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# 104

## EDITORIAL

### POPE FRANCIS

I wonder whether our Holy Father Saint Francis would ever have thought that, some time in the future, there would be a Holy Father Pope Francis! The announcement of the name of the new Pope was so surprising that one could hardly believe it. Being a Jesuit, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, it was to be expected that he would choose the name Francis for the great Jesuit apostle of missions, Francis Xavier. And yet he chose Francis of Assisi. And he also explained why.

Just three days after his election on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013, during an audience to the media operators in Pope Paul VI Hall on 16<sup>th</sup> March, Pope Francis said that, sitting close to him during the conclave was Cardinal Claudio Hummes OFM, Archbishop emeritus of São Paulo in Brazil. It was the presence of his close friend that prompted him to chose Saint Francis as his patron saint, particularly when Cardinal Hummes congratulated him with the words: "Do not forget the Church of the poor."

These words struck him in a particular way during that solemn moment. Coming from Latin America Pope Francis is aware of the great struggle to come to grips with the many social problems facing the world's poor, as well as of the great strides that the Catholic Church has accomplished in trying to change its image in this continent, where power has often been associated with ruthless exploitation and injustice of the poor. Pope Francis is continuing the work of other great churchmen in this continent ever since Vatican II, particularly Bishop Hélder Câmara of Olinda and Recife (†1999), Bishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, assassinated on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1980, and other bishops who stood out for the rights of the poor and downtrodden, especially in Brazil.

The Catholic Church has rediscovered its genuine calling to be a poor Church ever since Vatican II. However it has been stained by various crises and failures, particularly during these last decades, even though it should be stressed that the insistence upon its shortcomings is also the work of sinister forces that are bent on discrediting its mission and eventually destroying it. The Catholic Church is not culpable more than other religious or social institutions, but its great influence on human life and its defence of genuine human values make it prone to be attacked when its adherents are found guilty of going against the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

A Pope for the poor, a Church for the poor would be a blessing in a world in which the poor are outcasts in affluent post-Christian societies. Saint Francis understood this very well in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but he reformed himself and his brotherhood before attacking the shortcomings of the Church, and in this way he reformed the Church by loving it and serving it. This is what Pope Francis intends to do. His simple style is most welcome and maybe it is also necessary to trim down the Church's complex institutions and rites. This does not mean weakening the Church's defence of the truth about God and about mankind. Indeed, if Pope Francis would continue to be steadfast in the achievements of Pope Benedict XVI regarding clarity of doctrine, enriching it with a delicate human touch of tenderness and openness for dialogue and for the cause of social justice, he would certainly live up to the name he has chosen. May God bless our Pope Francis and may our Holy Father Saint Francis protect his "Lord Pope", as he would fondly call him.

Fr. Noel Muscat ofm

# JOSEPH OF NAZARETH

## IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

### (13TH – 15TH CENT.)

Guglielmo Spirito ofm conv.  
*Miscellanea Franciscana* 111 (2011) 163-185

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#### *The paternity of Joseph as a locus theologicus*

A quick reading of the contributions of some mediaeval authors regarding our theme places in the forefront their dominating preoccupation to define the nature of the marriage between Mary and Joseph. This question becomes essential in the same definition of the paternity of Joseph.

In this case it is expressed in relation to the Virgin and in relation to the Son of God. In such context is born the discussion regarding the virginity of Saint Joseph and the legitimisation of his paternity. At the basis of this question, however, we find the relation of Joseph with God: implying a holiness and a presupposed justice, and a holiness and consequent justice as a result of adherence to God's plan.

As we shall see, the Franciscan authors whom we shall take into consideration tackle two elements in particular: that which proposes the carpenter of Nazareth as a perfect father and that which exalts his humanity. The levels of the discussion are also two: one is strictly theological, while the other concerns the theme of preaching and presents these original and stimulating elements particularly with regards to the human face of the earthly father of Christ, characterised also by affective tones, appealing to piety, which gave a notable contribution to the diffusion of the cult of the Saint.

It is interesting to note how the words chosen by Matthew in order to define the substantial nature of the relationship between Jesus, Mary and Joseph, uncover the specific nature of their relationship with God. In other words: where did Mary and Joseph meet the Lord? What is the *locus*

*theologicus* in which their vocation is lived out? The question might seem superficial: in fact, it is certain that, in Jesus, the modality of a unique closeness in the history of humanity, both Mary and Joseph find God, their Lord. But with what level of awareness?

In the case of Mary the *locus theologicus* is her womb, where the Word of which she becomes a servant, before becoming a mother, is conceived. Mary cherishes in herself a mystery that does not belong to her but in which she enters through her listening and meditation in the secret of her own person. Joseph is invited by the angel to take Mary as his wife because of all that which is taking place in her, and to give the Name to the Child.

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (†1274), in his reflection regarding the motives that justify the virginal marriage between Mary and Joseph, asks why Joseph was chosen as the spouse of the mother of the Lord.

He gives three explanations to this fact, of which the last one is the most original and interesting. In the first place Joseph would have been chosen because he forms part of the lineage of David from which the genealogy of Christ descends, and in the second place his election would be the result of his faithfulness: Joseph, a chaste and just man, was fit to be the inseparable companion of the Virgin. Lastly, Joseph would have been chosen *propter paupertatem*, because of his poverty, a reasoning which is undoubtedly in line with Franciscan spirituality. Christ, who came to confound the haughty, did not want to be called the son of a king, but the son of a carpenter, and therefore he wanted to have a poor father.

For Bonaventure, Joseph is also a model of dedication to Jesus and Mary, so much so that

in a sermon, which he preached at the *studium* of the friars Minor in Paris around 1270, on the occasion of the feast of Epiphany, meditating upon Mt 2:21, Bonaventure invites his listeners to imitate Joseph, whom he qualifies as *beatus*, when he returns from Egypt and “took the child and his mother and entered into the land of Israel.”

Referring to the same context, the *Meditationes vitae Christi* of the Pseudo-Bonaventure (end of 13<sup>th</sup> century), define Joseph also as a *sanctus*.

This writing, which constitutes a notable example of the new Franciscan spirituality centred upon the contemplation of the life of Christ, assigns to the carpenter of Nazareth a first-hand role, and underlines the sphere of daily life, and the most material aspects of the life of Jesus. Joseph appears as an elderly man, who is wise and patient. In a particular way during the moment when the Virgin gives birth the author describes Joseph’s solicitude, his taking care of the Mother and Child whom he sometimes holds tenderly in his arms, in an attitude of delicate closeness.

We are surprised with the role accorded to Joseph in all the episodes that regard the insertion of Jesus within society: Joseph remains as if in a shadow, so much so that Mary – against all Jewish customs – is the one who practices the circumcision. This role of Joseph, which is apparently so marginal, is aimed, instead, at underlining the Franciscan reflection on humility, poverty, and service. These virtues, more than paternity in itself, are evidenced in a particular way: “if the role of Joseph as a servant is largely valued, his status as father is kept in silence.”<sup>1</sup>

In the Franciscan theological panorama, the reflection of the Spirituals gives a significant contribution to the “theology on Saint Joseph”, especially in the writings of Peter John Olivi and Ubertino da Casale.

Peter John Olivi (†1298) is one of the first authors of the West who, in his Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, keeping in mind both the patristic sources as well as those of other mediaeval authors contemporary to him, composed a dozen of theological questions, which nearly all concern directly Saint Joseph, and which contribute in a relevant way to the reflection regarding the Saint.

In general Peter John Olivi’s doctrine faces three problematic points: 1) the theological questions regarding the marriage of Mary and Joseph; 2) the suspicions of Joseph and the virginal maternity of Mary; 3) the roles and

dignity of Joseph in his relation with Mary, with the divine Child and with the universal Church. This last aspect is the most interesting for all that which regards our analysis, in particular where the author speaks of the sublime vocation of Joseph departing from the tenth question: for which reason did the Angel appear to Joseph always during dreams? (*Quare Angelus Ioseph semper in somnis apparuit?*).

Olivi, answering to this question, evidences that the veneration which Joseph enjoys is not mainly based upon his personal holiness, but rather upon his vocation and upon his role in the mystery of the Incarnation. He was intimately united to the Mother of the God-Man and of the Redeemer, with links of a special familiarity and unity.<sup>2</sup>

The relation between Joseph and Christ, moreover, was that of a father with his son under all aspects, except that of strict carnal generation:

“It is known fact that he was not only called and publicly regarded as His father, but also it is necessary to keep in mind that the holy man publicly, with regards to that Word, behaved with the attitude and gestures, with the care and authority, as a father regarding his son. Similarly Christ was like a son with his father, as regards his relation with him.”<sup>3</sup>

Olivi delights in describing with affective tones the intimate relation not only between Joseph and Jesus, but also between Joseph and his wife, making emerge the characteristics of a spouse and of a caring and vigilant father, who was poor and itinerant together with the Child and His Mother, to the point of reminding his readers that *sicut advenae et peregrini* (pilgrims and strangers) that Francis indicates to his friars as their way of life in the world, *sicut decet sanctam paupertatem* (as befits holy poverty)<sup>4</sup>:

“Think then how much faith and respect and how much purity of mind and body, in the assiduous cohabitation, which was so immediate and unique, in the conversation and in his gaze towards the Virgin who lived, slept, ate close to him, in a tiny hut or dwelling, or else during a journey as a pilgrim along the same road with him! And again, consider how much faith and respect he needed to make use of in order to take care of and contemplate the childish body of Christ and all his nakedness and necessities, and lastly, when Jesus became an adult, to consider all his words and deeds [...] Who would say that, to him who held Christ in his arms as a father and who would speak to him as a father, Christ, both as a child as well



as when he became an adult, would not impress and instil those ineffable sentiments and joys to him, and would do such a thing with the external cooperation of the grace of Christ, with his filial gaze and with his sentiments and embraces?”<sup>5</sup>

Peter Olivi underlines that, in Joseph the paternal and conjugal dignity reaches its peak (*fuit consummata*), since his being spouse and father has its origin and end in God, and it passes through the absolutely unique relationship with Christ and the Virgin. Thus it becomes a *locus theologicus* in which Joseph is chosen and from which he

enthusiasm that it is the fruit of divine election and of a special grace of the Holy Spirit (*ex speciali munere gratiae*). It is a gift that the carpenter of Nazareth received precisely in marriage and which is superior to the legal union established by an act of adoption:

“If, in fact, according to human law approved by God, an external person can be adopted as son, with greater reason the Son of God given to Joseph in the Virgin, who was his most holy spouse, in virtue of the sacrament of a virginal marriage, can be with full right called his son.”<sup>7</sup>

Such a paternity can furthermore be understood in an analogical relationship with that of God the Father, as a gratuitous gift of the love of the Father towards Joseph, who in this vocation received all the necessary charisms in order to live it out to perfection:

“Since, when the divine grace chooses someone for a state, it gives him all the charisms that adorn abundantly that state, and therefore I effectively conclude that the perfection of all virtues has been concentrated in Joseph in the highest manner.”<sup>8</sup>

If the relationship with Mary appears in Ubertino

circumscribed to a purely spiritual dimension, the Franciscan author instead likes to stop and describe – with most humane details – the intimacy between father and son, which is in itself a sign of external and interior graces:

“Oh, how many sweet kisses [Joseph] received from Him [Jesus]! Oh, with how much sweetness did he hear the little child call him “daddy” and with how much joy did he try to embrace him with such tenderness! Think also about how much compassion during the long journeys they undertook did he make the child Jesus rest on his bosom, since He was tired of walking, even though he was already growing up.”<sup>9</sup>

This closeness of Joseph to the Incarnate Word is the reason why, in the reflection of Ubertino da Casale, his paternity assumes even a soteriological meaning: “Joseph closes the Old Testament since he possesses in his body what God had promised to the patriarchs,” not only,



*Giotto, Nativity Scene, Greccio*

answers in a complete way to his calling, making of himself an instrument of the manifestation of God in the fullness of Christ.

Thanks to the role entrusted by God to Joseph, the Messiah has appeared in this world in an orderly and honest manner (*ordinate et honeste*). In virtue of his role as spouse of Mary, as head of the family, as the educator of the Incarnate Word, Joseph became the necessary complement to the divine plan.

The disciple of Peter John Olivi, Ubertino da Casale (†1329c.), in his famous work *Arbor vitae crucifixae Iesu* (1305) dedicates intense pages to the figure of Joseph, with the affective tones typical of the current of the Spirituals and with a peculiar attention to three fundamental arguments: the virginity, the marriage, and the theme which is most of interest to us, the paternity of Joseph in its theological, psychological and ascetical aspects.<sup>6</sup>

The paternity of Joseph is undoubtedly unique and singular. Ubertino affirms with



but “more than a son of Jacob, who gave to the Egyptians the bread for the body, [Joseph] with great care nurtured all the elect with the bread of heaven, which gives eternal life. In heaven he continues to do so through his intercession, so that

of mediation: through the hands of Joseph, the same hands that welcomed and nurtured the Incarnate Word of God, the Father has offered and incessantly offers to humanity the “bread that comes down from heaven, the true bread” (Jn 6:32).

Secondarily Joseph is invoked as the mediator before the Virgin Mary since he is her spouse. He is her spouse in order to become a father, and therefore he can request from her to welcome us as her children. He therefore prays that the divine maternity, from which the Divine was generated in a human womb, be repeated also in our case. In virtue of the Son, presented to the Father through Mary and Joseph, we become sons in the Son, since we are rendered able to participate in the same Holy Family. It was not only necessary for Christ to have a father in order to enter into this world, but it is also necessary for us, in order to become with Him “members of God’s family”



**Giotto. Presentation in the Temple. Scrovegni Chapel Padua**

we would gain the grace to pray that, at the same time, Mary would welcome us as her sons and daughters.”<sup>10</sup>

Ubertino, therefore, prays with trust to the mediation of Joseph:

“Be mindful of us, therefore, o blessed Joseph, and for the intercession of our prayer give us always this bread. But make us also worthy to have the protection of the most holy Virgin your spouse, so that, although we are unworthy, she would adopt us as her beloved children.”<sup>11</sup>

It seems interesting to stop on two requests that this prayer makes to Joseph, since they are intimately linked to his particular paternity: this intercession is exercised not only in relation to the Son of God, but also with regards to us. Ubertino asks Joseph “the bread”, one of the central motives of the prayer that Jesus himself has taught us to address to God the Father. In this way it seems that the analogy to divine paternity, to which we have already referred, is again underlined in its function

(Eph 2:19).

The space that Joseph occupies in the economy of salvation according to Franciscan theological reflection evidences, therefore, how the exercise of paternity which is proper to him is ordered for the good of all the Church and how it presents itself, in Joseph’s personal experience as well as in our relationship with him, as an effective *locus theologicus*.

### *The preaching on Saint Joseph: the paternity of a good and faithful servant*

After having considered some aspects of the Franciscan theological approach to the figure of Joseph, we shall now try to gather, as an example and in general lines, how in some texts by

Bernardine of Siena and Bernardine of Feltre, the ministry of preaching – a discourse, that is, that is addressed to a wider audience and with aims which are different from those of theological research – spread the devotion towards the paternity of the carpenter of Nazareth, with particular reference to his educative and catechetical value.

Chronologically, with respect to the authors that we have considered up till now, we find ourselves in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which marked an important period of change in the Order, being the century that saw the affirmation of the Observance and its massive immersion within the pastoral ministry.<sup>12</sup>

A significant contribution to the development of Christian piety with regards to Saint Joseph was given by Saint Bernardine of Siena (†1444). It was he who conserved, transcribed and preached the teachings of Peter John Olivi and Ubertino da Casale, and re-elaborated them in a personal manner.

Like Ubertino, Bernardine held that God, having predestined Joseph to a particular grace, conferred upon him all the necessary charisms to confirm him in the mission with which He entrusted him, a mission that was intimately united to the mystery of the Incarnate Word: the mission of Joseph was that of being considered by all as the father of Christ and spouse of Mary, as the custodian and carer of the Son of the Father and of the spouse of the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the marriage between Joseph and Mary, without entering into the theological questions of the time, Bernardine underlines the reality of the virginal marriage, of the spiritual union that “united in such a way the souls of Joseph and Mary that they constitute a *unitas summa*, one and the same person, and the foundation of the relationship between Joseph and Jesus Christ.”

The explication of this particular paternity has origins in the writings of Peter Olivi: it is understood as a spiritual relationship, derived from spiritual marriage and recognised by the same Virgin in the episode of the finding of Jesus in the Temple, where Mary publicly calls Joseph the “father” of Christ. The undeniable foundations of such a relation, therefore, are spiritual marriage and divine liberality.

In order to form an idea of the devotion of Bernardine of Siena towards Saint Joseph, we can read the text of the sermon, composed between 1440 and 1444, entitled *De Sancto Joseph sponso Beatae Virginis*. The greatness of Joseph is seen in relation to the Scripture: he participates in the history of salvation, as a fundamental actor, through election and through grace.

“Good and trustworthy servant, enter into your Master’s happiness (Mt 25:23). The general rule of all singular graces that God communicates to every rational creature is the following: namely, that when divine goodness chooses someone for a high office or a sublime state, it offers all those charisms that are necessary and opportune for the person who is elected and for his mission, and decorate the person abundantly. This is clearly apparent in the Fathers of the Old Testament. [...] It is similarly clear in the New Testament. [...] This thing, above all others, has been verified in the case of Saint Joseph, putative father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and true spouse of the Queen of the world and the Lady of the Angels. To him the Eternal Father entrusted the role of faithfully nurturing and protecting His principal treasures: his Son and his spouse. He carried out this office with maximum faithfulness. For this reason God, regarding him, says: ‘Good and trustworthy servant, enter into your Master’s happiness.’ In these holy words we find described the triple state of this most holy man: 1. The state of nature, of which it is said: ‘Good servant;’ 2. The state of grace, of which it is said: ‘trustworthy servant;’ 3. Finally, the state of glory, of which it is said: ‘enter into your Master’s happiness.’ In the first is expressed the nobleness of generation; in the second the gratefulness of relationship; in the third the sublime nature of glorification.”<sup>13</sup>

What could these words arouse in the minds and hearts of the audience of Saint Bernardine? The saint offers a way of holiness that can be lived according to the imitation of Saint Joseph.

In the case of the virginal father of Jesus, besides, the entering into the happiness of the Lord is the expression of the conviction of Saint Bernardine regarding his corporal assumption: it is worthy of belief, although it cannot be affirmed with certainty, that Jesus would have recompensed his earthly father with the same privilege reserved to His Mother, in such a way that in paradise the Holy Family would be reconstituted in glory and in love.

In the relation to his spouse<sup>14</sup> and to the Son is realised in fullness the vocation of Joseph and his conformity to the plan of God. We could have the courage to state that, that same relation has given back to mankind – introducing it and integrating it in the society of human relations – the humanity of Jesus, Word of God.

It was another Bernardine, also a Franciscan Observant, namely Blessed Bernardine Tomitano da Feltre (†1494), founder of the Monti di Pietà, who often reflected upon Saint Joseph in his preaching,<sup>15</sup> particularly during the *Quaresimali*



(Lenten sermons), given that the feast of the Saint, whose date had already been fixed on 19<sup>th</sup> March, always falls within the cycle of the Season of Lent. The key to read the preaching of Bernardine da Feltre is the centrality of Christ in Franciscan theology, which had in the Blessed John Duns Scotus its great master.<sup>16</sup>

The Capuchin Carlo Varischi da Milano enjoys the merit of having published, in 1964, the unedited writings of Blessed Bernardino da Feltre in the redaction of the Observant Minor Bernardino Bulgarino da Brescia. These writings are extremely interesting texts, both for the mixture of Latin and Italian present in the region of Veneto, as well as for their ascetical and mystical content.

Here we summarily take into exam some brief passages from the two sermons, both of which lack a title: the first of these sermons was destined for popular preaching as is evident by the abundant use of the vernacular, and it concentrates the attention upon the general excellence of Saint Joseph; the second sermon has a form that resembles that of a theological treatise, and it especially evidences the merits of Joseph. In both sermons we shall try to pinpoint once again the characterisation of the paternity of the carpenter of Nazareth in the peculiarity of his relationship with Jesus, the Incarnate Word.

In the first of these two sermons, Bernardine affirms that Joseph is greater than all the other saints, since he is “with dignity the most adorned, with sanctity the most crowned, with piety the most and best enthroned” (*de dignità più adornato, de sanctità più coronato, de pietà più e meglio intronizzato*).

Bernardine then considers how in Scripture we find four personages by the name of Joseph, who were marvellously adorned with the four cardinal virtues:

“The first one was the patriarch Joseph, who is the personification of prudence, in so far as he was the most prudent investigator of dreams (Gen 47) and is a prefiguration of Christ, since he was sold as a slave. The second one was Joseph, brother of the Lord, who is called Just (Acts 1:23) and who prefigures justice since he followed Christ. The third one was Joseph of Arimathaea, who is the personification of fortitude, in virtue of which he boldly presented himself before Pilate (Jn 19:38) and buried Christ. The fourth one is Joseph, spouse of the Virgin, who is the personification of temperance, since he imitated Christ and His Mother in all his conduct.”<sup>17</sup>

The Christ-centred nature of Bernardine’s writings is evident in the orientation of all virtues to Christ, and in the case of Saint Joseph, it

particularly translates in the imitation not only of the Incarnate Word but also of Mary. Before being father and spouse, the carpenter of Nazareth can be seen as a disciple. In this disposition of his to the faithful service, God the Father finds the *matter* from which He draws a *form* which is even more noble,<sup>18</sup> by electing this man to such a high office to which no other person had been chosen before him,<sup>19</sup> and by endowing him – as Ubertino and Bernardine of Siena had already affirmed – with all the requisites necessary to carry out such an important role.

God entrusted Mary to the hands of Joseph, since He considered him to be worthy of receiving also his Son.<sup>20</sup> If the Virgin was full of all perfection, her spouse was certainly perfect in a similar way since:

“It is sufficient that they be called spouses (in Latin *coniuges*), that is, under one yoke. When two animals are united together under the same yoke, if one goes a bit further than the other, they cannot walk well. If the other remains behind, it is even worse. If one goes this way and the other one goes that way, the same thing happens. It is necessary that they go along in a pair. [...] If a spouse has to marry a man who is her equal, and the blessed Virgin was full of every perfection [...] it is a sign that even Joseph was perfect in a sublime way: to him was conferred so much grace that he could be similar to his most perfect spouse.”<sup>21</sup>

The excellent qualities with which Joseph was endowed can be understood, however, only with regard to his relation to Christ:

“If we want to speak of the theological virtues and in the first place of faith, I affirm that the faith of Joseph was superior to the faith of all others. In fact, Joseph believed regarding Christ, before He was born, all that has to be believed, since he was instructed by the angel. He had such a strong hope more than all the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, etc. together, since if they had hope in Christ as their lord, Joseph had hope in Christ as his son. He also possessed charity to the maximum degree: who, in fact, could love Christ as much as Joseph?”<sup>22</sup>

In this relationship of devotion to the Son of God, which precedes the care of the same Son, Joseph expresses his holiness which is none other than the perfection of his relations with Christ and with the Mother. In the second sermon which we take into consideration, Bernardino da Feltre asserts that “Saint Joseph had such a profound knowledge of Christ that I do not believe that any one else among the saints could have had, except for the blessed Virgin.”<sup>23</sup>

The carpenter of Nazareth had such a





*Giotto. The Flight into Egypt. Scrovegni Chapel Padua*

unique familiarity with Christ that one can justly hold that nobody, except for the Virgin who carried Him in her womb, could enter so deeply into His mystery than Joseph, who with his internal and external senses participated fully in the life of that Child who came to redeem the world:

“O most holy Joseph, what did you do when you saw that Jesus was born? When you saw the angels, the shepherds and the magi adore him? What do you think, my soul, of this most blessed saint? Don’t you think that sometimes the child Jesus would have gazed upon Joseph, would have extended towards him his little arms, as if he wanted to stay on the bosom and among the arms of Joseph? I am short of breath to say all these things! If John the evangelist reclined his head upon the chest of the Lord and had such a profound knowledge of the Lord, more than any one else of the apostles could have had, what do you think regarding Joseph? It was not Joseph who reclined his head upon Jesus, but it was Christ who reclined his head upon Joseph’s chest.”<sup>24</sup>

The tones of intimacy, of affectivity, of day

to day simple life in which God enters, are the nucleus in which Franciscan preaching looked at the figure of Joseph, in order to evidence in a more strictly correlative manner the coniugal dimension and the paternal dimension, as the place of the full realisation of the Father’s plan, and at the same time, of an active journey of holiness in faithfulness, in service, and in the conscious dedication to the Child and to His Mother.

## Conclusion

Our analysis has tried to offer a general panorama of Franciscan thought regarding the figure of Saint Joseph,

examining some of the elements of theological

reflection and preaching within the sphere of the Order from its origins to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The question that has accompanied the development of our work has been the following: is there a typically Franciscan modality of interpreting and assuming the figure of Joseph of Nazareth as a point of reference in the journey of faith and evangelical existence?

The Franciscans recognise to Joseph a holiness founded upon his proximity to the Virgin and Child and to the dedication that he, faithful servant of the mystery of the Incarnation, reserves for both of them. Joseph, therefore, plays an active role in the history of salvation. Even though initially he was gripped by doubts regarding the pregnancy of his spouse, he walked in the faith of a just man, and chose to take her with him, to unite himself to her in a true marriage, which was true because he consciously wanted it, he freely consented to it and certainly embarked upon it out of love. He is the spouse of Mary, not only a functional presence in order to safeguard her virginity. Regarding this last aspect, in particular, we have dedicated our attention to the original contribution of Duns

Scotus.

Considering some authors among the Minors, we have been able to understand how Joseph became, for the followers of Francis of Assisi, a model of faithfulness, humility, poverty and obedience. The paternity he humbly exercised regarding the Son of God was not only the place of his service to the Most High, but became a *locus theologicus* par excellence, which confirms more than ever Franciscan Christocentrism. If in Jesus the fullness of the encounter with the Father becomes a reality, more than ever this occurs in the case of Joseph, for the extraordinary level of intimacy with Him which Joseph enjoyed. In his poverty, as in that of Mary, is realised the *kenosis* of the Word, who through the working of the Holy Spirit became a Child, and was in need of a mother and a father who were worthy of Him, who welcomed him, nourished him, defended him, educated him, and taught him to walk in this world.

It seems to us that Franciscan teaching underlines in a strong way the role of Joseph as a relational person. This is, in fact, the most important sign of holiness: the person who lives a direct and profound relationship with the Lord – which is expressed in obedience, in minority, in the welcoming of His project and in the faithfulness to the same project – and, at the same time, establishes authentic links with others, building them upon a proximity marked by charity and oriented towards God.

What is, therefore, the peculiar role of Joseph in the history of salvation? An affirmation of the Protestant theologian Karl Barth – who evidences in the carpenter of Nazareth the same qualities which are dear to the tradition of the friars Minor – can offer us, in a provocative manner, an ulterior point for Franciscan reflection:

“According to my way of seeing things, Joseph has realised with Christ the same role that the Church should accomplish. I am conscious that the Roman Church prefers to compare its mission to the more glorious mission of Mary. The Church offers to the world her message in the same form in which the Virgin has given Christ to us. But this comparison could be misleading. The Church is not capable of giving birth to the Redeemer, but she can and should serve him with humility and modesty. This was precisely the role of Joseph, who keeps himself always in the second place, leaving all the glory to Jesus. This should be the role of the Church, if we want that the world would

rediscover the splendour of the word of God.”<sup>25</sup>

## NOTES

1 Cf. PAYAN, *Joseph*, 107.

2 PETRUS IOANNIS OLIVI, *Postilla super Matthaeum, cap. 1: Quaestiones selectae de Sancto Ioseph*, X, 40, in EMMEN, *Pierre de Jean Olivi*, 268: “Si enim compares ipsum ad Virginem, de qua nulli est dubium quod est super omnem puram creaturam, ipse habuit, respectu eius, statum ineffabilis dignitatis sive auctoritatis ac unitatis et familiaritatis [...] Cogita igitur quid est dictum quod Virgo, Christi Mater, vero ac pleno consensu se habebat ad istum sicut ad virum suum, sibi divinitus traditum et confirmatum. Cognita etiam quantum est hoc, quod ille se habebat ad eam, quam sciebat certissime esse matrem Christi, tamquam ad suam veram coniugem, super cuius speciali assumptione et cura Dei praecepta habebat.”

3 Ivi: “Constat quod non solum publice vocatus et reputatus est pater eius, sed etiam tenere oportet quod sanctus vir publice se habebat ad eum verbo, actu et gestu, et cura et imperio, sicut pater ad filium. Et consimiliter Christus ad ipsum sicut filius ad proprium patrem suum.”

4 Cf. *Test* 24.

5 EMMEN, *Pierre de Jean Olivi*, 268-269: “Cogita igitur quanta fides ac reverentia, quantaque puritas mentis et carnis, et affectus ac sensus, erat semper necessaria ipsi Ioseph, in assiduo ac immediatissimo et secretissimo convictu, colloquio et aspectu [Filii] Virginis vigilantis, dormientis, comedentis circa ipsum, in uno parvo tugurio sive cella, aut in eadem via simul itinerantis et peregrinantis cum illo! Et iterum, quanta fides ac reverentia indigebat ad semper digne tractanda et contuenda Christi infantilia membra et omnes suas nuditates et necessitates; et tandem, cum fuit adultus, omnia eius verba et opera. [...] Quis diceret quod ipsi tenenti Christum in brachiis tamquam pater, et confabulanti cum ipso ut pater, Christus, sive infans, sive adultus, non ingeret et imprimeret ineffabiles sensus ac iucunditates de semetipso, et hoc cooperante exterius Christi gratia cum filiali aspectu, afflatu et amplexu?”

6 P. MARTÍNEZ, *La Josefologia de Ubertino de Casale*, in *San Giuseppe nei primi quindici secoli*, 339ff.

7 Ivi, 346: “Si enim secundum leges humanas approbatas a Deo potest extraneus adoptari in filium, multo magis Dei Filius datus Ioseph in sua sacratissima coniuge Virgine sub virginalis matrimonii sacramento debet merito eius filius appellari.”

8 *Ibidem*: “quod quando divina gratia aliquem elegit ad aliquem statum, omnia charismata illi tribuit, quae illum statum copiose decorant, efficaciter concludes, quod omnium virtutum perfectio in Ioseph altissime adunatur.”

9 Ivi, 348: “O quam dulcia oscula ab ipso recepit! O quanta dulcedine audiebat balbutientem parvulum se patrem vocare et cum quanta suavitate sentiebat se dulciter amplexari! Cogita etiam quanta compassione in itineribus, quae fecerunt, parvulum Iesum ex labore lassatum, cum esset grandisculus in suo gremio requiescere faciebat.”

10 Ivi, 349.

11 *Ibidem*: “Memento ergo nostri, benedicte Ioseph, et tuae orationis suffragio semper da nobis hunc panem. Sed et beatissimam Virginem tuam sponsam nobis redde propitiam et impetra nos indignos in dilectos filios adoptari ab ipsa.”

12 F. ACCROCCA, Introduction to E. CAROLI, *Mistici Francescani. Sec. XV*, III, Milano 1999, 13-14.

13 The quotation is translated from the text in CAROLI, *Mistici Francescani. Sec. XV*, 663-664. This sermon is also chosen as the text for the second reading of the Office of the Readings of the Solemnity of Saint Joseph in the Roman Breviary (19<sup>th</sup> March).

14 Regarding the communion between Mary and Joseph



I consider to be very beautiful these elements underlined by Bernardine: “I am convinced that [the Virgin Mary] loved Saint Joseph in the most sincere manner with all the affection of her heart, since she knew how intimate was the matrimonial unity in the spirituality of charity, she was aware that Joseph had been given to her as a spouse by the Holy Spirit in order to be the faithful guardian of her virginal purity, and because he had taken part with Her in the love of charity and reverent solicitude towards the most divine Son of God.” “For these reasons, and after having pondered on all that which can reasonably be thought out by a devout and prudent mind, regarding Saint Joseph and the blessed Virgin, I would not dare to deny that Mary would have loved Joseph more than all the other creatures, even to the point of loving him most after the blessed fruit of her womb Jesus. I am speaking, however, of social charity; since, regarding love of charity, She loved most those who are considered best before God.” CAROLI, *Mistici Francescani*. Sec. XV, 665 and 672.

15 Cf. P. MARTÍNEZ, *Dos sermones ineditos sobre S. José del Beato Bernardino de Feltre*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 71 (1978) 65-111.

16 Cf. CAROLI, *Mistici Francescani*. Sec. XV, 843.

17 MARTÍNEZ, *Dos sermones ineditos*, 79: “Primus fuit Ioseph patriarcha et significatur pro prudentia, quia fuit prudentissimus explorator somniorum, Gen. 47, et figuratur Christus, quia fuit venditus. Secundus fuit Ioseph, frater Domini, qui cognominatus est Iustus, Actuum primo, 23, et significatur pro iustitia et secutus est Christum. Tertius Ioseph ab Arimathia et significatur pro fortitudine, unde audacter ingressus est ad Pilatum, Iohn. 19,38 et sepelivit Christum. Quartus est Ioseph sponsus Virginis et significatur pro temperantia, et imitatus est Christum et matrem eius in regimine.”

18 *Ivi*, 82-83: “ubi reperitur materia melius disposita, ibi introducitur nobilior forma.”

19 *Ivi*, 82: “Deus elegit istum hominem ad officium tale,

ad quod nullus hominum fuit electus. Signum est quod erat talis naturae bonae et sanctae et sufficientis, quam nullus habuit.”

20 *Ivi*, 85-86: “Quod Deus dedit Mariam in manibus Ioseph. O vere gloriosus sanctus, quantum fuit dignificatus, cui dedit Deus Mariam et filium!”

21 *Ivi*, 86. From the linguistic point of view the text is very interesting: “basta che vocantur coniuges, id est sub uno iugo. Quando duo animalia coniunguntur sub uno iugo, si unum vadit ante, già non va bene. Si alter retro, peius. Si uno de là, l’altro de qua, similiter. Fa che vadano a pari [...]. Si aliqua debet nubere pari et beata Virgo fuit plena omni perfectione [...] signum est quod etiam Ioseph fuit perfectissimus, cui collata fuit tanta gratia, ut posset esse similis coniugi suae perfectissimae.”

22 *Ivi*, 87: “Si volumus loqui de virtutibus theologicis et primo de fide, dico quod fides Ioseph superavit fidem omnium, nam Ioseph credidit de Christo antequam nasceretur, edoctus ab angelo, omnia credenda. Habuit spem talem qualem non potuerunt habere omnes patriarchae, prophetae, apostoli, etc., quia isti si habuerunt spem in Christo, ut eorum domino, sed Ioseph habuit spem in Christo, ut in filio. Habuit etiam charitatem supremam: quis enim potuit amare Christum quantum Ioseph?”

23 *Ivi*, 101: “sanctus Ioseph habuit cognitionem de Christo talem qualem nemo sanctorum, excepta beata Virgine, creditur habuisse.”

24 *Ivi*, 102-103: “O beatissime Ioseph, quando vidisti Iesum natum, quid fecisti? Quando vidisti eum ab angelis, a pastoribus, a magis adorari? Quid credis, anima mea, de iste felicissimo sancto? Credisne tu quod aliquando puerulus Iesus dirigebat oculos suos versus Ioseph, extendebat brachiola sua quasi vellet stare in sinu et brachiis Ioseph? O, che me manca lu fiato pur a dirlo! Si Ioannes evangelista reclinando caput super pectus Domini habuit cognitionem talem de Domino, quam nemo aliorum apostolorum habuit, o, quid credis de Ioseph? Non Ioseph, sed Christus reclinabat caput super pectus Ioseph.”

25 A. CONTI POURGER, *San Giuseppe Vergine Padre*, <http://www.bibbiaweb.net/bibbia29.pdf> (accessed 20th November 2009).



*Stained glass window at Poggiobustone*

# FRANCIS, THE BROTHERS AND THE ANGUISH OF SOLITUDE

## Chapter 3

### *DOMINE, TIBI RECOMMENDO FAMILIAM, QUAM MIHI HACENTUS COMMISISTI*

One of the most dramatic moments in the life of Saint Francis was the decision he took upon returning to Italy after his daring adventure in the East during the Fifth Crusade in 1219-1220 when, at Damietta, he met Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil after having crossed over to the Saracen camp. It was at Damietta that Francis was informed of the crisis in the Order that was brought about by the two vicars he left behind in Italy before crossing the sea to the East.<sup>1</sup>

During the general chapter of 1220, which was probably celebrated on the occasion of the feast of St. Michael the Archangel on 29<sup>th</sup> September, since on Pentecost Francis would have still been away from Italy, Francis took a very bold decision, namely to renounce to his office of leader of the Order and to assign the office of Vicar to Peter Catanio. The account is presented in the *Assisi Compilation*:

“Blessed Francis wanted to be humble among his brothers. To preserve greater humility, a few years after his conversion he resigned the office of prelate before all the brothers during a chapter held at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. ‘From now on,’ he said, ‘I am dead to you. But here is Brother Peter di Catanio: let us all, you and I, obey him.’ Then all the brothers began to cry loudly and weep profusely, but blessed Francis bowed down before Brother Peter and promised him obedience and reverence. From that time on, until his death, he remained a subject, like one of the other brothers.”<sup>2</sup>

Such a decision was truly a difficult thing to do for Francis. It meant letting go of the leadership of the Order, since he was feeling physically and psychologically inadequate to handle such a large

fraternity of brothers. The Sources all indicate that the main reason as to why Francis renounced his leadership of the Order was the virtue of humility. One certainly cannot doubt that this was the sincere intention of the founder. However, it would be more helpful to delve deeper into the true motivations that were working in the mind and heart of Francis, as to make him arrive at such a difficult and painful decision. This was evidently clear in his fear that the Order would stray away from his Gospel ideal, and he was already seeing that it was impossible to keep all the friars steadfast in the primitive faithfulness to the Gospel way of life that he had proposed.

The most complete text regarding Francis’ renunciation of the leadership of the Order is found in Thomas of Celano’s *Memoriale* 143, suggesting that Celano is the source from which the author of the *Compilatio* drew his information. In fact, the *Compilatio* gives us the entire text as well, but in two different paragraphs, namely CA 11 which speaks about Francis’ resignation, and CA 39 which again repeats the event of the resignation, but adds the reference to Francis’ prayer in favour of the Order. The following is the text of Celano:

“In order to preserve the virtue of humility, a few years after his conversion, at a chapter, he resigned the office of prelate before all the brothers of the religion, saying: ‘From now on, I am dead to you. But here you have Brother Peter of Catanio; let us all, you and I, obey him.’ And bowing down immediately, he promised him obedience and reverence. The brothers were weeping, and sorrow drew deep groans from them, as they saw themselves orphaned of such a father.

As blessed Francis got up, he joined his



hands and, lifting his eyes to heaven, said: ‘Lord, I give back to you the family which until now you have entrusted to me. Now, sweetest Lord, because of my infirmities, which you know, I can no longer take care of them and I entrust them to the ministers. If any brother should perish because of their negligence, or example, or even harsh correction, let them be bound to render an account for it before You, on the Day of Judgement.’

From that time on, he remained subject until his death, behaving more humbly than any of the others.”<sup>3</sup>

Francis resigned from the prelacy of the Order. In his writings the saint often speaks about the *praelatus*, a Latin term indicating normally a bishop or pastor to whom is entrusted the care of souls. In the case of the writings of Saint Francis, however, the same term is applied to the ministers of the fraternity, whose role Francis explains in the *Earlier Rule* IV,6: “Let the ministers and servants remember what the Lord says: I have *not* come to be served, but to serve (Mt 20:28); and because the care of the brothers’ souls has been entrusted to them, if anything is lost on account of their fault or bad example, they will have to *render an account* before the Lord Jesus Christ *on the day of judgement* (Mt 12:36).”<sup>4</sup>

In his writings Francis refers to the *praelatus* in a particular way in *Admonition* 3, which speaks about perfect obedience. The term could have come from Cistercian tradition, referring to the abbot or prior. This is what Francis says regarding the *praelatus*:

“The Lord says in the Gospel: *Whoever does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be my disciple*; and, *Whoever wishes to save his life must lose it*.

That person who offers himself totally to obedience in the hands of his prelate leaves all that he possesses and loses his body. And whatever he does and says which he knows is not contrary to his will is true obedience, provided that what he does is good.

And should a subject see that some things might be better and more useful for his soul than what a prelate commands, let him willingly offer such things to God as a sacrifice; and, indeed, let him earnestly strive to fulfil the prelate’s wishes. For this is loving obedience because it pleases God and neighbour.

If the prelate, however, commands something contrary to his conscience, even though

he may not obey him, let him not, however, abandon him. And if he then suffers persecution from others, let him love them all the more for the sake of God. For whoever chooses to suffer persecution rather than wish to be separated from his brothers truly remains in perfect obedience because he lays down *his life* (Jn 15:13) for his brothers. In fact, there are many religious who, under the pretext of seeing things better than those which the prelate commands, look back, and return to the vomit of their own will. These people are murderers and, because of their bad example, cause many to lose their souls.”<sup>5</sup>

This *Admonition* helps us to understand what Francis meant by prelacy of the brothers, and also why he chose to give up this ministry at a certain stage of his life. Although the Sources we have quoted state that Francis arrived at such a decision some years after his conversion, we know that the episode occurred in 1220. By that time Francis had seen his Order grow from a handful of brothers in 1209 to about three thousand brothers. His Gospel way of life had been orally approved by the Pope and he was about to present the text of the *Earlier Rule* during the chapter of 1221. Many passages from the same Rule were certainly written during the period 1209-1220, particularly with reference to the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), to the division of the Order into provinces (1217), to the sending of the first missionaries, including Francis’ own missionary experience in the East (1219). Francis had, therefore, exercised to a great degree his role as prelate of the Order, in the spirit underlined in his Writings.

What was the reason that prompted Francis to renounce to this *ministerium fratrum* in 1220? It certainly was not linked to the clear ideals that Francis cherished regarding such a ministry. Even though the biographers speak about the fact that Francis renounced his office as prelate out of humility, it is obvious from the saint’s writings that Francis never considered the prelacy as an office of honour, but as a ministry of washing the feet of the brothers. This is evidently clear in the case of *Admonition* 4, which is a short commentary on Mt 20:28: *I did not come to be served, but to serve*.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, one can conclude that Francis was fully aware of the weight of such a responsibility. As time went on he probably became also more aware of his human limitations to handle such a ministry in a way that it could truly be beneficial to the brotherhood. Francis’ renunciation was truly

an act of humility not because prelacy in the Order was seen to be an honour, but simply because Francis was aware of his own limitations and accepted the events that had occurred during his absence from Italy as a sign from God, prompting him to entrust the care of the Order in the hands of more competent friars, first in the hands of Peter Catanio, who died on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1221, and afterwards in the hands of brother Elias.

Such a decision, as we have seen, was very difficult to make. It was difficult for various reasons. Francis knew that not all the brothers shared his same ideals regarding the radical nature of the Gospel calling which he and the first brothers had received. The inner tension within the Order, which was to be the trademark of Franciscan history along the course of eight centuries, was already present and being felt when Francis was still alive. The Sources coming from the pen of Francis' companions are full of references to this state of affairs that was creating uneasiness within the rank and file of the brotherhood, and which was linked to the differing visions of the form of life of the Gospel between the generation of first companions and the brothers who entered the Order at a later stage, and particularly those who possessed a professional training in theology and canon law.

Francis regarded himself as a "simple and unlettered" brother.<sup>7</sup> A brief look at his writings shows how Francis was convinced that simplicity of mind and heart is the most important virtue in the art of governing the brothers. In his *Admonitions* Francis explicitly states:

"Blessed is the servant who does not consider himself any better when he is praised and exalted by people than when he is considered worthless, simple, and looked down upon, for what a person is before God, that he is and no more. Woe to that religious who has been placed in a high position by others and [who] does not want to come down by his own will. *Blessed is that servant* (Mt 24:46) who is not placed in a high position by his own will and always desires to be under the feet of others."<sup>8</sup>

These words fit perfectly into the strong belief of Francis regarding the qualities of a prelate or minister in the Order. They convey the message that the *ministerium fratrum* is a gift given by God to a brother for the sake of the fraternity, and which remains valid only insofar as it is beneficial to the fraternity. Francis was aware that his deteriorating

health and human limitations could, in a certain way, prove detrimental to the development of the Order, even though he also knew that the learned brothers would lead the Order towards a new direction that he did not share or agree with.

Although Francis' decision seems to have been made with a spirit of inner calm and acceptance of the will of God in the concrete circumstances in which Francis was living, it nevertheless hides a human element which is very important in Francis' own sensibility, namely, his staunch conviction that there was to be no discussion regarding the form of life of the holy Gospel as he had envisaged it in his own life and in the life of the first brothers. The fact that some brothers were misunderstanding this position even while Francis was still alive filled him with a sense of bitterness. One event in the Sources is particularly relevant to portray this state of mind that was certainly not an indication that Francis just resigned from his post passively and abandoned his ideals and those of the brothers. The text is presented to us by Thomas of Celano in his *Memoriale*:

"Once a brother asked [Francis] why he had renounced the care of all the brothers and turned them over into the hands of others as if they did not belong to him. He replied: 'Son, I love the brothers as I can, but if they would follow my footsteps I would surely love them more, and would not make myself a stranger to them. For there are some among the prelates who draw them in a different direction, placing before them the examples of the ancients and paying little attention to my warnings. But what they are doing will be seen in the end.'

A short time later, when he was suffering a serious illness, he raised himself up in bed in an angry spirit: 'Who are these people? They have snatched out of my hands my religion and that of the brothers. If I go to the general chapter, then I'll show them what my will is!'"<sup>9</sup>

These words that Francis uttered in moment when he was seriously ill, and therefore during the last years of his life, are certainly taken from the material that Francis' companions sent from Greccio to the minister general Crescenzo da Iesi in 1244, and which served as the basis for Celano's *Memoriale* and for the so-called "unofficial" biographies, particularly the *Assisi Compilation* and the *Mirror of Perfection*. The documentary material is precious not only for the biographical content, but especially because it shows the



*intentio* of Francis in a very clear way. This text, in particular, is very explicit regarding as to why Francis preferred to retreat into solitude towards the end of his life. His intention was that of loving the brothers, and indeed he strove to do this all his life, but the brothers were not always responsive to Francis' ideal. The fact that they were seeking the other ways made Francis draw himself away from them and, in a certain way, filled him with bitterness.

According to these words it was the prelates, or ministers, who were guilty of drawing the brothers away from the simplicity of Gospel perfection that Francis had embraced and declared in the *forma vitae* of 1209, and which he then developed in the *Earlier Rule* of 1221 and particularly in the *Later Rule* of 1223. We shall take a look at the great opposition that the ministers presented regarding the Rule in the next chapter. Here let it suffice to say that the prelates were misleading the brothers into believing that the form of life of the holy Gospel as Francis had presented it was maybe ideal for the primitive fraternity, but not for a great religious Order. The prelates therefore had indicated to the brothers "the examples of the ancients", namely the venerable Rules of monastic and canonical Orders that were the norm among religious during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and particularly the Rule of Saint Augustine and the Rule of Saint Benedict, together with the *Charta Caritatis* of the Cistercian monks by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. The influence of the learned friars was being felt within many circles of the Order, and it might well have received a generous support from the Church's hierarchy, particularly after 1215, when the Fourth Lateran Council's canon 13 prohibited the writing of new Rules for religious Orders. Regarding this possibility we have ample proof in the *Assisi Compilation*, in a text which speaks about Cardinal Hugolino himself who recommends to Francis abandoning his *forma vitae* in order to adopt the venerable Rules already existing in the Church.<sup>10</sup> In this episode, which occurred during the Chapter of Mats, it was the learned brothers and prelates who convinced Cardinal Hugolino to speak to Francis and give him advice regarding the need to follow one of the established Rules.

Having this text as a background we can understand to whom Francis was referring when he vehemently stood up in his bed and shouted that he wanted to know who were the brothers

who were leading astray the whole Order and who snatched the brotherhood from his hands. He was explicitly making reference to the prelates of the Order. Now we know that, after the death of brother Peter Catanio on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1221, and most probably during the Pentecost chapter of that year, Francis chose brother Elias as his vicar. It is not our intention at this point to enter in the complicated matter of brother Elias and his legacy, and we know that the Sources coming from the pen of Francis' companions were not at all lenient on brother Elias, and that, in spite of all his shortcomings, Elias can be considered as one of the faithful companions of Saint Francis.<sup>11</sup> However, as we shall see in the next chapter, the figure of Elias remains ambiguous even during Francis' own lifetime, since Elias seems to have been a ringleader among the prelates and ministers in the attempt to thwart Francis' intention of writing the *Later Rule*. Francis felt that his physical and psychological weakness in front of such a great number of learned brothers was truly a limitation that he had to face, but at the same time he vehemently rose against their protests that the way of life he was advocating was not worthy of a great religious Order. The forceful expressions of the text we have quoted above re-echo the same forcefulness that is found in the *Testament* where the Saint makes use of very strong expressions when it comes to defending the *forma vitae* of the Gospel.<sup>12</sup>

The fact that Francis was withdrawing from the company of the majority of the brothers left him prone to a great sense of loneliness, which is evident towards the last years of his life. Indeed, he had the company of his first brothers, who would often tend to his needs particularly after the episode of the stigmatisation, when Francis could no longer walk or be completely independent in his movements. We know that brothers like Leo, Rufino, Angelo, Masseo and, indeed, even Elias, were often close to Francis towards the end of his life. Yet Francis seems to have been able to understand that, during certain moments, he had to be alone, since seemingly no one could fill the emptiness that he was feeling. We have ample proof of this sensation in the Sources, particularly in the text which follows upon the resignation of his office in the *Memoriale* of Celano:

"Another time he consigned all his companions to his vicar, saying: 'I don't want to seem singular because of this privilege of freedom;

any brothers can go with me from place to place as the Lord inspires them.' And he added, 'Why, I have seen a blind man who had no guide for his journey except one little dog.' This indeed was his glory: he gave up any appearance of being singular or important, so that *the power of Christ might dwell in him* (2Cor 12:9).<sup>13</sup>

What were the sentiments that Francis was actually feeling when he uttered these and similar expressions? Were they only a sign of great humility? Indeed, as we have seen and can also see in future references to the Sources, his words and actions betray a profound sense of humility. Yet I am convinced that there were other factors underlying such an attitude on Francis' part. His great sense of loneliness and feeling of abandonment on the part of the brothers can be explained as a natural tendency to withdraw from the limelight when one is aware of his life's achievements and failures at the onset of a mature age. Nowadays we might think that a person could go through this experience during a mid-life crisis, and indeed this is what seems to have happened to Francis at this stage. One of the signs of such a crisis is a person's awareness of his or her limitations. This does not mean that one is not aware of his or her successes and achievements in life. It is only a sign of profound maturity at seeing how limited are one's successes and achievements when compared to one's lofty ideals. This was typically the state of mind of Francis at such a crucial moment in his life, when he had to face a radical change in the framework of the fraternity he had dreamed of and realised years back. We quote an important text in order to illustrate such a state in Francis' mind and heart:

"Seeing how some were panting for prelaties, an ambition which even by itself made them unworthy of presiding, he said that they were not friars Minor, but that *they had fallen away from glory* by forgetting *the vocation to which they were called* (Eph 4:1). He criticised the wretched few who were upset when removed from the office; they were looking for honours, not burdens.

He once said to his companions: 'I would not consider myself a friar Minor unless I had the attitude which I will describe to you.' And he said: 'Here I am, a prelate of the brothers, and I go to the chapter. I preach to the brothers and admonish them, and, in the end, they speak against me: 'An uneducated and despicable man is not right for us; *we do not want you to rule over us* (Lk 19:14). You cannot speak; you are *simple and ignorant* (Acts 4:13). So in the end I am thrown out in disgrace,

looked down upon by everyone. I tell you, unless I hear these words with the same expression on my face, with the same joy in my heart, and with the same resolution for holiness, then I am in no sense a friar Minor.' And he would say: 'In a prelaty there is a fall; in praise, a precipice; in the humility of a subject, profit for the soul. Why, then, do we pay attention to danger more than profits, while we have time for making profit?'"<sup>14</sup>

This episode is eloquent in showing how Francis was truly aware that he could not face the educated brothers and prelates of the Order without a sense of disappointment and inner anguish as to how they wanted to depart from his original ideal of Gospel life. Francis felt excluded from the global fraternity. The episode is very clear regarding this bitter sensation. The fact that the brothers in the chapter would refuse Francis' words and present them as the words of a simple and unlettered brother who was incapable of leading the Order in a professional way, had a lasting impact on the sensibility of Saint Francis. At the same time Francis remains calm in front of all these contrary elements. He still retains his inner joy and peace. His words are certainly meant to instruct the brothers against the temptation for an exaggerated sense of self-esteem and against craving for power and prestige. They are, however also a picture of the real problems that Francis had to face at this particular moment of the history of the Order, when it seemed that minority was being replaced by thirst for power.

In the face of these difficulties Francis made recourse to prayer. In prayer he found the inner strength to make his decisions in a mature and calm way. Francis knew that it was time that he should entrust the fraternity to more capable vicars. Yet he also knew that the fraternity was in the hands of Christ, and this gave him an inner sense of peace and trust in the Lord and in the brothers. This attitude is explained in a very clear way in a revelation made to Francis regarding the future of the Order, as narrated by Celano in his *Memoriale*:

"[Francis] was greatly consoled by God's visitations which reassured him that the foundations of the religion would always remain unshaken. He was also promised that the number of those being lost would undoubtedly be replaced by those being chosen. One time he was disturbed by some bad examples. In his disturbance he turned to prayer and received a scolding from the Lord: 'Why are you so upset, little man? Have I set you up as shepherd over my religion so that



you can forget that I am its main protector? I have entrusted this to you, a simple man, so that the things that I work in you for others to imitate may be followed by those who want to follow. I have called; I will preserve, and I will pasture; and I will raise up others to make up for the fall of some, so that, even if they have not been born, I will have them born! So do not be upset, but work out your salvation, for even if the religion should come to number only three, by my gift it will still remain forever unshaken.”<sup>15</sup>

The same episode is narrated with greater detail in the *Assisi Compilation*, which also contains the meaningful words of Francis’ prayer: *Domine, tibi recomendo familiam quam dedisti michi* (“Lord I give back to you the family You gave me”):

“Noticing and hearing at one time that some brothers were giving a bad example in religion and that the brothers were turning aside from the highest summit of their profession, moved inwardly with sorrow of heart, one time he said to the Lord in prayer: ‘Lord I give back to you the family You gave me.’

And the Lord said to him: ‘Tell me, why are you so upset when one of the brothers leaves religion and when others do not walk the way I showed you? Also tell me: Who planted the religion of the brothers? Who makes a man convert and to do penance in it? Who gives the strength to persevere in it? Is it not I?’

And it was said to him in spirit: ‘I did not choose you as a learned or eloquent man to be over my family, but I chose you, a simple man, so that you and the others may know that I will watch over my flock. But I have planted you as a sign to them, so that the works that I work in you they should see in you, emulate, and do them. Those who walk in my way have me and will have me more abundantly. Those who refuse to walk in my way, that which they seem to have will be taken away from them. Therefore, I tell you, do not be so sad; do what you do, work as you work, for I have planted the religion of the brothers in everlasting love. Know that I love it so much that if any brother, returning to his vomit, dies outside religion I will replace him with another in religion who will have his crown in his place, and supposing that he has not been born, I will have him born. And so that you know that I love the life and religion of the brothers, suppose that in the whole life and religion of the brothers only three brothers remained: I would never abandon it.’

These words greatly comforted the mind of

blessed Francis, for he was immensely saddened when he heard anything about bad example regarding the brothers.”<sup>16</sup>

The text shows how Francis’ sorrow, although great, would turn into consolation at the thought that it was the Lord who had established the Order upon the foundation of Gospel perfection. In Francis’ prayer we can find a clear reference to the same sentiments of Christ upon the cross. Christ, at the same moment, asks the Father why He had abandoned Him, but also entrusts his spirit to the Father at the point of death. The sense of abandonment into the hands of Christ is the sign of the great faith and trust of Saint Francis, and gives meaning to his inner anguish at feeling abandoned and misunderstood by at least a portion of the fraternity, particularly by the learned brothers and the prelates.

We shall now examine why Francis was so troubled during the last years of his life regarding the role of the ministers or prelates, and to what extent were these sentiments interpreted and explained by the medieval biographers who were acting in a precise historical moment of crisis within the Order. This particular aspect will be examined by taking into account the documentary material coming from the pen of brother Leo and the first brothers, and especially its subsequent development and interpretation on the part of the Zelanti and Spirituals on the eve of the poverty controversy at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the figure of Francis began to emerge as that of a prophet of a new age who, like the prophets of old, was misunderstood and persecuted by his own companions.

## NOTES

1 The full account is given by JORDAN OF GIANO in his *Chronicle*, 11-14. Cfr. *XIII<sup>th</sup> Century Chronicles*, Translated from the Latin by PLACID HERMANN, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, Illinois 1961, 26-30. The two vicars entrusted by Francis with the government of the Order during his absence were brother Matteo da Narni and brother Gregorio da Napoli. The latter became also minister of France but ended up condemned with brother Elias and his party in 1239.

2 AC 11 [FAED II, 125]. Latin text in: *Compilatio Assisiensis* 11, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 1483-1484: “Inter fratres suos beatus Franciscus humilis esse voluit et, [ad] conservandam maiorem humilitatem, paucis annis post conversionem suam in quodam capitulo apud Sanctam Mariam de Portiuncula resignavit officium prelationis coram omnibus fratribus dicens: ‘Amodo sum mortuus vobis; sed ecce frater Petrus Cathanii, cui ego et vos

omnes obediamus.’ Tunc fratres omnes ceperunt alta voce plorare et fortiter lacrimari. Et inclinans se beatus Franciscus coram fratre Petro promisit obedientiam et reverentiam; et exinde *usque ad mortem* (cfr. Phip 2,8) suam permansit subditus, quasi unus de aliis fratribus.”

3 2C 143 [FAED II, 340]. Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, 570-571: “Ad servandam humilitatis sanctae virtutem, paucis annis elapsis post suam conversionem, in quodam capitulo, coram omnibus fratribus de religione praelationis officium resignavit, dicens: ‘Amodo sum mortuus vobis. Sed ecce,’ inquit, ‘frater Petrus Cathanii, cui ego et vos omnes obediamus.’ Et inclinans se protinus coram ipso, obedientiam et reverentiam promisit eidem. Flebant igitur fratres, et altos extorquebat gemitus dolor, cum videbant se tanto patre quodammodo orphanos fieri. Surgens beatus Franciscus, iunctis manibus et oculis in caelum erectis, dixit: ‘Domine, tibi recommendo familiam, quam mihi hactenus commisisti. Et nunc propter infirmitates quas tu nosti, dulcissime Domine, curam eius habere non valens, ipsam recommendo ministris. Teneantur in die iudicii coram te, Domine, reddere rationem, si aliquis frater eorum vel negligentia, vel exemplo, seu etiam aspera correctione perierit.’ Permansit exinde subditus usque ad mortem, humiliter agens quam aliquis aliorum.” Parallel text in AC 39 [FAED II, 142-143].

4 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Earlier Rule* IV,6 [FAED I, 66-67].

5 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Admonition* 3 [FAED I, 130].

6 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Admonition* 4 [FAED I, 130]: “Let those who are placed over others boast about that position as much as they would if they were assigned the duty of washing the feet of the brothers. And if they are more upset at having their place over others taken away from them than at losing their position at their feet, the more they store up a *money bag* (Jn 12:8) to the peril of their soul.”

7 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Letter to the Entire Order* 39 [FAED I, 119]. The English translation is “ignorant and stupid”, but the Latin original *ignorans sum et idiota* indicates ignorance as a fruit of simplicity and the lack of learning, more than the modern sense of the adjective “stupid”. Latin original expression in FRANCESCO D’ASSISI, *Scritti*, Edizione critica a cura di C. PAOLAZZI, Frati Editori di Quaracchi, Grottaferrata 2009, 218.

8 FRANCIS OF ASSISI, *Admonition* 19 [FAED I, 135].

9 THOMAS OF CELANO, *Memoriale in desiderio animae* 188 [FAED II, 366-367]. Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, 607: “Interrogatus a quodam fratre semel cur, fratres omnes sic a sua cura reiectos, alienis eos tradiderat minibus, quasi ad eum nullatenus pertinerent, respondit: ‘Fili, fratres diligo sicut possum; sed si mea sequerentur vestigia (cfr. 1Pet 2,21), illos utique plus amarem, nec me illis redderem alienum. Nam sunt quidam de numero praelatorum, qui eos ad alia trahunt, antiquorum eis proponens exempla, et parum mea monita reputantes. Sed quid agant, in fine videbitur.’ – Et paulo post, cum infirmitate nimia gravaretur, *in vehementia spiritus* (cfr. Ps 47,8) in lectulo se direxit: ‘Qui sunt isti,’ ait, ‘qui religionem meam et fratrum *de meis manibus rapuerunt?* (cfr. Ioa 10,28) Si ad generale capitulum venero, tunc eis ostendam qualem habeam voluntatem.” The same episode is found in AC 44 [FAED II, 145-146].

10 AC 18 [FAED II, 132-133]: “When blessed Francis was at the general chapter called the Chapter of Mats, held at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula, there were five thousand brothers present. Many wise and learned brothers told the Lord Cardinal, who later became Pope Gregory, who was present at the chapter, that he should persuade blessed Francis to follow the advice of those same wise brothers and allow himself to be guided by them for the time being. They cited the *Rule* of blessed Benedict, of blessed Augustine, and of blessed Bernard, which teach how to live in such order in such a

way. Then blessed Francis, on hearing the cardinal’s advice about this, took him by the hand and led him to the brothers assembled in chapter, and spoke to the brothers in this way: ‘My brothers! My brothers! God has called me by the way of simplicity and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want you to mention to me any *Rule*, whether of Saint Augustine, or of Saint Bernard, or of Saint Benedict. And the Lord told me what He wanted: He wanted me to be a new fool in the world. God did not wish to lead us by any other than this knowledge, but God will confound you by your knowledge and wisdom. But I trust in the Lord’s police that through them He will punish you, and you will return to your state, to your blame, like it or not.’ The cardinal was shocked, and said nothing, and all the brothers were afraid.”

11 Rosalind B. Brooke, *Early Franciscan Government. Elias to Bonaventure*, Cambridge University Press 1959, Paperback edition 2004, 83-105.

12 Certain expressions in the *Testament* betray this vehemence in Francis’ words. Examples include: *Precipio firmiter per obedientiam; firmiter volo obedire; omnes fratres teneantur ita obedire; custos firmiter teneatur; generalis minister et omnes alii ministri et custodes per obedientiam teneantur.*

13 2C 144 [FAED II, 340]. Parallel text in AC 40 [FAED II, 143].

14 2C 145 [FAED II, 340-341]. Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, 572: “Videns autem quosdam praelationibus inhiare, quos praeter alia vel sola reddebat indignos ambitio praesidendi, eos non esse fratres Minores dicebat, sed *vocationis qua vocati erant* (cfr. Eph 4,1) oblitus, a *gloria excidisse* (cfr. Gal 5,4). Nonnullos vero miseros agere ferentes ab officiis amoveri, quippe cum onus non quaererent sed honorem, multis sermonibus confutabat. Dixit autem quandoque socio suo: ‘Non mihi videor frater Minor, nisi fuero in statu quem tibi descripsero.’ Et ait: ‘Ecce, praelatus existens fratrum, vado ad capitulum, praedico, commoneo fratres, et in fine dicitur contra me: «Non convenit nobis illitteratus et contemptibilis, ideo *volumus te regnare super nos* (cfr. Luc 19,14), quia elinguis es, *simplex et idiota*» (cfr. Act 4,13). Tandem eicior cum opprobrio, vilipensus ab omnibus. Dico tibi, nisi eodem *vultu*, eadem mentis *laetitia* (cfr. Ps 15,10), eodem sanctitatis proposito haec verba audiero, frater Minor nequaquam sum.’ – Et addebat: ‘In praelatione casus, in laude praecipitium, in humilitate subditi animae lucrum est. Cur ego periculis plus quam lucris attendimus, cum tempus ad lucrandum ceperimus?’”

15 2C 158 [FAED II, 349]. Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, 153-154: “Consolabatur autem plurimum in *visitationibus Dei* (cfr. 1Pet 5,6), quibus reddebatur securus religionis suae fundamenta semper inconcussa manere. Cui etiam promittebatur in pereuntium numero indubitata substitutio electorum. Cum enim turbaretur malis exemplis et se orationi semel conferret turbatum, hanc invectivam reportavit a Domino: ‘Cur tu, hominucio, conturbaris? An ego te super religionem meam sic pastorem constitui, ut me principalem nescias esse patronum? Hominem simplicem ad hoc te constitui, ut quae in te fecero, caeteris imitanda, sequantur qui sequi voluerint. *Ego vocavi, servabo et pascam* (cfr. Is 48,15; Apoc 10,3), et in aliorum reparandum excidium alios subrogabo, ita ut si *natus non fuerit* (cfr. Mat 26,24), faciam ipsum nasci. Non ergo turberis, sed *tuam operare salutem* (cfr. Phil 2,12), quoniam etsi ad numerum trium religio venerit, inconcussa semper meo munere permanebit.’ Ex tunc maximam imperfectorum turbam unius sancti virtute superari dicebat, quia radio lucis unius innumerae tenebrae delitescent.”

16 AC 112 [FAED II, 219]. Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, 1667-1668: “Unde quondam tempore, considerans et audiens quod aliqui fratrum darent malum exemplum in Religione, et etiam quod fratres declinarent a summo apice professionis suae, tactus dolore cordis intrinsecus, quadam vice in oratione dixit ad Dominum: ‘Domine, tibi recommendo familiam quam dedisti michi.’”



# THE II SERMON OF HOLY THURSDAY BY SAINT BONAVENTURE

Pietro MARANESI OFMCAP, *La congruità del dono dell'Eucaristia secondo la trilogia eucaristica di Bonaventura da Bagnoregio, in Italia Franciscana. Rivista della Conferenza dei Ministri Provinciali dei Frati Minori Cappuccini*, Anno LXXXI, No. 1 (gennaio-marzo 2006) 43-72.

For Bonaventure, as well as for all the other medieval authors, the sacrament of the Eucharist occupies abundant space in the theological elaboration of the Christian mystery. It is amply clear that we cannot follow all the aspects of this material, except for some details of the Eucharistic theology. Among other possibilities it seems to be interesting to study our doctor not regarding questions of the static-metaphysical type of the mystery, such as transubstantiation and the relationship between accidents and sacramental form, but on a dynamic aspect, namely on the congruity of the gift of the Eucharist, and particularly on why the real presence of Christ in the sacrament of the altar is opportune and necessary. Therefore we would like to ask the Franciscan doctor to help us to understand not only the “essence” of the mystery; rather we would like to understand the essence of this gift, namely its necessity and opportunity for our life.

The texts upon which the theme of congruity returns in an explicit way coincide with the two most important theological works of Bonaventure, namely Book IV of the *Commentary on the Sentences*,<sup>1</sup> and the *Breviloquium*.<sup>2</sup> To these two fundamental texts we add other three texts, which are to be read in association with the two preceding ones. With regards to the first text, namely that of the *Sentences*, we should read first of all the *Sermo Feria quinta In Coena Domini*,<sup>3</sup> which is difficult to date, and which clearly depends upon the *Commentary on the Sentences* and also upon a text from the *Commentary on St. Luke*,<sup>4</sup> which is a work composed in the university and is linked with the *Sentence Commentary* more for chronological reasons than for its contents. Side by side with the *Breviloquium* we place the theological sermon *De*

*corpore Christi*,<sup>5</sup> in which Bonaventure comments once again upon the theological solutions of that text, and re-reads them within a different literary genre.

In all this theological material we face a way of procedure which is not repetitive, but which is characterised by a diachronic progress in the utilisation and application of a terminology which is organised and is fixed in a Eucharistic trilogy concerning the “sacrifice of oblation,” the “sacrament of communion” and “the viaticum of refreshment.”<sup>6</sup> The two textual blocks, the one depending on the *Commentary of the Sentences* and those linked with the *Breviloquium*, to my way of seeing things permit us to confront ourselves with a complex and diversified answer regarding the problem of “congruity” of the Eucharistic sacrament, as well as with a theological method which uses diverse and complementary registers in facing a unique theme. In both ambits we shall make use of some useful aids in order to reaffirm our sense of awe in front of the Eucharistic mystery and to obtain the confirmation of a legitimate methodological analysis of different forms in understanding this Christian truth.

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## *The Commentary on the Sentences*

The work in which Bonaventure treats of the theme of the Eucharist in the most exhaustive and systematic manner is certainly the *Commentary on the Sentences*, where the young student of theology affronts the theme of the seven sacraments in the fourth book (questions 1-42) and then deals with diverse problematic themes of Christian

eschatology (questions 43-50). The Eucharist constitutes one of the most accurately and widely developed sacraments. Here we briefly recall the questions dedicated to the individual sacraments: 2-6, baptism; 7, confirmation; 8-13, the Eucharist; 14-22, penitence; 23, extreme unction; 24-25, orders; 26-42 marriage. Our sacrament is therefore preceded for extent of arguments treated only by penitence and marriage, two sacraments that show more complexity and canonical connotations, and that necessitate an accurate study.

The analysis in the six questions dedicated to the Eucharist proceeds through a logic of development that departs from two general considerations on the sacrament proposed in question 8, where Bonaventure studies the antecedent elements to the sacrament such as the figures found in the Old Testament, which announced the sacrament, the institution of the sacrament, and then its essential elements constituted by the words and matter. In question 9 Bonaventure studies the sacrament on the part of the one who receives it, and speaks about the material fact of *manducatio*. In questions 10 and 11 he transfers his attention first to the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine and then on the way in which this happens, namely “transubstantiation.” In question 12 the central theme of the Eucharistic species of bread and wine is examined, in order to establish first and foremost their nature and to clarify the problem of the breaking of bread and lastly to study in a profound manner the sacramental efficacy on those who receive the Eucharist. In the past question, number 13, Bonaventure occupies himself with two subjects who are committed in different ways in the celebration of the Eucharist: firstly he who celebrates the sacrament and then he who receives it. Bonaventure studies and specifies the power of the first and the necessary spiritual conditions of the second in order to receive it worthily.

Bonaventure deals with the “congruity” of the Eucharist in the first question of distinction 10, in conjunction with the real presence of Christ in the sacrament, where the young theologian presents the question *utrum Christus sit in Sacramento altaris secundum veritatem (whether Christ is found according to truth in the Sacrament of the altar)*.<sup>7</sup> The fundamental objective of the question is that of confrontation in order to resist the heretical opinion according to which the presence of Christ in the Eucharist is only evident *in signo*

(symbolically) and not *in veritate* (truthfully).<sup>8</sup> Such a hypothesis, in fact, is not only in opposition to the fullness of faith,<sup>9</sup> but above all to the dignity of the sacrament. It is exactly on this last aspect that the doctor centres his answer. To deny the real presence means to reject to recognise the dignity of the sacrament since this would mean losing the power, the wisdom and the divine goodness that God manifests precisely in the sacrament of the Eucharist: His *power* in the unique manner of his working, His *wisdom* in the congruity of the sacrament and His *goodness* in the usefulness of the Eucharist. The most important sphere which is treated in a more profound manner among the three is that of divine wisdom, which is manifested in the congruity of the Eucharist as the real presence of Christ. Whereas in the other two moments the progress is in a certain way summary and synthetic, in this Bonaventure applies a tight demonstrative process of the syllogistic kind, organised on a triple thematic division linked to the mystery of the Church. It is on this aspect that we would like to concentrate our attention, in such a way as to consider it as the resolving centre of the theological proposal of Bonaventure.

The argument upon whose basis Bonaventure constructs the demonstration of the congruity of the Eucharist is found in the connection of this sacrament with the mystery of the Church as body of Christ. We now read the text which opens and organises the demonstration of a triple motivation of Eucharistic congruity.

“Christ our Lord acquired a numerous people to the Lord God, and He united them all in his mystical body. In this body, which is the Church, there are many and diverse persons, there are those who are pilgrims and infirm, there are those who are also surrounded by sin every day. Since there are many in the one body, it is necessary that they be bound together; since they are pilgrims, they need nourishment; since they are prone to sin every day, they need an offering of sacrifice; these things come about not only inwardly through the virtue of grace, but also outwardly through the grace of the sacrament.”<sup>10</sup>

The argumentation, therefore, departs from the nature of the body of Christ assigned to the Church whose members need three kinds of help: the need for connection/communion, the need for nourishment, and the need for oblation. These needs are directly connected with the nature of the members who are many, who are on a pilgrimage



or journey, and who are sinners. We note therefore that Bonaventure organises his triple demonstration of the congruity of the Eucharist departing from ecclesiology and theological anthropology. Since it is called to be the body of Christ, the Church is marked by the triple necessity to which the triple efficacy of the gift of the Eucharist corresponds. Each member of the Church, although tending towards the unity of the mystical Body, is weighed down by a triple evil: by the division of being one among many, by the fatigue of having to make continual progress, and by sin in which one falls on a daily basis. This opposition to the calling to become one body in Christ can be overcome according to Bonaventure by the triple nature of the Eucharist, inasmuch as the body and blood of Christ unite the members, offer a true respite and are an efficacious oblation for sins.

Having underlined these points on the general presentation that Bonaventure makes regarding the congruity of the Eucharist, we now look at the texts, in order to analyse attentively the three functions of the Eucharist.

(1) “The congruity of the Eucharist consists in the fact that it has one external connection just as it has one internal connection.

(a) But it has to be one where there are many members and at similarly while there are many members in various places, it should be so, so that it would be fitting in many places.

(b) But no one could be so except God, or the One who is united with the Divinity, but God is interiority, whereas Divinity is united with the body of Christ.

(c) Therefore it is fitting that the body of Christ is externally administered in the Sacrament, since it is one and since all the faithful are united to eat of the one body.

(2) It was fitting that the external effects of nourishment are present in the sacrament,

(a) but nourishment for the soul cannot exist without God, or in union with God

(b) and this is the true body of Christ

(c) and therefore it is fitting that the body of Christ in this sacrament should be true.

(3) It was fitting that (the sacrament) should have the external effect of oblation,

(a) but the Lord offered one single oblation so that all the other offerings would be rendered useless:

(b) therefore He should not remake what He has destroyed, and therefore He should give to

us the same reality that He offered and not another one.

(c) Therefore, just as the body of Christ was truly offered on the cross, so it is truly sacrificed on the altar.”

The first element which we note is the method used by the Franciscan doctor in order to propose the congruity of the institution of the Eucharist. If we take a closer look, in the three texts of Bonaventure we notice a double argumentative movement. The first one is of the axiomatic (self-evident) type, where the doctor places three absolute affirmations that regard a triple necessity in Christian life, deducted from one conclusion: the situation of multiplicity, the presence of an instrument which is connective, which restores, which is an oblation and reconciliation, and which is capable to overcome these kinds of poverty. Therefore, at the basis of the theological process one places the conclusion of a triple situation of need which asks for an axiomatic way (*congruum fuit*), a triple presence which is capable of responding to the three essential necessities. On this basis, deducted according to an existential way, the second movement is developed, which is characterised by a theological process of the argumentative type. In the three texts dedicated to the function of union, nourishment and oblation, Bonaventure applies a method of the syllogistic type. The necessity-congruity of having an instrument which truly unites, nourishes and reconciles leads to the logical-theological necessity that in the Eucharist the body and blood of Christ is truly present as the unique and indispensable condition so that it can become a triple instrument given to man in order to efficaciously win over his triple poverty.

Regarding the contents of the three passages we here simply underline some points. First of all, it seems to me to be interesting to note the constant repetition that Bonaventure makes of the value of the “external” element of the Eucharist: it was fitting that the different members would be externally connected, that they would be externally nourished and that they would receive an external offering for the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, the visible element of the Eucharist is the real presence of Christ that has to be shown as being fitting to the itinerant state of the members: in its exteriority, visibility, materiality, reside the centre of the mystery and its precious nature, since the external element does not point out a reality

which is outside itself, it is not only a “sign” but it is the “real” presence of the meaning contained in the sign.

In the three arguments favouring the absolute nature of the Eucharist in the life of the Christian, Bonaventure makes use of three parallel themes in order to arrive at the same conclusion of the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. The first one touches upon the connective role assigned to the material act of eating of the same bread: the multiplicity of the members present in many places needs to be united in a visible way by means of a reality which is truly united to Him who, although being present in different places, is one in all. In the second passage Bonaventure underlines the absolute particular nature of the food that really and uniquely can nourish the hunger of the human soul: it is only God or something united to God that can be described as the true nourishment for man, and this nature is proper to the Eucharist. The last argument, which is directed to show the nature of oblation of the Eucharist should not only signify, but should newly realise the gift of the body and blood of Christ on the cross.

The vocation of the Church to be the mystical body of Christ requests the gift of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. In fact, the different kinds of poverty of the members, who are divided among themselves because of their great number, who are burdened with the tiredness of sin, ask for a unique presence which would permit the realisation of unity through an ability to win over spiritual tiredness and sin.

The particular nature of Bonaventure’s solution regarding the fittingness of the gift of the Eucharist receives more light if one confronts it briefly with a text of Thomas Aquinas which is contemporary and parallel to that of Bonaventure. In his *Commentary on the Sentences* the Dominican doctor faces the question regarding the congruity of the real presence by dealing with the question: *Utrum in sacramento altaris contineatur verum corpus Christi* (Whether the true body of Christ is contained in the sacrament of the altar).<sup>11</sup> The answer given by Thomas is not developed as harmoniously as that of Bonaventure. In practice in the text of Thomas there is only one argument, resulting from the necessity of perfect union between Christ and the faithful. This union should not only be a union of participation but also an essential union in order to realise a perfect union between body and members. At the centre,

therefore, there is the mystical union aspect between Christ and the different members, and this constitutes the ecclesial element. However it does not seem to have the same strategic role underlined by Bonaventure, whose reasoning departs from the fact that he places its foundation in the will of Christ to create a mystical body realised through the triple influence of the Eucharist. Furthermore, in Thomas such a function of unity is not linked to other arguments which constitute its organic development. In fact, the Dominican doctor adds other three arguments in order to defend the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine, which are however just outlined. He relates them to the three theological virtues, namely to charity, hope and faith: charity is seen in relation to Christ who manifests His great love for all mankind in the gift of the Eucharist; whereas the other two virtues are placed in relationship with the fact that the Eucharist increases and develops in those who receive it the gift of hope and the merits of faith. When we read the text of Thomas Aquinas we get the impression that there is a missing integration between the various parts, where only one is developed in a complete manner through a demonstrative process of the syllogistic kind, whereas the other two are simply hinted at. In particular, if we confront the texts with those of Bonaventure, we find that in Thomas the unitary and orderly relationship between ecclesiology-anthropology and the mystery of the Eucharist is missing.

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## *The II Sermon of Holy Thursday and the Commentary on Luke*

In the second Sermon among the five dedicated to the *Coena Domini* of Holy Thursday,<sup>12</sup> Bonaventure develops once again, in a very clear way, the general structure and the contents that he makes use of in the text of the *Sentences*, and in this way establishes a precise terminology of the Eucharistic trilogy. We shall first of all underline the convergences between the two texts, which are an evident sign of a clear dependence of the Sermon upon the Eucharistic question of the *Sentences*. In the Sermon, in fact, not only do we see the return of the same triple consideration of the Eucharist according to the power, wisdom and benevolence of God present in the *Commentary*, but also the internal logic and the terminology that



uphold and organise the three moments of that text. If we confront the two texts in a systematic way we notice the following diagram:

*Commentary on the Sentences:*

- *Divine power* of God is revealed over all other powers, on the imaginative, intellective and operative levels.

- *Divine wisdom* was necessary so that all the members would have one external connection, one external nourishment, and one external oblation.

- *Divine goodness* was necessary so that the merit of faith increases, so that the trust of hope is uplifted, and so that the devotion of charity is inflamed.

*Sermon II on Holy Thursday:*

- *Divine power* is above all human power on the sensitive, imaginary, intellective and operative levels.

- *Divine wisdom* was fitting so that the members would have a sign of remembrance, a bond of unity, nourishment for the journey, and a sacrifice for remedy.

- *Divine goodness* was necessary for good works, so that the rationality of faith be increased, the uplifting hope would tend towards our comfort, and the inflaming love would increase our desire.

The confrontation of these texts shows without any shadow of doubt the link of continuity and progress between both texts. However, in their clear relationship it is possible to observe in the Sermon a process of specification regarding terminology that Bonaventure accomplishes inside the theme of the congruity of the Eucharist and its link with divine wisdom. In the other two ambits, namely those of power and goodness, Bonaventure maintains the terminology of the *Sentences* unchanged, marked as it is by an equal series of substantives, with the unique marginal exception regarding the sphere of divine power, where in the Sermon the sensitive faculty is added to the three preceding faculties. The only ambit in which the terminology is radically renewed regards the theme of divine wisdom. Not only does Bonaventure insert a new term in the series of motivations regarding the congruity of the Eucharist as a *signum rememorativum* (a sign of remembrance), but he goes beyond the kind of ambiguity of terminology of the *Sentences*, where the trilogy is connected to divine wisdom which operates in the Eucharist and which in the *Sentences* used terms which are discontinuous

among themselves in the formulation: “one external connection, one external nourishment, and one external oblation.” In the text of the Sermon this terminological disharmony is prevailed by inserting for the three substantive ambits, which are homogenous and symmetrical among them, “a bond of unity, nourishment for the journey, and a sacrifice for remedy.” The choice of the three terms is witness to a development in which Bonaventure, although repeating in a wholesome manner the structure of the *Sentences*, tries to go beyond what the text presents in the terminology which is not wholly mature and definite.

On the level of contents the Sermon confirms the relationship between man’s various faculties, as complementary ambits of human poverty, and the congruous theological necessity of the gift of the Eucharist in order to go beyond these deficiencies and heal these divisions:

“Such is the admiration for this marvellous Sacrament, which God instituted, so that the members would have a sign of remembrance of the passion of the Lord since their memory would otherwise be liable to fail them; thus we find in chapter eleven of the first Letter to the Corinthians: ‘Do this in memory of me’ (1Cor 11:24).

As a nourishment for the journey it gives strength to the weakness and failings of human nature; that is why John, chapter six, states: ‘If you do not eat the body’ (Jn 6:54).

As a bond of unity it expresses human affection because of the diversity of the will; that is why chapter ten of the first Letter of the Corinthians states: ‘Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body’ (1Cor 10:17).

As a sacrifice for remedy of the human transgressions because of the fact that we are prone to guilt we read in chapter nine of the Letter to the Hebrews: ‘If therefore the blood of lambs, etc., how much more does the blood of Christ’ (Heb 9:13).”

Therefore the congruity of the Eucharist in the Sermon is manifested in four ambits which are counter-distinct by a series of substantives accompanied by an equal number of adjectives which specify its nature. The operation effected by our author does not only respond to a need of the stylistic type, where Bonaventure presents his linguistic abilities to relate terms which are phonetically assonant and which favour the rhythm of the text, but which also need clarity and thematic precision through the choice and utilisation of

terms capable of illustrating more efficaciously the positive functions of the Eucharistic mystery. Thus in the Sermon Bonaventure underlines the contents of three texts from the *Sentences* by using a new and more organic terminology.

The fact that this series of terms proposed in the Sermon is more efficacious from the three proposed in the *Sentences* in synthesising and expressing the triple positive function of the Eucharist on the faculties of man, is attested also by another text present in the *Commentary on Luke*, where Bonaventure, commenting the narrative of Luke regarding the last supper, makes use of the same four Eucharistic terms in order to explain the invitation of Jesus: "Do this in memory of me." The power of such a memory resides in the truth and reality of the sacrament that is celebrated, in the fact, that is a "living and true memorial." Such a unique and absolute nature of the Eucharist for Bonaventure is expressed in four ambits that are ordered thus:

"This is the living and true memorial which is not simply a sign of true remembrance but also of a demonstrative remembrance; therefore it is said: 'This is my body' (Lk 22:19); since this is the sacrament that is significant and that sanctifies, of which we read in the third chapter of the first Letter to Timothy: 'It has been manifested how great is the Sacrament of piety, that has been revealed in the flesh, has been justified in the spirit' (1Tim 3:16). This is also the nourishment that sustains us and comforts us during the journey, as we read in the sixth chapter of John: 'Whoever eats of me will also draw life from me. This is the bread that comes down from heaven; it is not like the bread your fathers ate when they ate the manna and then died. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever' (Jn 6:58.59). This is the acceptable and peaceable sacrifice, according to what we read in the second chapter of the first Letter of Peter: 'A holy priesthood to offer the spiritual sacrifices made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1Pt 2:5); and therefore it is necessary that this sacrament would contain the true body of Christ."<sup>13</sup>

It is difficult to establish the chronological dependence between this text and the two preceding ones. We know for certain that the *Commentary on Luke's Gospel* was composed during the same period of theological formation in which Bonaventure was training in the commentary not only of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, but also of some texts of the Bible. It is therefore possible

to think of a certain chronological closeness between the two passages. In the same time we are struck with the terminological concordance between this series and the one we have seen in the Sermon, which is a text that is difficult to date with precision. The terminological closeness between the two series of four terms, however, should not lead us astray. In fact we notice a thematic and terminological difference between the two texts that renders the passage of the *Commentary on Luke* in a certain way autonomous and parallel to the thematic line of thought that links the text of the *Sentences* with that of the Sermon. In the biblical commentary, in fact, the ecclesiological element of the Eucharist which dominates in the *Sentences* is missing, and in particular the function of "external connection" of the members, which is a role assigned to the Eucharist also in the Sermon, is also absent. The Sermon speaks about the *vinculum unitivum*, specifying it through the reference to the first Letter to the Corinthians with its explicit ecclesiological content: "As there is one bread, although we are many, we are one body" (1Cor 10:17). In the *Commentary on Luke* the term is substituted by the *Sacramentum significativum et sanctificativum*, interpreted by another text of Paul, namely by the first Letter to Timothy, and countersigned by the sanctifying function of the sacred sign: "It has been manifested how great is the Sacrament of piety, that has been revealed in the flesh, has been justified in the spirit" (1Tim 3:16). The same is valid for the other three terms, in which the motivation directed to the situation of man in his poverty is lost. The *Commentary on Luke* re-proposes a certain terminology which we meet in the Sermon without, however, referring to the context, where the Eucharist is seen in its triple function in favour of man, in its being a "bond" in order to win over division, in its being a "nourishment for the journey" (*viaticum*) to restore man from the weariness of the journey, and in its being a "sacrifice" in order to become an offering for the sin of mankind.

This thematic diversification, in the general continuity of the terminology, seems to me to evidence a certain discontinuity between this text of the *Commentary on Luke* and the line of thought that we have seen in the two preceding texts.

The individuation of a line of thematic and terminological progress between the two first texts centred upon the theme of the congruity of the Eucharist and the partial discontinuity of the



third text, will be confirmed by the second group of texts, where we shall discover once again both a theological text centred upon the congruity (*Breviloquium*) as well as a homiletic text (*Sermo de Corpore Domini*), in which Bonaventure seems to re-propose what he has elaborated in the preceding texts, giving them a definite thematic and terminological configuration..

## NOTES

- 1 Cf. *IV Sent.*, d. 10, p. 1, au, q. 1 (*Opera Omnia* IV, 216-218).
- 2 Cf. *Brev.*, VI,9 (*Opera Omnia* V, 273a-274a).
- 3 *Feria quinta in Coena Domini*, Sermo II (*Opera Omnia* IX, 252).
- 4 *Commentarius in Evangelium S. Lucae*, c. XXII, n. 27 (*Opera Omnia* VII, 547).
- 5 *Sermo de sanctissimo corpore Christi* (*Opera Omnia* V, 533-566).

6 Cf. M.T. MAIO, *La Eucaristía: sacrificio, sacramento y vía según San Buenaventura*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 101 (2001) 433-494; *Sacramento de la Eucaristía: Sacrificio de oblación según San Buenaventura*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 102 (2002) 17-71; *L'Eucaristía segno sacramentale ed efficace dell'unità della Chiesa*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 105 (2005) 3-20.

7 *IV Sent.* d. 10, a.u., q. 1 (*Opera Omnia* IV, 216-218).

8 Regarding the discussion on the Eucharist before Bonaventure, cf. Pietro MARANESI, *Questioni teologiche e pastorali sull'Eucaristia nel Lateranense IV*, in *Negotium fidei. Miscellanea di studi a Mariano D'Alatri in occasione del suo 80° compleanno*, a cura di P. Maranesi, Bibliotheca Seraphico-capuccina 67, Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, Roma 2002, 267-306.

9 "But this is a most abominable error and it goes against the piety of faith, since one should recognise how great is God's benefit towards him and should give Him thanks, since in His own flesh and proper nature He willed to be ours" (*IV Sent.*, d. 10, a.u., q. 1, in *Opera Omnia* IV, 217b).

10 *IV Sent.*, d. 10, a.u., q. 1, ad 2 (*Opera Omnia* IV, 218a).

11 Cf. THOMAS AQUINAS, *IV Sent.*, d. 10, q. 1, a. 1.

12 Cf. *Feria quinta in coena Domini* (*Opera Omnia* IX, 247-259). Our text is found in pages 250-253.

13 *Commentarius in Evangelium Lucae*, XXII, 27 (*Opera Omnia* VII, 547a).



Fr. Noel Muscat ofm is presenting a second publication as an e-book for Ipad, after "The Chronicle of the XXIV Ministers General of the Order of Friars Minor."

"In Defence of the Portiuncula Indulgence" is an English translation of the Latin original medieval sources for the Portiuncula Indulgence, which Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) requested from Pope Honorius III in 1216 for the

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chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, known as the Portiuncula, close to Assisi. The most important source among these documents is the "Tractatus de Indulgentia Portiunculae" by Brother Francis Bartholi of Assisi, composed in 1334-1335 in defence of the Indulgence against its detractors. Hence the title "In Defence of the Portiuncula Indulgence".

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# EREMO DELLE CARCERI

Noel Muscat ofm

The Eremo delle Carceri is one of the first Franciscan hermitages. It is hidden in the midst of thick woods of oaks and chestnut trees in a deep gorge on Mount Subasio, at about 800 metres above sea level. The hermitage is one of the most hallowed Franciscan sites and is an ideal place for peace and prayer, as it was during the time of Saint Francis who spent long periods of retreat on this mountain together with his first companions.

The hermitage, however, is much older than the 13<sup>th</sup> century. During the first centuries Mount Subasio was popular among hermits as a place for retreat. In Umbria we have various examples of these mountain retreats going back to Byzantine times, particularly Monteluco, above Spoleto, where Syrian hermits came to dwell after they escaped from the east during the iconoclastic crisis of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The nucleus of the Eremo delle Carceri was the tiny chapel called *Sancta Maria carcerum* or *Sancta Maria ad carceres*. The name itself indicates a prison or cell, that is, a place for retreat and solitude cut off from the world. Francis discovered this place, which during the 13<sup>th</sup> century lay abandoned, and chose it as an ideal place for solitude for him and the first companions.

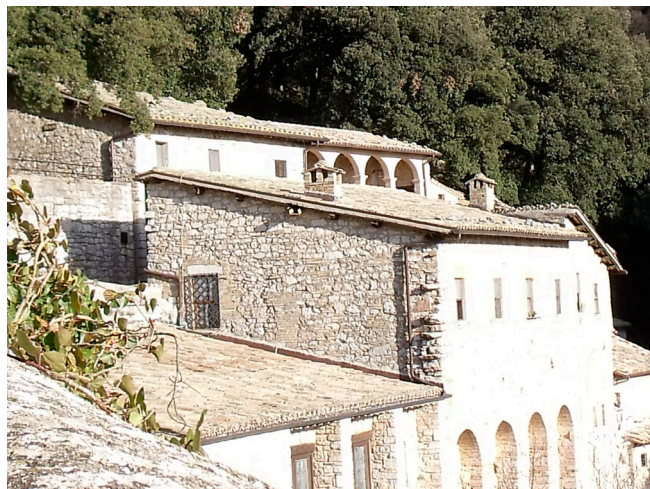
The geographical position of the hermitage is interesting to note. The hermitage is found above Assisi, at a leisurely walking distance of not more than one hour going out of Porta Cappuccini. This position agrees with the practice of the early friars to make use of remote mountain hermitages in order to retreat in solitude and prayer at night, but at the same time in such a way that during the day they could go to the nearby towns to preach and beg alms and to visit the lepers in their hospices. In order to do so they had to reside in hermitages that were distant from the hustle and bustle of town life, but at the same time that were within fairly easy

walking distance. Le Carceri is a typical example of such Franciscan hermitages.

After the death of Saint Francis, Le Carceri continued to function as a preferred place for quiet and meditation of the friars. During the early years of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, during the poverty controversy between Pope John XXII and the Minister General Michele da Cesena, and especially after the condemnation of the Spirituals in 1317, the more radical faction of these friars, known as Fraticelli, escaped from papal control and took refuge in remote mountain hermitages in Umbria, Marche, Basilicata and Sicily. The Assisi Fraticelli could stay in relative peace on Le Carceri, since they were protected by the Assisi Commune. It was in 1334 that Giovanni da Valle and Gentile da Spoleto, who were linked with the Fraticelli of Le Carceri, began a more orthodox reform of the Franciscan Order, particularly when the Minister General Gerard Eudes drove away the Fraticelli from the hermitage in 1340.

The first attempt at reform of the Order of Minors in Italy began when brother Giovanni da Valle da Foligno received permission from the General Minister Gerard Eudes to follow the literal observance of the Rule in the friary of Brogliano, a hermitage between Foligno and Camerino. In this region the influence of the Fraticelli was predominant. Angelo Clareno had contacts in this area, and the same family dei Trinci, from which Paoluccio dei Trinci, the initiator of the Franciscan Observance, would be descended, had contacts and sympathies with the Fraticelli. Pope Clement VI gave Gentile da Spoleto, who became successor to Giovanni da Valle in 1350, permission to live the strict observance of the Rule in other Franciscan hermitages, besides that of Brogliano. These hermitages were those of Le Carceri on Mount Subasio; La Romita, near Porcheria; Monteluco,





### *Eremo delle Carceri*

above Spoleto; and Giano, on the west of the Clitunno stream. These brothers were not priests, and they were initially known as *fratres simplices* or *fratres devoti* (simple or devout brothers), and their hermitages were known as *loca devota* (devout places). In 1354, however, the General Minister William Farinier suppressed the reform, since he declared it suspect to the tendencies of the Fraticelli. On August 18, 1355 Innocent VI revoked all privileges given to the reformed brothers. This suppression marked the end of the first attempt towards the regular observance in the Order of friars Minor. The second attempt, which would be more successful, was initiated by brother Paoluccio Vagnozzi dei Trinci in 1368. It was Paoluccio who constructed the first permanent cells for the brother hermits on Le Carceri.

When the Observant reform developed and engulfed many Franciscan friaries, including the friary of Santa Maria degli Angeli, in 1415, and particularly when Bernardine of Siena promoted the reform with vigour, the Eremo delle Carceri became one of the principal hermitages of the Order. It was Bernardine of Siena who built the friary as it appears today. A monogram with the Holy Name of Jesus (IHS), typical sign of the Observant reform preached by Bernardine of Siena, still appears on the door of the small refectory overlooking the terrace of the hermitage.

One enters the hermitage through an archway adorned with a *Madonna and Child between Saint Francis and Saint Clare*. After a short walk in the footpath along the woods one arrives at the

entrance to the terrace, which is a gem of a cloister overlooking the gorge upon which Le Carceri is constructed. One immediately notices the monogram of the Name of Jesus over the tiny door of the refectory constructed by Saint Bernardine, in which there is a fresco of the Last Supper (1595). Above the refectory are the living quarters of the friars. There are two wells in the terrace. A small chapel for private prayer has been in use since 1970, for pilgrims and residents who come to Le Carceri for short periods of reflection and retreat.

The historical nucleus of the hermitage starts at the opposite end in the chapel of Saint Bernardine. Entering the chapel one notices the inscription on the archway which reads: *Santo Francesco pose a questa cappella el nome di Santa Maria*. We know, however, that the name *Sancta Maria ad carceres* antedates Saint Francis by various centuries. The small chapel is decorated by a *Crucifix and Saint Francis* (15<sup>th</sup> century), and the altar frontal has the coat of arms of the Monti di Pietà, the typical institution of the Observant family. From this chapel one passes to the original chapel of *Santa Maria delle Carceri*, which is a tiny oratory hewn in the living rock, just as the first Franciscan oratories might have looked like. Upon the altar there is a *Madonna and Child with Saint Francis* by Tiberio of Assisi (1506), a fresco under which there is an original fresco of the Crucifixion going back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Close by there is the tiny space of the choir stalls of the friars, but these go back to the time of Saint Bernardine. From this



### *Le Carceri, Bed of St. Francis*

chapel one goes down a steep flight of steps, upon which there is an image of the *Pietà* of the 14<sup>th</sup>

century. The steps lead down to the grotto of Saint Francis, which is divided into two parts, the so-called *Letto di San Francesco*, a place where the saint would rest on the bare rock, and the inner cell where he would retire to pray in solitude. Going out of a tiny doorway one crosses a bridge over the deep gorge to go to the other side of the mountain, where various cells of the first friars are indicated.

This gorge is traditionally linked to an episode recounted in the *Fioretti of Saint Francis*, chapter 29 (FAED III, 619): “Brother Rufino returned to his cell in the woods (at Le Carceri), and as he remained in prayer with many tears, the enemy (devil) came impersonating Christ (crucified) in outward appearance and said to him: ‘Oh, Brother Rufino, didn’t I tell you not to believe the son of Pietro Bernardone? And not to wear yourself out in tears and prayers, because you’re damned? What use is it to you to afflict yourself while you’re alive, and then when you die, you’ll be damned?’ Brother Rufino immediately replied: ‘Open your mouth and I’ll shit in it.’ The demon, indignant, left immediately with such a great storm and shaking of rocks on Mount Subasio up there that for a long time the rocks kept tumbling down. The crashing they made in colliding with each other was so great that they sent horrible sparks of fire throughout the valley. At this terrifying sound they made Saint Francis with his companions came outside the place in order to see what new thing this might be; and people can still see that great pile of rocks. Then Brother Rufino clearly recognised that the one who had tricked him was the demon. He went back to Saint Francis and once again threw himself to the ground and acknowledged his fault. Saint Francis comforted him with sweet words and sent him back, all consoled, to the cell.”

The footpath on the other side of the gorge is protected by a wall constructed in 1609 by Cardinal Alessandro Peretti of Montalto. There is a legend that says that Saint Francis made the stream flowing in the gorge dry up, so that it would not disturb his prayers and those of the brothers. An ancient oak tree marks the spot where birds would stop to listen to the words of Saint Francis, although this episode is normally placed by the Franciscan Sources at Bevagna. The footpath, called *Viale di San Francesco*, provides a pleasant walk among the green oaks. At the beginning of the path there is a bronze statue of *Saint Francis who frees the turtle doves* by Vincenzo Rosignoli (1882), whereas in the woods above the path



*Le Carceri, Monogram Name of Jesus*

there are the grottos of brother Rufino and brother Masseo. Stone altars are placed in the natural amphitheatres on the side of the footpath, serving for the needs of pilgrims. Further up there is the grotto of brother Leo. On the other side of the gorge there are also other grottos linked with the first companions of the saint: Antonio da Stroncone, Bernardo da Quintavalle, Egidio, Silvestro and Andrea da Spello. The name of brother Sylvester is linked with a story in the *Fioretti* 16 (FAED III, 592), when Francis sent brother Masseo up to Le Carceri to ask him, who was a great contemplative in the hermitage, whether Francis should dedicate himself wholly to prayer or to apostolic work.

Going out of the hermitage of Le Carceri one passes by a small chapel dedicated to *Saint Mary Magdalene*, where brother Barnaba Manassei (†1474) who initiated the Monti di Pietà in the Observant family is buried.

(Information regarding Le Carceri taken from *Guida di Assisi. Storia e Arte*, Editrice Minerva, Assisi 2004<sup>5</sup>, 176-178. For further research, cfr. Arnaldo FORTINI, *Nova Vita di San Francesco*, S. Maria degli Angeli, Assisi 1959, Vol. 3, 153-162).



## Francis is for me the man of poverty, the man of peace!

“Alcuni non sapevano perché il Vescovo di Roma ha voluto chiamarsi Francesco. Alcuni pensavano a Francesco Saverio, a Francesco di Sales, anche a Francesco d'Assisi. Io vi racconterò la storia. Nell'elezione, io avevo accanto a me l'arcivescovo emerito di San Paolo e anche prefetto emerito della Congregazione per il Clero, il cardinale Claudio Hummes: un grande amico, un grande amico! Quando la cosa diveniva un po' pericolosa, lui mi confortava. E quando i voti sono saliti a due terzi, viene l'applauso consueto, perché è stato eletto il Papa. E lui mi abbracciò, mi baciò e mi disse: “Non dimenticarti dei poveri!”. E quella parola è entrata qui: i poveri, i poveri. Poi, subito, in relazione ai poveri ho pensato a Francesco d'Assisi. Poi, ho pensato alle guerre, mentre lo scrutinio proseguiva, fino a tutti i voti. E Francesco è l'uomo della pace. E così, è venuto il nome, nel mio cuore: Francesco d'Assisi. E' per me l'uomo della povertà, l'uomo della pace, l'uomo che ama e custodisce il creato; in questo momento anche noi abbiamo con il creato una relazione non tanto buona, no? E' l'uomo che ci dà questo spirito di pace, l'uomo povero ... Ah, come vorrei una Chiesa povera e per i poveri! Dopo, alcuni hanno fatto diverse battute. “Ma, tu dovresti chiamarti Adriano, perché Adriano VI è stato il riformatore, bisogna riformare ...”. E un altro mi ha detto: “No, no: il tuo nome dovrebbe essere Clemente”. “Ma perché?”. “Clemente XV: così ti vendichi di Clemente XIV che ha soppresso la Compagnia di Gesù!”. Sono battute ... Vi voglio tanto bene, vi ringrazio per tutto quello che avete fatto. E penso al vostro lavoro: vi auguro di lavorare con serenità e con frutto, e di conoscere sempre meglio il Vangelo di Gesù Cristo e la realtà della Chiesa. Vi affido all'intercessione della Beata Vergine Maria, Stella dell'evangelizzazione. E auguro il meglio a voi e alle vostre famiglie, a ciascuna delle vostre famiglie. E imparto di cuore a tutti voi la benedizione. Grazie.

His Holiness Pope Francis  
To the representatives of the Media  
Vatican, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2013

## Abbreviations

### Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones.
CantAudPov	Cantico Audite Poverelle.
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis.
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi.
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data.
EpAnt	Epistola ad sanctum Antonium.
EpCler I	Epistola ad Clericos (Redactio prior).
EpCler II	Epistola ad Clericos (Red. posterior).
EpCust I	Epistola ad Custodes I.
EpCust II	Epistola ad Custodes II.
EpFid I	Epistola ad Fideles I.
EpFid II	Epistola ad Fideles II.
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem.
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum.
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa.
EpRect	Epistola ad populorum rectores.
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei.
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster.
FormViv	Forma vivendi sanctae Clarae data.
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius RegulaeNB.
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas dicendae.
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini.
OrCruc	Oratio ante crucifixum.
RegB	Regula bullata.
RegNB	Regula non bullata.
RegEr	Regula pro eremitoriis data.
SalBMV	Salutatio beatae Mariae Virginis.
SalVirt	Salutatio virtutum.
Test	Testamentum.
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Clarae scripta.

### Sources for the Life of St. Francis

1C	Tommaso da Celano, Vita Sancti Francisci.
LCh	Celano, Legenda ad usum chori.
2C	Celano, Memoriale in Desiderio Animae.
3C	Celano, Tractatus de Miraculis S. Francisci.
LJS	Julian of Speyer, Vita Sancti Francisci.
OR	Officium Rhythmicum S. Francisci.
AP	Anonimo Perugino.
L3C	Leggenda dei Tre Compagni.
CA	Compilatio Assisiensis.
LMj	S. Bonaventura, Legenda Maior S. Francisci.
LMn	S. Bonaventura, Legenda minor S. Francisci.
SP	Speculum Perfectionis.
SC	Sacrum commercium S. Francisci.
ABF	Actus Beati Francisci et Sociorum Eius.
Fior	Fioretti di San Francesco.

### Sources for the Life of St. Clare

BICl	Blessing of St. Clare.
1-4LAg	Letters to St. Agnes of Prague..
LCl	Legend of St. Clare.
PC	Acts of the Process of Canonization.
PrPov	Privilege of Poverty.
RegCl	Rule of St. Clare.
TestCl	Testament of St. Clare.

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**Cover picture:**

*Chapel of Saint Mary Magdalene at Fontecolombo*