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EDITORIAL

POWER AND PRESTIGE IN FRANCISCAN LIFE

It is obvious that this title sounds out of tune with the very nature of Franciscan life. Francis of Assisi built his religious Order upon minority and humility, which are directly opposite to power and prestige. A study of Franciscan history, beginning from the very first years after the death of the founder, shows a different picture. The Franciscan Order, born as a fraternity of penitents from Assisi (AP 19; L3C 37), soon became one of the bulwarks of Catholicism during the late Middle Ages. This fact, in itself, was not a negative factor, since the Franciscans were of great benefit to the Church in the areas of preaching, missionary expeditions, pastoral work, and studies. The history of the Franciscan Order has been marked by such heroic exploits that have made the Franciscan family among the foremost in fostering the spreading of the Christian faith in Europe and far beyond.

A typical example of the ability of the Franciscans to spread the Christian message is their presence in the Holy Land. Ever since they set foot on the Holy Land in 1217, and particularly since the establishment of the Custody of the Holy Land in 1342, the Franciscans have been a guarantee for the continuation of the Catholic presence among other religions. Their contribution to the cause of peace has been enormous. Popes have paid tribute to such a noble cause. The mission entrusted to them by the Church has been respected even by secular and political authorities all along history, and to this very day. In an ever-changing world this mission, however, needs to be redrawn and reviewed, not only in the Holy Land, but indeed in all places where the Franciscan Order flourishes.

We live in a social and political setting in which it is important to present an attractive image of who one is and of what one does. One needs to assert his authority, his power, to make use of financial assets to promote projects, and to be in the limelight of publicity in social media. The same principle applies to any institution. The Franciscans have always been aware of the need to make good use of these means in order to promote their mission. This, however, is not without its dangers.

The need to open up to new opportunities, to preserve what one has gained with so much effort in the past, to maintain a dignified social standing that demands respect, can sometimes lead religious to become self-centred upon power and prestige, and to forget the virtues of minority and humility. It is certainly important to preserve traditions, to defend the *status quo* against threats from interfering innovators, to make use of money and means of communication to sustain projects and maintain an image. Yet it is also dangerous to insist too much upon this method in the case of Franciscan religious life.

Within an institution it is important to have leaders who are authoritative and have a clear vision. But it does not necessarily mean that, to be such, one has to insist upon power and prestige. Indeed, the temptation to fall into this trap can sometimes be seen not only in the case of higher circles of authority, but even more so in subordinate offices. When a Franciscan becomes in charge of an office of authority, he has to confront the temptation to assert his power by demanding financial guarantees for his activity, for example, a bank account, a credit card, or by asking for means to be more efficient, like having a car, an office, a secretary. Sometimes we end up giving more importance to these material means of efficiency than to the mission we are called to carry out. In an environment in which power and prestige are synonymous of good leadership, the danger to fall into this trap is greater than ever before.

Franciscan life is a life of itinerancy. It implies the ability to let go of places, offices and means in order to start all over again. It also calls for a broad vision of the global mission of the Church and the Order. The fact that a Franciscan friar belongs to an entity does not mean that he is “incardinated” in that entity. If the world has become a global village, our sense of belonging to the international and universal character of the mission of the Franciscan Order should be our response to this new challenge. This does not mean that we should not love our provinces, and that we should not feel “sons” of our provinces or custodies. But if this sense of belonging means a closure to others, and a holding on to power and prestige, then we have lost the significance of who we are and of our mission.

Resisting change, even minimally, is a sign of holding on to power and prestige. It brings division and delusion, destroying the freshness and joy of our vocation and mission. No wonder young people are not attracted to follow such examples. Maybe we should begin to ask ourselves why generous Franciscan brothers tend to abandon missions for which they consecrated their energies, why it is so difficult to find new recruits to the Order’s missions, and why friars are afraid to assume positions of responsibility and authority.

Indeed, we run the risk of making Isaiah’s prophecy come true: “Yes, a man will catch hold of his brother in their father’s house, to say, ‘You have a cloak, so you be leader, and rule this heap of ruins.’ And, that day, the other will protest, ‘I am no healer; in my house there is neither food nor clothing; do not make me leader of the people’” (Is 3:6-7).

Noel Muscat ofm

FRANCISCAN MOUNT ZION:

THE PILGRIM HOSPITAL AND THE SHRINE OF THE CENACLE

Narczyz Stanislaw Klimas ofm
[Frate Francesco, 79 (Novembre 2013), n. 2, 373-424]

Visits of the friars and pilgrims to the Cenacle after 1552

The interdependence and resourcefulness of the friars who continued to visit the Cenacle offer an example worthy of note, although it is always a question of exceptions that confirm the rule regarding the strict prohibition on the part of the Turks who rendered it inaccessible for Christians.

In general terms we can distinguish three diverse periods in which this prohibition was enforced:

1. The period beyond the mid 17th century, during which, although with difficulty, there was a possibility to succeed in visiting the Cenacle.
2. The last three decades of the 17th century, which constitute the most “clement” period.
3. The 18th century was less intransigent when compared to the end of the 17th century.

The fact remains, however, that for nearly three centuries it was impossible to celebrate any formal acts of cult in this holy place. In spite of this, the friars did not desist in “being alive and present” in the place where they had been expelled by force, and this was nearly a concrete demonstration of the fact that the Franciscans never accepted the *fait accompli*, and always continued to reclaim their rights. Many facts depended also upon the personal “willingness” of those responsible during concrete moments, as well as upon the major or minor initiatives of the other part, including, for example, personal friendships, “savoir faire”, and well directed initiatives. In the meantime one

also has to look at the negative side of things, particularly during special circumstances, such as after the “blow” of Malta, the defeat of Lepanto and that of Vienna.

A general line of nearly uniform behaviour was totally impossible. As a consequence, we are faced with innumerable cases, all dictated and linked by the unique intention and will to continue to “be present” in the holy Cenacle, in spite of the difficulties of all kinds. The visit to the holy place was always an extraordinary or occasional event, although one cannot say that it was a totally exceptional phenomenon, but it had and kept a coherent and constant continuity, and thus acquired a great significance and value.

The witnesses come nearly all from Franciscan sources. The common pilgrim could not be aware of all the problematic issue, or he did not notice it. The prohibition to visit the Cenacle did not mark the pilgrimage so seriously, as it did mark the profound wounds suffered by the Franciscans. To “visit” the Cenacle for the friar had a totally particular and “supplementary” significance. This is proved by the rich documentary witness coming from Franciscan circles and presented here in a chronological order.

1552-1553: Juan Perera, a Spanish canon, was author of the *Peregrinacion desde Roma a Jerusalem*. He narrates how in 1552 the friars were expelled from the Cenacle: “and that place became a mosque”, and he writes: “The Cenacle is 11 paces wide in longitude and 7 in latitude. Underneath the Cenacle we saw the small room in which the Virgin Mary remained all the years of her life after the ascension of Christ, and the other

room of Saint John the evangelist. Underneath the chapel of the Holy Spirit it is said that there is the tomb of David and Solomon in a crypt.” It seems therefore that at the time there were no specific difficulties to visit the place.¹

We find a hint of the relationship between the Armenians and the Custody of the Holy Land in the words of brother Luca da Gubbio (1559): “On the fourteenth day of August, the vigil of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, in the morning we went to visit the house of Caiaphas, which is under the care of the Armenians, and I celebrated Mass in that place; the stone of this altar is the same stone that used to be the door to the tomb of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” “After the low and sung Masses were finished, we returned to eat; and this house of the convent [Forno] is about ten or twelve paces distant.”² Even Jan Gorynski, *Peregrynacya do Ziemi Swietej* wrote: “On the twenty-fifth day [of August 1559] [...] in the afternoon we went to visit the Cenacle,” and he does not allude to any eventual problems.³

We also find a witness in the Chronicle of Furer that it was possible to visit the Cenacle by paying a fee: “Today [1556] the Turks are in possession of the church and the convent where there is the tomb of David, since they usurped it. Before admitting us in, as they normally do, they demanded that we pay an entrance fee [...] But in the other room, which is nowadays a mosque of the Turks, no Christian can dare enter, except if he wants to deny his faith in Christ, or else if he wants to lose his life in a miserable way.”⁴

The situation was therefore getting worse. We find a confirmation of this in Brother Francesco di Sicilia, author of *Relazione del suo soggiorno nella Custodia di Terra Santa – Terra Santa, Aleppo, Alessandria*, who from the convent of San Francesco in Tivoli, on 5 April 1585, sent to the “Signor Cardinale Santa Severina” this *Ragguaglio*. When he was staying in Messina, on 10 May 1582, he received the obedience of the Father Custos of the Holy Land to go to preach in Aleppo. He left Messina on 21 June and arrived in Tripoli of Syria at our convent after five days. After having stayed for one whole year in Jerusalem, he was sent to preach in Aleppo, where he also stayed “continually for one year”, and the following year he went to preach in Cairo, where he stayed “continually for two years and for another three years I continued in Alexandria, preaching and administering the sacraments to the Christian

faithful.” “[On] Mount Zion [...] there was a beautiful convent that used to belong to us, but those *Santoni* and *Papassi*, that is, their Religious [Muslim] leaders, took it from us and transformed it into a mosque. Among other things in this place there is that church called the Cenacle, where Christ made the last supper and washed the disciples’ feet before he went to the passion of the holy cross; in that place also the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost: in this place Christ appeared to the apostles on the day of his holy resurrection. There one can also see the place where the blessed Mother departed from this life. If any Christian among us would like to enter that place he has to do two things, or become a Turk or reject his faith. However, I received the grace from the majesty of God, a grace which is not conceded to all, that with the payment of money and other promises trying to bribe those guardians, at noon on Friday during the hour in which the others go there to pray, I entered courageously and without any fear, and I saw everything, although I had to hurry up because of the guardian and head of that place. Indeed, if I had been found by others, they would have made a feast and rejoiced at putting me to death on such an occasion; but God gave me this grace. I was so happy! O great joy it would be for us if we could enjoy the holy Places as we used to do before, and not be so sad on seeing them fall in the hands of those infidels!”⁵

1583: This is how Radziwil succeeded in visiting the holy Cenacle. He wore his habit and accompanied the brother pharmacist. “Here [in the holy Cenacle] it is prohibited for Christians and Jews to enter, since the Turks have a Mosque in there. When the pilgrims would arrive at that place, they would recite one Our Father and a Hail Mary kneeling down, in order to acquire the plenary indulgence, that it, if they succeed in going in. I also, as I have already stated, succeeded to enter into this sacred Cenacle with two others [...]; we arrived at the sacred Cenacle, and since the Turks mistook us to be Monks, they let us enter without any difficulty.” He specifies the place of Mount Zion and adds: “To the right there is the house of Caiaphas, and the Catholic Cemetery, since they have been buried there from ancient times.”⁶

From the testimony of Ioannes Cotovicus, *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum et Syriacum* (1596), who does not seem to have visited the Cenacle, but only saw the House of Caiaphas, and who refers to what he heard from the friars, we

gather interesting information regarding the exact position of the Cenacle: “We went up to this place by means of a ladder placed on the floor, and from a hole in the wall of the Area of the Temple of the Saviour, which looks towards the south, when we went up we could see the holy Cenacle of the Lord [...] It has been roughly forty years ago, that the Minors have been evicted from this holy Mount Zion, and the place which is so famous for the mystery that it commemorates has been profaned by the Turks, the Temple of the Holy Cenacle has been transformed into a Mosque, and Christians have been prohibited from exercising any cult, whereas all the adjacent buildings have been taken as dwelling places for the Saracens: Christians very rarely, if ever, and not without paying money, are admitted to this place [...]. As we have said already in this Holy Mount there are the places where Christ and the Apostles celebrated the mysteries (we have learned that these places were under the care of the Franciscans).” In the successive page, the author depicts a map of Mount Zion, from the southeast section of the city of Jerusalem, indicating the various places, among which the Cenacle, the House of Caiaphas and the Catholic Cemetery.⁷

In 1599 Aquilante Rocchetta dedicates to Mount Zion the entire chapter XXIII of his work, and states that: “[...] every year the Friars alone, on Easter, together with the Custos who has to offer a gift, are allowed by the *Santoni* [Muslim imams] to visit the places of the Cenacle,” an occasion that the Muslims normally respected. In chapter XIV he describes the visit: “Going upstairs [...] through a window they showed us secretly, out of fear of the *Santoni* of the Turks, the Buildings of the Holy Mount Zion close by.” Then he underlines the fact that the friars lent him their habit in order to go with them and he describes in detail, together with the measurements, the Chapel of Mount Zion.⁸

1600: Stefano Mantegazza from Milan, a friar of the Order of Preachers, in his *Relazione* regarding the visit to Mount Zion, speaks about the indulgence given by Pope Sixtus IV when: “The Turks and *Santoni* occupied it and expelled with insults those poor Fathers in the year 1550, on account of some false information given by a Turk.” Then he adds that he visited the House of Caiaphas, but that he could only have a look at the Cenacle and the Tomb of David, without being able to enter.⁹

Miguel Matas in 1602 confirms the witness.

He also visited Mount Zion, and explains that the Franciscans were driven out of the Cenacle “and this on account of the fact that the Jews and the Turks say that in that place the Prophet David had been buried.” Then he speaks about the Cemetery that was found “in front of that holy place [where the Virgin died] and in it are buried the friars of Saint Francis and the pilgrims.”¹⁰

The situation caused by the prohibition to visit the Cenacle continued to worsen and the witnesses are more incisive regarding this fact.

1616 and 1619: Brother Blas de Buyza was in the Holy Land two times, in 1616 and in 1619, “The Cenacle [...] is off limits to all Christians, since it is a Mosque of the Moors. If anyone tries to go in he is bound to reject his faith, or else he is hanged and killed. In spite of all this, with good diligence and secrecy, and by giving some gifts to the *Santoni* who keep it, I succeeded in going in and so all the important places”, namely the place where Christ washed the feet of the Apostles, the Holy Cenacle, the Tomb of David, the place where the Risen Lord appeared to the Apostle Thomas, and the cloister.¹¹

1628-1629: Father Francesco da Seclì informs us that the friars, since they could not enter the Cenacle in order to gain the indulgencies linked with that place, “often go to their own cemetery on Mount Zion [with the excuse] that they are going to pray for the deceased Religious.”¹²

1631-1636: Eugene Roger ofm, explains who the French ambassador de Brèves obtained permission that pilgrims and religious could visit the Cenacle. He states that the pilgrims would each make an offering and give the money to the “*Santons ou Prestres*” [the Muslim *Santoni* or Priests] in order to be allowed to enter secretly every Friday from midday for two hours, while the Muslims were at the “Temple”, that is in the mosques to pray.¹³

1627-1634: Father Antonio de Castillo described the visit to Mount Zion. He states that a friend of the *Santone*, who was praying on Friday at noon, during the time of prayer of the Muslims, went with a companion to Mount Zion, and could thus visit all the shrines. However, “in those Holy Places which are found within the Cenacle, its Proprietors, namely the Turks, did not let us enter. Even though we could not enter, we nevertheless said our prayers, and venerated them.” The author also presents an illustration of Mount Zion with the indication of the *Sepulchra Catholicorum*, as

well as a plan of the Cenacle, that seems to have been copied from Bernardino Amico.¹⁴

Once again we quote from the *Croniche o Annali di Terra Santa* by Father Verniero:

1646: he explains in two volumes (vol. I): “How the Friars Minor had been expelled from the Holy Mount Zion” [1551]; then how “that Holy Place [Cenacle] in the present has been transformed into a mosque and a dwelling place of the Turks.” Lastly, he states that in that place, “it is prohibited for the friars or pilgrims to enter in order to visit it, to venerate or adore in it, as that Holy Place would require of them. If, on rare occasions, they arrive there after great expense, because of the great danger that one experiences in that place, they hardly get any satisfaction, since it is prohibited to the friars to go and to the Turks to make them enter.”¹⁵

In volume II he explains how it was possible to go to that place, and in what circumstances it occurred: “Our Father Guardian had insistently begged the *Santone* of Mount Zion to give him permission to repair some windows through the work of a certain Brother Antonio Beraud, a Frenchman. At long last the Guardian got his request accepted, and he obtained faculty from the Magistrates of the city to give permission to that friar to go; at the same time he decided upon a good occasion in which to satisfy the majority of the friars by making them see and venerate that most holy place [...] With the permission of the *Santone*, and after having given a handsome tip to the Turk who dwelt in that house, in order to satisfy the friars, the Guardian accompanied them together with Father Bernardino Bandena, who was Vicar at the time, on a Friday at noon, when the Turks, after having shut the gates of the city, had all retreated to the temple in order to make their usual prayers. The *Santone* had gone to the Temple inside the city, and the Turk, who had received the tip, since he believed that there was no other person inside except the friar who was working with his companion, did not want (according to what had been agreed) to accompany the friars or make them enter personally, saying that it was not necessary, since during that hour they could all enter freely. Those friars therefore entered on Mount Zion, but they were seen by a certain elderly Turk who lived in that place. He went up hurriedly to the minaret of the Mosque, without informing himself or asking others about who they were, and he began to shout at the top of

his voice: ‘Come to help, come to help everybody, because the Franks have come to take the church and convent of Mount Zion once more.’ When [the Muslims] at the Temple heard all those shouts, there was a great tumult among the people, and with infernal fury they all went towards Mount Zion to use violence on those poor friars. The *Santone* succeeded in quelling that noise and tumult, since he was aware of what had happened, and said that the old man was out of his senses and half mad, since although he had seen the friars, they were only there to work, and he had gone to yell at such a loud voice. When the ministers of the Cadi went they did not find other friars, except the two, since when the others heard the shouts of the Turk, they had run to hide themselves in various places, and it was only after dusk that they re-entered the city by way of the various gates of the city and retreated to their convent. The two friars who were working exhibited the written permit they had received from the Cadi, and they were not molested. The Guardian gave the *Santone* a silk garment as a gift to thank him for having quelled that rebellion; and he also distributed 16 *piastre* to other persons of the *Santone*’s household.”¹⁶

1646-1647: Bernardin Surius, in his *Le pieux pèlerin ou Voyage de Jérusalem*, explains how, when the new Custos entered in Jerusalem, accompanied by some religious “to take possession of Mount Zion, he could in this way see the Cenacle, but only after making money tinkle”, that is, distributing handsome tips to the Muslims.¹⁷

1655: Father Mariano da Maleo recalls the past custom, which was not practiced any longer, according to which the new Custos could visit the Cenacle. Regarding the Turks he writes: “when the new Guardian arrived in that place, he presented a garment to the principal *Santone*, and then the Prelate could enter with five or six friars. At present, however, they want to maintain their custom, but not that of the Guardian, who therefore cannot enter. Nevertheless when I returned from Constantinople in the year 1655, with the excuse of making certain repairs, I entered and I also succeeded in making other 45 Religious enter in a file, as I will also write in the second part.” In fact, in the second part, he continues: “When not even by paying a hefty tip one could hardly enter, as my Vicars and the Procurator had experienced, when they negotiated to make a Pilgrim enter by paying ten *piaster*. When at the determined hour they arrived in order to enter, the *Santoni* welcomed

them with blows and told them: Infidel dogs, did you think that we would really make you enter? Are you truly worthy to see this Shrine? And thus they had to return humiliated, and they lost their money.”¹⁸

1660: Even Gabriel Bremond, speaking about Mount Zion, refers to the mosque built on the place of the Cenacle: “No Christians are allowed to enter it. However, Monsignor de Breves has asked that the Latins can visit this place on Fridays from noon for a space of two hours, during the time in which the Mohammedans are praying in their Mosques. This, however, is done in utmost secrecy, since the place is outside the city. After notifying the *Santoni*, who give them permission without difficulty if they individually give them a payment, [Christians] can go in and close the doors behind them.”¹⁹

These repetitions and emphases are necessary to understand the daily life of the Franciscans, Custodians of the Holy Places, during those years and in that situation. That which seems a normal “practice” of a visit (asking for permission and keeping to a precise schedule) became necessary for a visit that, in all cases, had to be carried out in utmost secrecy, every time asking for permission from the responsible of the mosque and always after paying him a hefty tip! The friars did not give up: even the competences of a friar artisan who invented the need to have an assistant could be used for the scope of going in and praying at the Cenacle!

1668: Father Jacques Goujon, *de la Famille de Terre Sainte*, as he himself underlines, refers that in 1666-67 the *Santone* needed to repair the glass windowpanes. A competent friar went every day to work with a different companion each time. The work was dragged along for two years, when it would have been enough to repair the windows in two months. When the *Santone* discovered the trick, he prohibited the accompanying of friars to the job.²⁰

The situation of those decades is also explained by the testimony of Father Michel Nau who came twice to the Holy Land, in 1668 and in 1674. The first time he went he knelt down to say his prayers in front of the Cenacle, close to a cistern that he recalls as a place recalling the parting of the Apostles from the Lord. In 1674 he was part of a group of noble persons who accompanied the French ambassador to Jerusalem in front of the *Sublime Porte*, Charles François Olier, Marquis of

Nointel. However, not even on that occasion was it possible for him to accompany the ambassador in the Cenacle, even though he could only enter for a very short time.²¹

Laffi Domenico was in the Holy Land in 1679, and speaks about the Cenacle, which he could not visit: “[In the Holy Cenacle and its environs] Catholics are prohibited to enter, under pain of either rejecting their faith or else being burned alive [...] We could venerate this Holy Place only from outside, and then we continued [...]”.²²

The witness of Corneille Le Brun (1681) is different. It is not clear whether he actually visited the Cenacle, or whether he could, in fact, go in. His explanation as to the necessary things that pilgrims who wanted to go to the Holy Land had to carry with them is interesting, since he also speaks about what they had to pay to the friars for their hospitality.²³

The Statutes of the Custody, edited in 1682, speak about the Cenacle and Mount Zion: “During the time of the government of the Father Guardian of Jerusalem, no Pilgrims were allowed to visit the Church of the Holy Mount Zion, in which Christ instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist [...] If a Secular Pilgrim, who wanted to go against this prohibition and celebrated in the Shrine, had to pay to the Turk (*Santone*) responsible a gold coin (*zequinum*). For one hundred and twenty years it has been prohibited for all Christians to enter [...] although we never cease to make sacred functions and ceremonies in that Holy Place by asking for indults and faculties from the Ottoman *Porte* [...] We have received from the Judge (Cadi) a document in which it is declared that the Friars of the Holy Land are allowed to make celebrations in their rite, but just once a year, in the upper Church of Mount Zion.”²⁴

Eleven years later, namely in 1693, Giovanni Francesco Gemelli Careri described his visit to Mount Zion in these terms: “We went out of the City through the gate of King David, or of Mount Zion, and we saw the burial ground of all our Catholic Christians, and there close by the remains of an ancient wall of a house, where the Most Holy Mother died, and where Saint John celebrated Mass. After having paid a gold coin to the *Pascià*, I entered to see the Church of the Holy Apostles (sic!), which at present functions as a Mosque. The Church has just one aisle, and is a large church for the use of this country. It has two

columns, and was built by Saint Helen, like many of the other Holy Places, and was restored later on by Sancia, Queen of Naples and of Sicily. On the west it has a Tower, or belfry, from where the *Santone* calls the people for prayer. One goes down some steps to the lower Church, which is low but longer than the upper Church. IN this place Our Lord Christ celebrated Easter with his Apostles, and instituted the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist [...] In this place the Holy Spirit came down [a list of the mysteries that occurred here follows]. One can see the Tomb of King David (which is sixteen palms in length) and which was built by Solomon.” This witness can be placed in relation to that by Le Brun in 1681. It was enough to pay the sum of money requested in order to visit the Cenacle.²⁵

1698: the canon Antoine Morison, speaking about Mount Zion, the Cenacle and the other places linked with them, narrates that ordinarily the pilgrims had content themselves with going around the Church [Cenacle] reciting hymns and prayers conforming to the mysteries that these places commemorated. This however, was only possible for those who were admitted to visit the Cenacle, and this means that not all were allowed to go inside.²⁶

The report by Bartolomeo Angeli, a pilgrim priest who came to the Holy Land in 1700, is memorable. When he speaks about the Cenacle he notes that it had been reduced to a mosque “officiated by the Turks” and that entry “is prohibited to Christians.” Then he adds: “With a singular grace, however, before I arrived in Jerusalem, entry was conceded to the Nurse of the Franciscans as a gift for having cured the *Pascià* of Jerusalem from an illness that had made him come face to face with death. Upon the order of the *Pascià*, the Nurse had a faculty to enter freely in all the Shrines, and the *Santoni* immediately obeyed this order. They would welcome him with courtesy and once they begged him to try to cure one of their colleagues who had been obliged for a long time to stay in bed. The prudent nurse tried all means possible in order to undertake such a task, since he knew that the illness was most difficult to cure. On the other hand he knew that, if the sick man would die under his care, he would be accused of negligence and of having brought about that man’s death, and that would have placed his own life in peril. He could not refrain from accepting, however, in any way. He had to

undertake the cure, and was lucky enough to cure the sick man to perfect health. For the poor Fathers, however, this was fatal, since the Principal of the *Santoni* went to the Convent of Saint Saviour, and enkindled with fury he began shouting at the Father Guardian, lamenting that the nurse now had abused of his freedom more than once, since he was leading other Fathers to the Mosque [Cenacle], and he accused them for profaning that place and said they merited to be put to death. So the Father Guardian, in order not to have to face any more vexations, judged it expedient to calm down the excessive zeal of the *Santone* by giving him some bags full of gold. This was the recompense that the friars had to pay for the gentleness of the Nurse.”²⁷

1703: Father Pietro Antonio di Venezia recalls the custom that we have mentioned previously, regarding the entry in the Cenacle of the new Father Custos. He indicates that it was not tolerated any longer: “The *Santoni* received an order from the *Porte* to deprive those poor Religious [of the Holy Cenacle] of their property and take it from them [...] and to this very day they still possess it and keep it with great jealousy. There used to be an agreement that, when the new Guardian arrived there, he would present a garment to the principal *Santone*, and thus the Prelate could enter with five or six of his Friars. At present, however, [the Muslims] want their traditions to be upheld, not those of the Guardian, who is thus prohibited from entering; in spite of this, however, some Religious did succeed in entering, and especially when the majority of the *Santoni* go to look for wheat or other necessities. At that hour one [Muslim] stays on guard, and with a moderate courtesy the friars are given leave to enter.”²⁸

Prudence also played its part in the organisation of the visits to the holy Cenacle, which should never be interrupted or discontinued!

1719: Marcel Ladoire, vicar of the Holy Land, was a friend of a *Santone*. He gave him the possibility “to visit” the Cenacle, but the other Friars counselled him against doing such a thing, because if the other *Santoni* who guarded the other places would come to the knowledge of this fact, they would do otherwise every time the friars would want to enter other Shrines. So they convinced him to be content to do “like us” and go around the Cenacle making his prayers and devotions, in order to acquire the plenary indulgencies.²⁹

Father Joan Lopez ofm arrived in Jerusalem on 17 March 1762. This is the way he presented

his visit to the Holy Places: "I arrived at Mount Zion and visited the Cenacle, which I could only see from outside since it is now a mosque: there is also the tomb of David. I also visited the house of Caiaphas, which is the Church and convent of the Armenians, and in this way I ended this pilgrimage and visit to the Holy Places [outside the Holy City and in its environs]."³⁰

1767: The *Istoria dello stato presente della Città di Gerusalemme* offers an interesting witness where for the first time we meet with the reason for the prohibition to visit the Cenacle, and which refers to the fact that in the vicinity there was a kind of female orphanage for Muslim girls: "It is not permitted for anybody who is not a Mohammedan to approach that building or to dare to enter it, even if it is only for curiosity since this could be a dangerous thing to do. However, I believe that the main reasons for this jealousy lie in that fact that here there is a refuge for Mohammedan female orphans. On 30 April 1767 and in other similar occasions, when I was passing on Mount Zion, I limited myself to observe the exterior of this building from a certain distance [...]. In spite of the extreme rigour that prohibits any Christian from daring to enter into this place, nevertheless I know that some Persons have sometimes obtained permission to enter here, after having acquired a *Firman*, or Order of the Grand Lord. It could also be that some could also have entered to see that building without acquiring that permit, and especially during lucky occasions, such as when that Building was in need of repairs, or when [the occupants] needed the counsel of some Religious of the Order of Minors in Jerusalem, who was an expert in Architecture. On those occasions it would have been easy to gain permission to enter under some excuse, and to acquire also permission for the entry of other Persons who were in the same company."³¹

The memoirs of Father Giuseppe Antonio da Milano, who was in service in the Holy Land during the years 1764-1778, document for us the following information regarding the Cenacle: "I received this information from some of our Religious, namely, that with a handsome and generous tip given to the *Santone* who would remain on guard, they could enter; however this is a severe prohibition; one can only see it [the Cenacle] from outside, and the entry is to be found under a small portico that looks to the north."³²

We thus arrive at 1800: the situation seems

to have stabilised. The Cenacle became a mosque to all effects, where it was becoming ever more difficult for Christians to enter it; and where one had to pay a price after negotiations in order to be able to enter. The witnesses of religious pilgrims are clear regarding this fact.

Brother Joao de Jesus Christo, a Portuguese Franciscan, was in the Holy Land in 1817. He offers us his personal witness, telling us that he desired to enter the Holy Cenacle, which was a mosque, and he at last succeeded in doing so and was not molested by the Muslims.³³

The abbot Luigi Valiani from Florence arrived in Jerusalem on 31 October 1826. Regarding his journey he wrote: "On the day [21 November 1826] after lunch we went out of the gate of Bethlehem. Accompanied by a Turcoman we wanted to go and see the Cenacle [...]. We went through the cemeteries of the Catholics, Greeks and Armenians, and arrived in front of the Holy Place where the Sacrament of the Eucharist was instituted. We knew well that entrance to the place is not conceded easily to anybody, and therefore I begged the Turcoman to go and speak to the Turks who were at the door to see whether I could enter, if I paid them something. They asked for eight *piastre*. We offered them six, and they let us pass. When we entered we saw some horses already prepared to leave. After eight paces we arrived at a small door, and there I was told that one could go down to the tomb of King David and the other Princes of those times. That is a place where, even if one wants to pay a sum, it is not possible to enter. We went up to the left through a staircase of 20 steps, and turning to the left we found ourselves in a great hall [the Cenacle] [...] where Jesus Christ made his last supper [...] Nowadays it is a mosque which is greatly venerated because of the tomb of David [...] In past times, it was a Church and a Convent: nowadays there is no sign of all this [...] I tried to go and see the tomb of David, but I was told that it was impossible to do so."³⁴

1832: Marie-Joseph de Géramb narrates his visit to the Holy Places under the form of a long letter written in Jerusalem on 30 March 1832. In the first volume one reads that his reputation of being an expert in medicine, together with the help of his *dragoman*, made it possible for him to approach the mosque of Omar and to enter the Cenacle. In the second volume he explains how he took all the necessary precautions to try to enter the Cenacle. Again his reputation of being a good

expert in the art of medicine came to his aid. He narrates how he entered a tiny door, which led to the tomb of David. However it was not possible to visit it, since it was prohibited for Christians to enter, even though they would offer a hefty sum of money. Although he could not visit the Tomb of David, he nevertheless visited the Cenacle. He was permitted to stay inside for a considerable period of time without being interrupted, but at the end went out in order not to exasperate the patience of the Muslims.³⁵

1838: Father Raffaele di Taranta, in chapter XII of his *Peregrinazione*, speaks about the visit to Mount Zion: "This visit is very difficult to accomplish, since this most holy place has been reduced to a Mosque of the Turks; for this reason they do not permit anybody to enter; but finally, through prayers and the offer of money, without being seen by the Citizens, the *Santoni* conceded to us the grace to visit the place. When we went in the son of the *Santone* made us go through an internal corridor, and at the end of this corridor we entered into an underground chamber built with rough stonework. Inside this room there is a stairway with 10 steps, and I went up in order to enter through a door [...] in the room [...] which marks the place where Our Lord made his last Supper."³⁶

1552-1838: These 300 years of witnesses throw light on the problems linked with the possession of the holy place of the Cenacle, and those relating to the visits of friars and pilgrims, to the difficulties they met in order to go in and pray, and to be able to at least celebrate the evangelical memories linked with the Cenacle. The friars tried to find all ways in order to enter this place. Since it was impossible, particularly for the celebrations of Holy Thursday and Pentecost, they remedied in part by celebrating their prayers in the House of Caiaphas, that belongs to the Armenians, as Father Lavinio da Hamme describes: "Although this Shrine [House of Caiaphas] pertains to the Schismatics [Armenians], the Franciscans have obtained, and conserve to this very day, the right to celebrate solemnly the divine office during the vigil and on the day of Pentecost in this place, since it is close to the Holy Cenacle, where the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles."³⁷

The custom of praying in the Cenacle in an alternative place has been documented also by Verniero in his *Croniche*, already during the 17th century, and continued to be practiced until

the beginning of the 20th century. We do not have any explicit references regarding the practice on Holy Thursday, except those which document that the friars used to go to the Cemetery, close to the Cenacle, where they would recite their prayers in order to receive the indulgences.³⁸

NOTES

- 1 Regarding the author and text, see ARCE, *Itinerarios raros y preciosos*, 6-8: 7-8 (text).
- 2 LUCA DA GUBBIO, *Viaggio in Terra Santa*, in *Bessarione* 12 (1907-1908) 78-79.
- 3 Regarding the author and text, see ARCE, *Itinerarios raros y preciosos*, 9-11: 11.
- 4 F. FURER, *Itinerarium Aegypti, Palestinae, Syriae aliarumque regionum Orientalijum*, Nüremberg 1621 (cfr. Tobler, 79, sub ann. 1566), in H. Vincent – F. M. ABEL, *Jerusalem nouvelle*, II, Paris 1922, 471-472.
- 5 FRA FRANCESCO DI SICILIA, *Ragguaglio de Santi Luoghi*, quoted in MARCELLINO DA CIVEZZA, *Orbis Seraphicus de Missionibus*, II, Firenze 1857-1895, 753-758.
- 6 RADZIWIŁ, *Jerosolymitana Peregrinatio*, 59, 60, 110.
- 7 COTOVICUS, *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum et Syriacum*, 283-285.
- 8 A. ROCCHETTA, *Peregrinatione di Terra Santa e d'altre provincie*, Palermo 1630, 243-247; 242, 195.
- 9 S. MANTEGAZZA, *Relatione del santo viaggio di Gierusalemme*, Milano 1616, 114-119.
- 10 M. MATAS, *La devota peregrinacio de la Terra Sancta, y civitat de Hierusalem*, II, Perpignan 1627, in ARCE, *Documentos y Textos*, 96-97.
- 11 FRAY BLAS DE BUYZA, *Relacion nueva, verdadera, y copiosa, de los sagrado lugares de Jerusalem, y Tierrasanta*, Madrid 1622; for the text see ARCE, *Documentos y Textos*, 245; and also ARCE, *Itinerarios raros y preciosos*, 12-13.
- 12 FRANCESCO DA SECLI, *Viaggio di Gierusalemme nel quale si have minuta, e distinta notitia delli Santi Luoghi*, Lecce 1639, 134-135.
- 13 ROGER, *La Terre Sainte*, 118-119.
- 14 ANTONIO DE CASTILLO, *El devoto peregrino. Viage de Tierra Santa*, Madrid 1656, 160-169.
- 15 VERNIERO, *Croniche*, I, 157-159.
- 16 VERNIERO, *Croniche*, II (1620-1632), Firenze 1930, 10-11.
- 17 B. SURIUS, *Le pieux pèlerin ou Voyage de Jérusalem*, Brussels 1666, 387.
- 18 MARIANO MORONE DA MALEO, *Terra Santa nuovamente illustrata*, Piacenza 1669, 188, 365.
- 19 G. BREMOND, *Viaggi fatti nell'Egitto superiore et inferiore, nel Monte Sinay, e luoghi piu cospicui di quella regione: in Gerusalemme, Giudea....*, Roma 1679, 312-313.
- 20 J. GOUJON, *Histoire et Voyage de la Terre-Sainte*, Lyon 1671, 194. The work was written in 1668.
- 21 M. NAU, *Voyage nouveau de la Terre-Sainte*, Paris 1757, 112-114; Cfr. *Navis Peregrinorum. Ein Pilgerverzeichnis aus Jerusalem von 1561 bis 1695*, ed. B. Zimolong, Köln 1938, 20 August 1668 and 11 March 1674; ASCTS, II, 443.

- 22 D. LAFFI, *Viaggio in Levante al Santo Sepolcro di N.S.G. Christo, et altri Luoghi di Terra Santa*, Bologna 1683, 167.
- 23 CORNEILLE LE BRUN, *Voyage au Levant*, Paris 1714, 300-301. Cfr. *Navis Peregrinorum*, 18.X.1681, “a fide cath. Alienus”, Dutch.
- 24 *Status Custodiae Terrae Sanctae Anno 1682*, in A. ARCE, *Miscellanea de Tierra Santa*, II, *Estudios Criticos y documentos*, Jerusalem 1973, 294.
- 25 G. F. GEMELLI CARERI, *Giro del Mondo*, Venezia 1719, 92; cfr. *Navis Peregrinorum*, sub anno 1692.
- 26 Cfr. A. MORISON, *Relation historique d'un voyage nouvellement fait au Mont de Sinai et à Jérusalem*, Toul 1704, 432-433.
- 27 B. ANGELI, *Viaggio in Terra Santa*, Venezia 1737, 80-81.
- 28 PIETRO ANTONIO DI VENEZIA, *Guida fedele alla Santa Città di Gerusalemme...*, Venezia 1703, 51.
- 29 M. LADOIRE, *Voyage fait a la Terre Sainte en l'année 1719*, Paris 1720, 146-147.
- 30 J. LOPEZ, *Relació de la Peregrinació à Jerusalem y Palestina (1762-1781)*, Barcelona 1900, 71.
- 31 G. MARITI, *Istoria dello stato presente della città di Gerusalemme*, Livorno 1790, 146-147.
- 32 GIUSEPPE ANTONIO DA MILANO, *In Giudea e Galilea (1764-1778). Ricordi*, Firenze 1896, 68.
- 33 J. DE JESUS CHRISTO, *Viagem de hum peregrino a Jerusalem e visita que fez aos Lugares Santos em 1817*, Lisboa 1822, 158.

- 34 L. VALIANI, *Viaggio a Gerusalemme per l'Asia e Soria, ove si descrivono tutti i luoghi santi della Palestina, Giudea, Galilea, ed altre provincie...l'anno 1826 e 1827*, Firenze 1828, 141-142.
- 35 M. J. DE GÉRAMB, *Pèlerinage à Jérusalem et au Mont Sinai en 1831, 1832 et 1833*, Paris 1834, I, 301; II, 63-67.
- 36 RAFFAELE DI TARANTA, *Peregrinazione di Terra Santa e di altri luoghi. L'anno 1838*, 88-89. Manuscript in ASCTS section Manoscritti-Cronache. Reg. Matricola Sacerdoti: Fr. Raffaele da Taranta, Prov. Oss. S. Bernardino. N. agosto 1802 – Profes. Settembre 1821 – in Custodia di Terra Santa dal 27 ottobre 1838. Fu Presidente – Corista – Calendarista – Maestro di Cerimonie – Penitenziere Ital. – Scrivano in Procura † 16 novembre 1876.
- 37 LAVINIO DA HAMME, *Guida indicatrice dei santuari e dei luoghi storici di Terra Santa*, traduzione dal francese del p. Cipriano da Treviso, Venezia 1870, 147.
- 38 Cfr. VERNIERO, *Croniche*, IV, 51. In more recent times, ever since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, when the Cenacle ceased to be a Mosque, the friars have been permitted to visit officially the Cenacle on Holy Thursday and on Pentecost. Initially they simply commemorated the events of these special days by a Gospel reading and some prayers, but in more recent times they have continued to celebrate these occasions with more solemnity, including the celebration of Vespers on Pentecost Sunday, together with the incensing of the Room of the Descent of the Holy Spirit,

HUMAN FRIENDSHIP AND AFFECTION IN THE FRANCISCAN SOURCES

Noel Muscat ofm

Fraternity is a key word in describing the Franciscan way of life. The novelty introduced by Francis of Assisi during the 13th century consisted in the introduction of a new kind of Christian commitment. Until Francis' times the insistence had been upon the monastic *communitas*, based upon the model of the first Christian community in the Acts of the Apostles. Francis envisaged an important variation to community life, by taking as his model the itinerant way of life of Jesus and the apostles in the Gospels, in which the emphasis lies more on brotherhood, *fraternitas*, than on community. Having said this, however, one should not be led astray to the point of excluding the communal or conventual nature of Franciscan life, as some have done, making the Franciscan concept of *fraternitas* look like a political tool militating against any form of regular religious establishment. Let it suffice to state that Francis hardly, if ever, makes use of the abstract term *fraternitas*, but prefers to speak about *fratres*, brothers. The simplistic use of the term *fraternitas* has often led many to envisage a kind of Franciscan religious life devoid of any hierarchical structures, legislation, traditions, etc. Any scholar of Franciscan history is well aware that this approach is of great disservice to the authentic expression of the Franciscan way of life, both in its internal makeup as well as in its place within the framework of the Catholic ecclesiastical establishment in which it was born and developed.

Fraternity has sometimes been branded as the typical trademark of Franciscan life to the point where it becomes meaningless. Indeed, a fraternity based upon an ideology of life, where attention is given to a pre-concept of Gospel life devoid of humanity, becomes simply a slogan lacking significance

and hardly capable of attracting persons to its ranks. Maybe such a truth can be examined more closely nowadays, if we are to understand why the Franciscan Order is not attracting new recruits as it used to do some decades back. It could well be that the guilt lies in having deprived the Franciscan concept of fraternity of its human dimension.

A look at the life of Saint Francis and that of the early brothers shows quite the opposite. It is certainly true that they lived as brothers in a concrete fraternity modelled upon the Gospel. However, such an ideal could never have been achieved had not the first brothers been, first and foremost, a genuine expression of human friendship and affection. It is important for us to rediscover this crucial aspect of Franciscan life if we are to rejuvenate our ranks and renew our religious family. Our aim in this paper is that of discovering the originality of Francis and the first brothers in their human friendship within the fraternity itself, with other persons from both sexes, and with the entire creation. Such an attitude of friendship was based upon a sincere affective relationship in which the tender touch of God's love in the beauty of creatures and human beings played an important role.

Spiritual friendship has been praised in classical mystical works, such as the treatise *De spirituali amicitia* by the Cistercian monk Aelred of Rievaulx (1110 – 1167). In the second book, in the section entitled "Friendship as a step towards God", Aelred discusses the theme of spiritual friendship with his friend Mark, in these terms:

"In brief, how does friendship constitute a step that leads us to the love and knowledge of God? In friendship there is nothing that is dishonest, false or simulated. Indeed, in friendship everything is

pure, spontaneous and true. This is exactly the characteristic note of charity. The particular quality of friendship shines forth in the fact that, between those who are united in the bond of friendship, everything becomes a source of joy, everything gives a sensation of security and sweetness. In the name of perfect charity we love many others who are burdensome to us or who make us suffer: we take care of them in all honesty, without falseness or simulations, but with sincerity and good will, but nevertheless we do not admit them in the intimacy of our friendship. In friendship, on the other hand, honesty is bonded with sweetness, truth with joy, amiability with good will, sentiment with action. All these things come from Christ, they mature thanks to Him, and in Him they come to perfection. Therefore it is not impervious or unnatural to speak of a journey that, departing from Christ, inspires in us that love by which we love our friend, which goes up to Him who offers Himself as a friend who should be loved: in this way it adds marvel to marvel, sweetness to sweetness, affection to affection.”¹

It is interesting to note that this text was written by a Cistercian monk who died just fifteen years before Francis was born. The influence of Cistercian spirituality on the Franciscan charism, particularly regarding its insistence upon the humanity of Christ, is well known. Human friendship based upon the mystical experience of Christ's own humanity became one of the pillars of the success of the first Franciscan fraternity, as we shall now see from a brief analysis of the Franciscan sources.

Theological foundation of friendship in the life of Saint Francis

When we speak about friendship and affection in the life of Saint Francis and the first brothers, we are certainly speaking about a human experience. However, we need to understand its theological foundations if we are not to fall in the trap of looking at the Franciscan way of life simply as an easygoing style of life between friends. Indeed, the danger of making such an experience of Franciscan life today is greater than ever. In a time when fraternities are getting smaller and demands of ministry and apostolate absorb the major part of a friar's daily schedule, we sometimes meet fraternities in which one can live comfortably and in good friendly relations, but without really

becoming involved in a solid life of fraternity. In other words, it is possible to find a fraternity in which the brothers meet for a meal or for a moment of relaxation, in which they can feel “at home” in the relative comfort of the physical surroundings in which they live, but where they do not really belong, since each and every one is concentrated on his busy schedule, travels, external friends and acquaintances, virtual relationships, etc. Maybe one can find a fraternity that celebrates daily the Mass, and at most Morning and Evening Prayers, but which never dedicates one full day of retreat, or of ongoing formation, or just a community day for the brothers, since no one is available at any time. Such a way of life can be very peaceful and fulfilling on a purely convivial and sociable level, but it has nothing to do with genuine human friendship, let alone with fraternity and with the theological basis of friendship and affection.

The theological basis of Franciscan friendship is explained in the life of Francis and the brothers as a deep experience of faith in Christ who calls the brothers to become His friends and makes of them a mutual gift of his love. No wonder that Francis always considered the brothers as a gift given to him by Christ.² It is from the gift of the fraternity that the beauty of human friendship is born in the experience of Francis' life in his relationships with other persons and with all creatures. We shall take a brief look at Francis' particular friendships with female and male persons, as well as his affection to creatures, with the help of the Franciscan sources and also with some references to similar friendship experiences in the lives of the first companions.

Francis' friendship with Clare of Assisi

When the Franciscan scholar Optatus van Asseldonk wrote about affection and friendship in the life of Saint Francis, he concentrated his attention in a particular way upon the female figure of Saint Clare and of other female friends that Francis had during his lifetime.³ Although this is a partial presentation of the theme of friendship in Francis' life, since he also had many male friends, it is important to underline the “feminine” dimension of his spirituality, which forms part and parcel of his frame of thought whenever he speaks about fraternity.⁴ Francis' delicate character and his upbringing according to the medieval custom



St. Clare and St. Francis

of courtly and chivalric love can be best seen in his relationship to Saint Clare. Although she was eleven years younger than Francis, and the popular image portrayed by some films on these saints making them appear to be young lovers before their consecration to God is obviously an invention and has no historical foundation, it is true that Francis was very fond of Clare since maybe she was the person who understood his intuition of the Gospel life better than anyone else.

A certain brother Stephen, who might have been the same brother who travelled to Damietta in 1219 in order to inform Francis regarding the disastrous state of the Order during his absence, gives us the following testimony regarding the human affection that Francis showed towards Saint Clare:

“Brother Stephen used to say that Saint Francis did not want to have familiar relationships with women and did not permit women to treat him in familiar manners. It was only in the case of Saint Clare that he seemed to show particular affection. However, when he spoke with her or spoke about her, he avoided calling her with her name, but he called her ‘Christian woman’. And he took care of her and her monastery.”⁵

It is Saint Clare herself who speaks about Francis’ affection towards her and the sisters in her

Testament: “And moved by pity for us, he bound himself, both personally and through his religion, always to have the same loving care and special solicitude for us as for his own brothers.”⁶

This care and love of Francis for Clare and the Poor Sisters is well documented in the Franciscan sources. The deep bond of friendship that linked Clare to Francis was also the result of her female qualities of beauty and tenderness, which are well described by one of the witnesses in the *Process of Canonisation*, Lord Ranieri di Bernardo di Assisi, who stated that “because she had a beautiful face, a husband was considered for her.”⁷ This is an important detail, because it shows that the radical choice of leaving the world in order to follow Christ along the way marked by Francis was a free and responsible decision on her part. Francis and the brothers were certainly aware of Clare’s physical beauty as well as of her spiritual beauty. That is why their mutual friendship developed in such an open and frank way, placing Christ as the one who had a right of being a Spouse to Clare. It is Clare herself who describes this profound affection and friendship in mystical and yet concrete terms in her *Fourth Letter to Saint Agnes of Prague*:

“Draw me after you, let us run in the fragrance of your perfumes (Ct 1:3), O heavenly Spouse! I

will run and not tire, until *You bring me into the wine-cellar* (Ct 2:4), until *Your left hand is under my head* and *Your right hand will embrace me* (Ct 2:6) happily, *You will kiss me with the happiest kiss of Your mouth* (Ct 1:1).⁸

In order to understand the profound intimacy of spiritual love that bound Francis to Clare, we here quote a well-known testimony given by Sister Filippa or Lord Leonardo di Ghislerio in the *Process of Canonisation*:

“Lady Clare also related how once, in a vision, it seemed to her she brought a bowl of hot water to Saint Francis along with a towel for drying his hands. She was climbing a very high stairway, but was going very quickly, almost as though she was going on level ground. When she reached Saint Francis, the saint bared his breast and said to the Lady Clare: ‘Come, take, and drink.’ After she had sucked from it, the saint admonished her to imbibe once again. After she did so what she had tasted was so sweet and delightful she in no way could describe it. After she had imbibed, that nipple or opening of the breast from which the milk comes remained between the lips of blessed Clare. After she took what remained in her mouth in her hands, it seemed to her it was gold so clear and bright that everything was seen in it as in a mirror.”⁹

Maybe no other text in the Sources can be as clear as this one regarding the human dimension of Francis’ affection towards Clare. Although the vision, or dream, of Clare is typically feminine in its symbolic and physical connotations, and it is evident that it is Clare who is attracted to Francis and not the other way round, it is also clear that Francis is quite willing to offer himself to Clare’s tender and loving cares and to give her access to his intimate friendship. All in all, it is quite a touching and down to earth experience of a couple falling in love, but it is presented against the mystical and symbolic background of lovemaking in the *Canticle of Canticles*. Such a description of the intimate relationship of love between Francis and Clare is very different from the ascetical and austere description given to the same relationship by Francis’ foremost biographer, namely Thomas of Celano, in his *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*.¹⁰

What such a vision goes to state is simply that there existed a genuine, sincere and loving relationship of a spiritual friendship between Francis and Clare, based upon their common ideal of following Jesus Christ. The human aspect of such a relationship

not only does not water down the deep theological significance of spiritual friendship, but it enriches it. It is God himself who is full of tender love towards creatures, and this love is expressed in the mystery of the Incarnate Word. Clare of Assisi remained for the first brothers a source of inspiration and faithfulness to the ideal of Francis. Without her feminine touch the Franciscan ideal would not have been expressed in the way we know it, and Francis would not have cherished the maternal aspect of God’s friendship which is so evident in his life and writings.

Francis’ friendship with Jacopa dei Settesoli and other women

One of the most inspiring characters in the life of Saint Francis was the noble Roman lady Jacopa dei Settesoli.¹¹ The Franciscan Sources speak about the great devotion and affection that this noble lady used to show towards Saint Francis every time he used to visit her on his stopovers in Rome. A touching episode of the friendship between Francis and “frate Jacopa”, as he affectionately called her, is found in Bonaventure’s *Major Legend of Saint Francis*:

“Once in Rome (Francis) had with him a little lamb out of reverence for the most gentle Lamb of God. At his departure he left it in the care of the noble matron, the Lady Jacopa of Settesoli. Now the lamb went with the lady to church, standing reverently by her side as her inseparable companion, as if it had been trained in spiritual matters by the saint. If the lady was late in rising in the morning, the lamb rose and nudged her with its horns and woke her with its bleating, urging her with its nods and gestures to hurry to the church. On account of this, the lamb, which was Francis’ disciple and had now become a master of devotion, was held by the lady as an object of wonder and love.”¹²

The episode shows how a little lamb became for Jacopa dei Settesoli a living reminder of the spiritual presence of her friend Francis, who had given her the lamb as a gift. This human gesture of kindness and generosity that is normal in any sincere friendly relationship becomes, in the case of Jacopa, a celebration of God’s tender affection towards His poor disciples. In fact the lamb was for Jacopa a reminder of the importance of prayer, and in a certain way it united her in spirit with Francis who certainly taught her to praise God for the gift of His creatures.

The most noteworthy episode of tender affection and friendship between Francis and Jacopa dei Settesoli is that linked with the moment of the death of the holy father, when Jacopa came to visit him and brought him all the necessary things for burial, plus his favourite sweet. Like a confident friend Francis had indeed asked Jacopa to prepare this dish for him before he died: “‘Have her also send some of that confection which she often made for me when I was in the City.’ This confection, made of almonds, sugar and honey, and other things, the Romans call *mostacciolo*.”¹³ Although Francis could hardly taste the sweet, because of his illness, he ordered it to be given to brother Bernard of Quintavalle, for whom he reserved a special bond of affection: “The day Lady Jacopa prepared that confection for blessed Francis, the father remembered Bernard, ‘Brother Bernard likes this confection,’ he said to his companions.”¹⁴ Maybe this is an indication that Bernard would have accompanied Francis to the house of Jacopa in Rome and would have gladly eaten the *mostaccioli* which she prepared so lovingly for Francis and his brothers.

The *Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis* by Thomas of Celano contains the most detailed description of Francis’ affectionate relationship with Lady Jacopa dei Settesoli.¹⁵ The author states that Jacopa had “earned the privilege of special love from the saint.” She was so familiar to Francis and the brothers, that when she miraculously appeared at the door of the Portiuncula some days before Francis died, he declared, “the decree about women is not to be observed for Brother Jacopa.” Jacopa became the only female member of the exclusive male club of brothers at the Portiuncula! The same *Treatise* describes the tender sorrow of Jacopa when she was given the dead body of her friend Francis to embrace before his burial. “All wet with tears, she was brought in private and alone, and the body of her friend was placed in her arms. ‘Here,’ said his vicar (Elias), ‘hold, even in death, the one you loved when alive!’ Her warm tears bathed his body, and with sobs and sighs she kept hugging and kissing him, and pulled back the veil to see him unveiled.” It is the image of the bride who unveils her face to the loving gaze of her spouse during marriage, which is here applied in a contrary manner making of Francis the groom who is ready to enter into the joy of the heavenly Spouse. The tenderness expressed by Jacopa dei Settesoli is reminiscent of the love of

Mary Magdalen for the dead body of the Lord that she could not find in the empty tomb. The Sources speak about the sorrow and tears of women during Francis’ death and funeral procession, particularly of Jacopa dei Settesoli and of Clare and the Poor Ladies of San Damiano.¹⁶ These are some of the most touching pages in the Franciscan Sources, and are proof of the profound affection that Francis showed towards the women who mattered most in his life.

In his *Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis*, Thomas of Celano mentions another woman who enjoyed Francis’ friendship and became a consecrated cloistered religious, and was subsequently cured by the saint. Her name was Prassede of Rome. Celano states that: “Prassede was among the best known religious women in the City and in Roman circles. From her tender infancy she had, for love of her eternal Spouse, withdrawn for nearly forty years to a narrow cell. She earned the favour of a special friendship with Saint Francis. He did for her what he did for no other woman: he received her to obedience, and with pious devotion gave her the habit of the Religion, that is, the tunic and cord.”¹⁷ Francis’ love and care for women who recurred to his spiritual guidance is seen in various other instances in the Franciscan Sources.¹⁸ Maybe it is also important to mention the love of Francis towards *Madonna Povertà*, Lady Poverty. Although such an affectionate and friendly relationship was totally symbolic, it is interesting to note the fact that Francis regarded his faithfulness to Gospel poverty as a loving relationship between a bride and her spouse. This relationship has been immortalised in Franciscan literature and art. Let it suffice to mention the allegory entitled *Sacrum commercium Sancti Francisci cum Domina Paupertate* (The Sacred Exchange of Saint Francis with Lady Poverty), and the allegory of poverty by the anonymous Maestro delle Vele in the ceiling frescoes of the lower basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi.

Francis’ friendship with the brothers

The references to Francis’ friendly relations of affection towards his brothers are numerous in the Franciscan Sources. Here we will only outline some of the most important, in order to insist upon the human aspect of fraternity in Franciscan life.

Brother Bernard

The first follower of Francis was Bernard da Quintavalle.¹⁹ The *Fioretti* portray in a vivid way the particular sense of friendship and affection that Francis reserved for this brother. The first description of Bernard is that concerning his vocation to the brotherhood. The *Legend of the Three Companions* and other sources describe Bernard's great affection towards Francis on a human level from the very moment in which Bernard invited Francis for an evening meal in his house and also provided accommodation and made Francis sleep in his company in order to test his holiness.²⁰ Francis nurtured such a great respect and affection towards his first companion that the same text of the *Fioretti* states: "Sir Bernard similarly had such grace from God that was often rapt away to God in contemplation, and Saint Francis said of him that he was worthy of every reverence and that he had founded the Order, because he was the first who had abandoned the world, keeping nothing for himself, but giving everything to the poor of Christ, starting evangelical poverty, offering himself naked into the arms of the Crucified."²¹ According to the *Fioretti*,²² Bernard was the privileged companion of Saint Francis during the latter's journey to Santiago di Compostella, but immediately obeyed the saint when he was asked to remain behind along the journey in order to take care of a sick man. Francis then gave him permission to return to Santiago the following year. During his return journey Bernard was met by "a handsome young man dressed for travelling", who was in fact the angel of the Lord, who helped him cross a deep river, and who recounted how he had also been to the friars' place where brother Masseo welcomed him, but brother Elias had been rude to him. In this episode we find an example of human courtesy that characterised the first Franciscan fraternity, with the negative tone regarding Elias, which is typical of the "spiritual" writings of the 14th century. Courtesy is presented as a characteristic note of true friendship in fraternity.

Bernard was entrusted with great responsibilities by Saint Francis, who held him in high esteem. He sent him on a preaching mission to Florence and Bologna, and also chose him as the leader of the expedition of the brothers to Rome, when they went to meet Pope Innocent III in 1209 in order to

obtain the approval of the primitive form of life.²³ The *Fioretti* insist upon Francis' great affection towards Bernard of Quintavalle especially during the moment of the death of the saint, when Francis gave Bernard a special blessing, even though brother Elias had been presented to him as his vicar. Francis called Bernard his "firstborn" among the friars and blessed him for his faithfulness to the Gospel.²⁴ Although one cannot help noticing the polemical nature of this episode in the *Fioretti*, which tend to speak highly of Francis' companions and to condemn Elias, it is highly probable that Francis did reserve a special blessing for Bernard and was consoled to have him close to him during the intimate moment of his death.

Brother Leo

Among the first companions of Saint Francis, Brother Leo stands out as maybe the most privileged within the inner circle of brothers.²⁵ There are various accounts concerning the intimate friendship between Francis and Leo, the "little lamb of God", as Francis would call him. One of the most widely known is the episode of true and perfect joy, found especially in the *Fioretti*.²⁶

Leo was known especially for his dove-like simplicity and purity. Maybe that is why he merited Francis' friendship in such a special way. The same *Fioretti* describe how Francis and Leo found themselves without a breviary in one of their journeys, and Francis suggested praying Matins by commanding Leo to remind him of his sinfulness. Leo, instead, could not stop himself praising God and thanking Him for the gift of Francis' holiness. When Francis became annoyed, Leo answered: "God knows, my Father: each time I tried in my heart to respond as you commanded me, but God makes me speak as it pleases Him, not as it pleases me."²⁷

Leo was so intimately united with Francis that he courageously approached him one night when Francis was rapt in contemplation on Mount La Verna, and witnessed the secret dialogue between the saint and Christ. Francis was disturbed and rather annoyed that Leo had intruded into the privacy of his contemplation, but as often happens among true friends, he immediately forgave him and even went as far as sharing with him the innermost secrets of his heart.²⁸ Leo was so full of affection towards Francis that he was terrified that Francis might exclude him from his company.



The first five martyrs of the Franciscan Order

This is the way in which the *Fioretti* describe what happened, and portray a typical attitude of friendship and brotherhood: the desire to participate intimately in all moments of a friend's life, and the fear of intruding into their privacy.

Brother Masseo

Brother Masseo of Marignano was among the closest brothers of Saint Francis, and he is presented as accompanying the saint on many of his journeys.²⁹ The *Fioretti* dedicate 4 paragraphs

to Masseo, describing him as “a big man and handsome of body,” to the point that, when Francis and himself went out begging for some bread, “since Saint Francis was such a worthless-looking man and small of body, and for that reason was considered a lowly little poor man by those who did not know him, he only got a few mouthfuls and some little pieces of dry bread,” whereas “Brother Masseo, since he was a big man and handsome of body, was given good, large portions, and plenty of them, and whole loaves of bread.”³⁰

The fact that brother Masseo was aware of his good

looks and handsome and athletic stature made him wonder how Francis could be more popular than himself. It was a typical gesture of sincere friends who joke about their physical appearance. Indeed, this human touch to the brotherly friendship between Francis and Masseo is portrayed in the *Fioretti*:

“Once Saint Francis was staying in the place of the Portiuncula with Brother Masseo of Marignano, a man of great holiness, discernment and grace in speaking of God, for which Saint Francis loved him very much. One day Saint Francis was returning from the woods and from prayer, and when he was at the edge of the woods, that same Brother Masseo, wanting to test how humble he was, went up to him and, as if joking, said, ‘Why after you, why after you, why after you?’ Saint Francis responded: ‘What do you mean?’ Brother Masseo said, ‘I am saying why does the whole world come after you, and everyone seems to desire to see you and hear you? You are not a handsome man in body, you are not someone of great learning, you are not noble; so why does the whole world come after you?’”³¹ Francis was not annoyed. Rather he was overjoyed and replied that the world came after him because God could not find a greater sinner with whom to exercise His divine mercy.

The relationship between Francis and Masseo sometimes took on the turn of a child-like friendship. Francis made Masseo turn around like a kid until he became dizzy and fell to the ground, when they were at a three-way crossroads leading to Florence, Siena and Arezzo. Francis made Masseo turn round in order to discover God’s will, which was that they should proceed towards Siena.³² The episode shows a particular attitude on the part of Francis to become a *homo ludens*, a playful man. Such an attitude is typical in sincere human friendship, and is possible when one builds a frank, open and sincere relationship that arrives at “abusing” his friend’s patience and tolerance. But even Masseo was playing the same game on Francis, since the *Fioretti* say that he “wanted to test” Francis’ humility.

Francis loved Masseo to the point that he wanted him to remain humble, since he was afraid that Masseo would feel overconfident because of his charming character, handsome physique and spiritual progress, “so that he would not lift himself up in vainglory because of the many gifts and graces God gave him.”³³ In this way Francis commanded the brothers to leave all responsibility

fall upon the poor brother Masseo in order to be free for contemplation. Masseo duly obeyed, until Francis and the brothers took pity on him and told him to share the daily burden of household chores with them.

Brother Rufino

The last companion of Saint Francis about whom we shall speak, and who enjoyed a particular friendship with the saint, was Brother Rufino of Assisi, the cousin of Saint Clare.³⁴ The *Fioretti* narrate two episodes of his life, which are witnesses to the close relationship between Francis and him. The first episode regards a difficult moment in the life of Brother Rufino, when he was tempted by the devil at the Eremo delle Carceri, and became very cold in his relationship with Francis, since the devil, who appeared to him under the figure of Christ Crucified, convinced him that Francis was a boastful hypocrite and that he was commanding him to live in penance in vain, since Rufino was damned and could never be saved. Francis sent for him and spoke to him very frankly, convincing him that he was suffering from a diabolical illusion. Francis even went as far as commanding Rufino to speak courageously to the devil the next time he appeared and to tell him: “Open your mouth and I’ll shit in it.” Francis continued: “This will be a sign for you that he is the devil and not Christ.”³⁵ The episode is a beautiful example of the power of spiritual friendship that feels that the other person is not well, even though he may be far away. It is also a sign of how a true and sincere friendly relationship can have beneficial healing effects in mind, body and soul. Francis was so fond of Rufino and thought so highly of him that he “used to say that Brother Rufino was canonized by Christ in this life, and that he would not hesitate, except in front of him, to call him Saint Rufino, though he was still living on earth.”

The second touching episode is that referring to the command that Francis gave to Brother Rufino to go and preach semi-naked in the Assisi cathedral. Poor Rufino instantly obeyed and went to preach dressed only in his underwear, to the amusement of the Assisi townsfolk who ridiculed him. But when Francis reflected upon his command to Rufino he felt sorry and soon joined him in the pulpit, also preaching in his underwear. The effect of this sermon was astounding. People converted

not because of the words of the two brothers, but because of their example, since they were a living sermon of the folly of the cross. "Through all of Assisi there was such weeping that day over the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ that there was never anything like it."³⁶

Examples of deep affection between the brothers

Francis taught the brothers to love one another with a sincere and heartfelt affection. We find many instances of such deep friendship in the Sources. Here let it suffice to mention the description given to us by Celano of the first brothers and of their mutual love and friendship:

"What a great flame of charity burned in the new disciples of Christ! What great love of devout company flourished in them! When they all gathered somewhere or met each other on the road, in that place a shoot of spiritual love sprang up, scattering over all love the seeds of real delight. What more can I say? There were chaste

embraces, delightful affection, a holy kiss, sweet conversation, modest laughter, joyful looks, a clear eye, a supple spirit, a peaceable tongue, a mild answer, a single purpose, prompt obedience, and untiring hands."³⁷

What is seemingly an idealised description of the first brothers finds confirmation in various instances in the Sources. Not only was Francis always keen on teaching the brothers the beauty of mutual forgiveness, he cured many brothers who were prey to the snares of the devil who tries to rob Christ's disciples from their inner peace. A touching episode is found in the *Fioretti*, in which we see the power of brotherly love that soothes the spirit when a brother is assailed by carnal temptations. It is the episode of Brother Simon who saved a young brother from leaving the Order by praying for him and, at the same time, by embracing him and sitting close to him like a loving father.³⁸

Francis' friendship with other persons outside the fraternity

The Sources also speak about other friendships



that Francis cherished outside the intimate bond that tied him to the brothers. When he was still a young man in search of his vocation, Francis had a close friend with whom he would go to a certain crypt or cave in order to pray. We do not know who this close friend was. Many have thought that it could have been Elias, but there is no proof of this. Thomas of Celano speaks about this particular friendship of the young Francis with this young man of his age:

“Now there was in the city of Assisi a man he loved more than all the rest. They were of the same age and the constant intimacy of their mutual love made him bold to share his secrets with him. He often brought him to remote places suitable for talking, asserting that he had found a great and valuable treasure. This man was overjoyed, and since he was so excited about what he heard, he gladly went with him whenever he was summoned. There was a cave near the city where they often went and talked together about the treasure.”³⁹ Celano shows, however, how Francis would enter all by himself to pray in this cave and his companion would patiently wait outside, respecting his privacy, although he would be worried at the confused look on Francis’ face whenever he went out of that secluded spot. This episode is an indication of the need for company and friendship during difficult times in Francis’ life, as well as a proof of the healthy nature of a friendly relationship between persons of the same age. Indeed, this friendship can be considered as having been instrumental in the slow process of Francis’ conversion to the following of Christ.

During his itinerant life Francis needed the friendship of generous persons who were benefactors of the new fraternity. We can cite some examples. The *Considerations on the Stigmata of Saint Francis* speak about the finding of Mount La Verna, which Francis acquired in 1213, when he met Count Orlando of Chiusi della Verna in the castle of San Leo in Montefeltro.⁴⁰ Count Orlando was to prove himself to be one of the greatest benefactors of the first fraternity.

Count Orlando Cattani donated the mountain of La Verna to Saint Francis at the castle of San Leo on 8th May 1213. Francis went up to La Verna the first time in 1214, and as *The Considerations on the Stigmata* recount, he was personally welcomed by the Count, who offered him and his friars expert guides and soldiers to protect them on the mountain against brigands and wild animals. The

sons of Count Orlando confirmed the donation of the mountain to Francis on 9th June 1274. The document specifies that the extension of the territory donated included the entire mountain, with its cover of trees, its cliffs and fields, departing from the summit of the mountain (Mount Penna, 1289 metres above sea-level), down to the very base, all around, a generous gift indeed!

The example of Count Orlando shows how Francis was courteous and friendly with rich and powerful men who made alms to the new fraternity, out of the love they had for the friars. Another example of a generous man who greatly respected Saint Francis is that of John of Greccio. The *Assisi Compilation* states: “the saint loved (John) with great affection and showed him great friendliness during his whole lifetime.”⁴¹ John was instrumental in the Christmas event of Greccio, since he prepared for Francis the stable in which the Christmas Mass was celebrated in 1223. Celano says: “There was a certain man in that area named John who had a good reputation but an even better manner of life. Blessed Francis loved him with special affection.” It was John who, during that blessed night, “saw a little child lying lifeless in the manger and he saw the holy man of God approach the child and waken him from a deep sleep.”⁴²

Conclusion

From the moment in which Francis embraced and kissed the leper in 1205, to the moment when he lay dying at the Portiuncula in 1226, his life was characterised by an intense love towards the brothers, towards all persons of both sexes, and towards all creatures. We could consider Francis’ love as having been an expression of the theological virtue of charity, which implies acceptance, forgiveness, fraternity, and which is nurtured by a life of prayer of intercession for all. Yet such a sublime commitment would not have been an example to imitate had it not been expressed through Francis’ humanity and his psychological and physical ability to show love and affection and to let himself be loved in return. Fraternal life is certainly based upon a relationship among equals, centred upon God. Yet it would not be a joyful experience without the gift of friendship and courtesy. This is what the Franciscan notion of fraternity is all about. If we are to be freed from an abstract notion of fraternity

that has unfortunately invaded our friaries and our bourgeois lifestyle of self-sufficiency, we are to return to the original attitude of mutual friendship and kindness that Francis and the brothers shared. If we rediscover this fundamental human need that lies at the basis of any sincere relationship on the theological level, we can be able to stop craving for possessive relationships and self-sufficiency in order to experience the joy of the blessed who are pure in heart and who see God in their sisters and brothers.

NOTES

1 Translation by the author of this paper from Latin text in: <http://www.teologiaspirituale.it/testi.html>. For the official English translation: Aelred of Rievaulx, *Spiritual Friendship*, Translated by Lawrence Braceland, Cistercian Publications, Kentucky 2010.

2 *Test* 14: "And after the Lord gave me some brothers" (FAED I, 125).

3 Optatus van Asseldonk, *Affetto, Amicizia*, in *Dizionario Francese*, Movimento Franciscano Assisi, Padova 1983, 1-24.

4 *LR* 6,7-8: "Wherever the brothers may be and meet one another, let them show that they are members of the same family. Let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for if a mother loves and cares for her son according to the flesh, how much more diligently must someone love and care for his brother according to the Spirit" (FAED I, 103).

5 *Testimony of Brother Stephen*, in L. Olier, *Descriptio codicis Sancti Antonii de urbe una cum appendice textuum de sancto Francisco*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 12 (1919), 382-384.

6 *TestCl* 29 (CAED, 61).

7 *PC* 18,1 (CAED, 193).

8 *4LAg* 30-31 (CAED, 57).

9 *PC* 3,29 (CAED, 161). This episode has been the object of misinterpretations, but fortunately also of erudite studies, particularly by Marco Bartoli, *Historical Analysis and Psychoanalytical Interpretations of a Vision of Clare of Assisi*, in *Greyfriars Review* 6 (1992) 189-209; Margaret Carney, *Francis and Clare: A Critical Examination of the Sources*, in *Greyfriars Review* 3 (1989) 337-339.

10 *2C* 112: "When he spoke with a woman, he would speak out in a loud voice so that all could hear. He once said to his companion: 'I'll tell you the truth, dear brother, I would not recognise any woman if I looked at her face, except for two. I know the face of this one and that one, but any other, I do not know'" (FAED II, 322). These two familiar faces could have been those of Saint Clare and Lady Jacopa di Settesoli. Thomas of Celano describes in an austere manner the relationship of Francis and the brothers with Lady Clare and the Poor Sisters in *2C* 205-207 (FAED II, 377-380).

¹¹ A biographical note on this Roman noble lady is found in FAED II, 122: "Jacopa (or Giacomina) dei Settesoli was of a noble Roman family of high rank, the descendant on her father's side of the Norman knights who had conquered Sicily. Her husband, Graziano, was a member of one of

Rome's great families, the Frangipani. They were believed to be the descendants of Flavius Anicius, who in 717 AD saved the people of Rome from famine by giving them bread and so was given the name *Frangens panem*, (or 'Frangipani,' 'breaking bread'). The family also traced its descent from Aeneas, son of Anchises, the Trojan hero whose emigration to Italy is told in Virgil's *Aeneid*. The name Settesoli came from the Septizonium, the imposing structure that the Frangipani acquired in 1145 from Camaldolese monks."

¹² *LMj* 8,7 (FAED II, 591-592).

¹³ *AC* 8 (FAED II, 122).

¹⁴ *AC* 12 (FAED II, 126).

¹⁵ *3C* 37-39 (FAED II, 417-419).

¹⁶ *IC* 116-117 (FAED I, 283-284). Paul Sabtier, in his *Life of Saint Francis of Assisi*, Translation by L. Seymour Houghton, London 1908, 344, makes an interesting comment on this event: "On the morrow, at dawn, the Assisians came down to take possession of his body and give it a triumphant funeral. By a pious inspiration, instead of going straight to the city they went around by St. Damian, and thus was realized the promise made by Francis to the Sisters a few weeks before, to come once more to see them. Their grief was heart-rending. These women's hearts revolted against the absurdity of death; but there were tears on that day at St. Damian only. The Brothers forgot their sadness on seeing the stigmata, and the inhabitants of Assisi manifested an indescribable joy on having their relic at last."

¹⁷ *3C* 181 (FAED II, 462). The same episode is found in *LMj*, Miracles 8,7 (FAED II, 675).

¹⁸ Among the various examples of women for whom Francis showed particular affection, we mention Lady Pica, his mother. *2C* 3 (FAED II, 242) describes Pica as "a friend of all complete integrity." Francis takes pity on a woman from Limisiano, who suffered from verbal and physical abuse by her husband, and through his words of comfort and counsel he encouraged her to obtain the conversion of her husband (*2C* 69: FAED II, 172-173). In the *Treatise on the Miracles of St. Francis* we find various instances of pregnant women who delivered healthy children after a difficult labour, through the intercession of Saint Francis.

¹⁹ Bernardo da Quintavalle was a member of one of the noble families of Assisi. His house, in which he welcomed Francis one evening for dinner, and where he was converted during the night in which he invited Francis to sleep in his own room, can still be seen in Assisi, in Via Bernardo da Quintavalle. The episode of Bernard's conversion is particularly detailed in *AP* 10, *2C* 15, and *L3C* 27-29, with other details in the *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius* 1, and *Fioretti* 2. Bernard accompanied Francis and the first brothers as head of the expedition to Rome in 1209, when they went to Pope Innocent III for the approval of the *forma vitae*. He was an itinerant preacher in Florence and Bologna in 1211, and in 1216 accompanied Giles to Santiago di Compostella (*IC* 30), and maybe also Francis in 1214, according to the *Chronicle of 24 Ministers General*. The "spiritual" sources describe Bernard as the "firstborn" of Francis, in contrast to brother Elias, who was the "vicar", particularly during the episode in which Francis reserved a special blessing for Bernard before he died at the Portiuncula (*MP* 107, *Actus* 5, *LFl* 6). Bernard died as a contemplative and was buried in the lower church of Saint Francis in Assisi.

²⁰ *L3C* 27-29 (FAED II, 85-86).

²¹ *LFI* 2 (FAED III, 567-569).

²² *LFI* 4 (FAED III, 571-574).

²³ *L3C* 46 (FAED II, 95).

²⁴ *LFI* 6 (FAED III, 576-578).

²⁵ Leo was born around the end of the 12th century in Assisi, or Viterbo (according to the *Tractatus de Indulgentia* of Francesco di Bartolo di Assisi). The *AC* and the *MP* say that Leo came from Assisi. Arnaldo Fortini found a document in the Assisi cathedral archives, which mentions a certain *Domino Leone*, and thus indicates that Leo could have been a priest. He entered the Order after 1209, and probably around 1215 when, according to *IC* 55, a group of clerics and laymen entered the Order. The fact that Leo was a priest is shown in the *Liber exemplorum fratrum minorum*, in which Francis calls Leo *novus sacerdos*. Leo was also the confessor and *secretarius* of Saint Francis, he accompanied him to Fonte Colombo in 1223, when Francis dictated the *Later Rule*, and in 1224 was with him on Mount La Verna, where Francis received the stigmata. It was on La Verna that Leo acquired from Francis the *Chartula*, a parchment containing the *Praises of the Most High God* and the *Blessing given to brother Leo*, today conserved as a relic in the Basilica of Saint Francis. Francis also addressed a short autograph to Leo, which is nowadays conserved in the cathedral of Spoleto. The fact that Leo was “secretary” to Saint Francis is proved by the episode of *True and Perfect Joy*, in which Francis commands him: “Brother Leo, write!”, as well as by the rubrics that Leo himself wrote in the “Breviary of Saint Francis”, which he conserved and then donated to sister Benedetta, abbess of the Monastery of Saint Clare in Assisi in 1257-1260. After the death of Francis Leo dwelt in various hermitages, like the Portiuncula, San Damiano, Greccio, La Verna, and Monteripido. Leo was one of the three companions (Leo, Rufino, Angelo) who wrote the *Letter of Greccio* to the Minister General Crescentius of Iesi (11 August 1246) accompanying the *florilegium*, or their memoirs concerning Francis of Assisi. Leo was also the author of two scrolls, the *Words of Saint Francis*, and the *Intention of the Rule*, conserved in manuscript 1/73 of Saint Isidore’s College in Rome (*Documenta Antiqua Franciscana*, Quaracchi 1901-1902). He was close to Saint Clare during the last moments of her life on 11 August 1253. Leo’s writings were popular with the Spiritual friars. Ubertino da Casale, in his *Tree of the Crucified life of Jesus* (1305), mentions these scrolls, and again in 1311 wrote that they were still conserved “in a cupboard of the friars in Assisi.” Leo spent the last years of his life in Assisi, where Salimbene, James of Massa and Angelo Clareno visited him. He died on 14 or 15 November 1271 and was buried in the lower church of Saint Francis in Assisi. Since 1932 his remains lie in the crypt, close to the tomb of Saint Francis. Cfr. Enrico Menestò, *Leone e i compagni di Assisi*, in *I compagni di Francesco e la prima generazione minoritica*. Atti del XIX Convegno internazionale (Assisi, 17-19 ottobre 1991), Società internazionale di Studi Francescani, Spoleto 1992; Tommaso Calì, *Leone d’Assisi*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Vol. 64 (2005), con ulteriori indicazioni bibliografiche; Wiesław Block, *Frate Leone di Assisi, compagno di san Francesco*, in *Frate Francesco* 77/1 (2011) 7-32.

²⁶ *LFI* 8 (FAED III, 579-581).

²⁷ *LFI* 9 (FAED III, 581-582).

²⁸ The episode is found in the *Third Consideration on the Sacred Stigmata*, an appendix to the *Fioretti*, which unfortunately have not been included in the English translation of the Sources. It can be found in Italian in the *Fonti Francescane. Nuova Edizione*, Editrici Francescane, Padova 2011, marginal numbers 1915-1916. Leo’s attitude is described in a vivid way in these expressions: “When he (Leo) was going away with an air of certainty, Saint Francis heard a rustling of leaves being trodden upon and he commanded him to stop where he was and not to move. So brother Leo obediently stopped still and was trembling with so much fear that, as he later told his companions, he

would have liked the ground to swallow him up, and not to wait for Saint Francis, whom he thought very confused and angry with him. In fact, he diligently tried his best to be careful not to offend his paternity, and he was afraid that, because of his fault, Saint Francis would now deprive him of his company.”

²⁹ According to the historian Arnaldo Fortini, *Nova Vita di San Francesco*, Tipografia Porziuncola, Assisi 1959, Vol. II, 298; Vol. III, 461, Masseo was born in Marignano, not far from Assisi. He entered the Order in 1210 and was one of the most intimate companions of Francis, accompanying him in many of his journeys. After the death of Saint Francis Masseo spent many years living in the Eremo delle Carceri and in the Eremo di Cibòttola, close to Perugia. He died in Assisi in 1280 and was buried in the lower church of Saint Francis.

³⁰ *LFI* 13 (FAED III, 587).

³¹ *LFI* 10 (FAED III, 583).

³² *LFI* 11 (FAED III, 584-585).

³³ *LFI* 12 (FAED III, 585-586).

³⁴ Rufino of Assisi was Saint Clare’s cousin. In the past historians mistakenly thought that both he and Favarone di Offreduccio, Clare’s father, belonged to the noble family of Scifi. Rufino entered the Order around 1210. Arnaldo Fortini, *Nova Vita di San Francesco*, Tipografia Porziuncola, Assisi 1959, Vol. II, 383-387, identifies Brother Rufino as Rufino di Scipione di Offreduccio. Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor vitae crucifixae Iesu*, V, 5:56, says that Rufino, together with Brother Leo, accompanied Francis to Fonte Colombo, when Francis composed the *Later Rule* in 1223. According to Thomas of Eccleston, *De adventu fratrum minorum in Angliam*, c. 13, 92, Rufino was with Francis on Monte della Verna in 1224, when Francis received the stigmata. The author of the *Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius*, dedicates chapters 34-37 to Brother Rufino, who was companion of Angelo of Rieti e Leo of Assisi, the *three companions* of Greccio. Rufino died on 15 November 1278, and was buried in the lower church of Saint Francis.

³⁵ *LFI* 29 (FAED III, 617-620).

³⁶ *LFI* 30 (FAED III, 620-621).

³⁷ *IC* 38 (FAED I, 217-218).

³⁸ *LFI* 41 (FAED III, 634-635): “Finally one night that temptation attacked him more strongly than usual, and he could not resist it for anything in the world. He went to Brother Simon demanding absolutely to have his secular clothes, because he could by no means stay there any longer. Then Brother Simon, as he usually did, had him sit down beside him and, as he was speaking to him of God, the young man leaned his head onto Brother Simon’s breast out of melancholy and sadness. Then Brother Simon, because of the great compassion he had toward him, raised his eyes to heaven and, praying to God devoutly for him, was enraptured and heard by God; then he returned to himself, and the young man felt himself completely freed from that temptation, as if he had never felt it.”

³⁹ *IC* 6 (FAED I, 187).

⁴⁰ The episode of the finding of Mount La Verna is also found in the *Actus beati Francisci* 9 (FAED III, 452-458).

⁴¹ *AC* 119 (FAED II, 228).

⁴² *IC* 84-86 (FAED I, 254-256).

War is madness

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Dopo aver contemplato la bellezza del paesaggio di tutta questa zona, dove uomini e donne lavorano portando avanti la loro famiglia, dove i bambini giocano e gli anziani sognano... trovandomi qui, in questo luogo, vicino a questo cimitero, trovo da dire soltanto: la guerra è una follia. Mentre Dio porta avanti la sua creazione, e noi uomini siamo chiamati a collaborare alla sua opera, la guerra distrugge. Distrugge anche ciò che Dio ha creato di più bello: l'essere umano. La guerra stravolge tutto, anche il legame tra i fratelli. La guerra è folle, il suo piano di sviluppo è la distruzione: volersi sviluppare mediante la distruzione! La cupidigia, l'intolleranza, l'ambizione al potere... sono motivi che spingono avanti la decisione bellica, e questi motivi sono spesso giustificati da un'ideologia; ma prima c'è la passione, c'è l'impulso distorto. L'ideologia è una giustificazione, e quando non c'è un'ideologia, c'è la risposta di Caino: "A me che importa?". «Sono forse io il custode di mio fratello?» (Gen 4,9). La guerra non guarda in faccia a nessuno: vecchi, bambini, mamme, papà... "A me che importa?". Sopra l'ingresso di questo cimitero, aleggia il motto beffardo della guerra: "A me che importa?". Tutte queste persone, che riposano qui, avevano i loro progetti, avevano i loro sogni..., ma le loro vite sono state spezzate. Perché? Perché l'umanità ha detto: "A me che importa?". Anche oggi, dopo il secondo fallimento di un'altra guerra mondiale, forse si può parlare di una terza guerra combattuta "a pezzi", con crimini, massacri, distruzioni... Ad essere onesti, la prima pagina dei giornali dovrebbe avere come titolo: "A me che importa?". Caino direbbe: «Sono forse io il custode di mio fratello?». Questo atteggiamento è esattamente l'opposto di quello che ci chiede Gesù nel Vangelo. Abbiamo ascoltato: Lui è nel più piccolo dei fratelli: Lui, il Re, il Giudice del mondo, Lui è l'affamato, l'assetato, il forestiero, l'ammalato, il carcerato... Chi si prende cura del fratello, entra nella gioia del Signore; chi invece non lo fa, chi con le sue omissioni dice: "A me che importa?", rimane fuori. Qui e nell'altro cimitero ci sono tante vittime. Oggi noi le ricordiamo. C'è il pianto, c'è il lutto, c'è il dolore. E da qui ricordiamo le vittime di tutte le guerre. Anche oggi le vittime sono tante... Come è possibile questo? E' possibile perché anche oggi dietro le quinte ci sono interessi, piani geopolitici, avidità di denaro e di potere, c'è l'industria delle armi, che sembra essere tanto importante! E questi pianificatori del terrore, questi organizzatori dello scontro, come pure gli imprenditori delle armi, hanno scritto nel cuore: "A me che importa?". E' proprio dei saggi riconoscere gli errori, provarne dolore, pentirsi, chiedere perdono e piangere. Con quel "A me che importa?" che hanno nel cuore gli affaristi della guerra, forse guadagnano tanto, ma il loro cuore corrotto ha perso la capacità di piangere. Caino non ha pianto. Non ha potuto piangere. L'ombra di Caino ci ricopre oggi qui, in questo cimitero. Si vede qui. Si vede nella storia che va dal 1914 fino ai nostri giorni. E si vede anche nei nostri giorni. Con cuore di figlio, di fratello, di padre, chiedo a tutti voi e per tutti noi la conversione del cuore: passare da "A me che importa?", al pianto. Per tutti i caduti della "inutile strage", per tutte le vittime della follia della guerra, in ogni tempo. Il pianto. Fratelli, l'umanità ha bisogno di piangere, e questa è l'ora del pianto.

Pope Francis

Homily at Mass at Sacrario Militare Redipuglia
Gorizia, 13 September 2014

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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:

St. Francis giving the Rule to the First and Second Order members