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EDITORIAL

THE PEACE OF ASSISI

Twenty-five years ago, on 27th October 1986, Blessed Pope John Paul II met the heads of all religions of the world in Assisi, during a day dedicated to prayer and fasting for peace. The occasion was unique in its originality and we still vividly remember the images of John Paul II surrounded by the religious leaders of the world in front of the Portiuncula chapel in the Basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels, and in the piazza below the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi.

Pope Benedict XVI has willed to commemorate this event with another special meeting with world religious leaders in Assisi on 27th October 2011. The aim was not simply that of commemorating a unique event, but also to remind everyone of the need to pray and work hard for the cause of peace.

Way back in 1986 we were at the eve of great political and social upheavals in Europe. Some years later the Berlin wall went down, the Soviet Union disintegrated, and Communist regimes disappeared from the countries of Eastern Europe. In Poland the workers movement Solidarnosc heralded a new era of democracy and freedom that was soon to be copied in many other countries of the former Soviet block.

We have come a long way from that important moment in the history of contemporary Europe. Since then Europe has become a stronghold of peace and economic prosperity, particularly with the enlargement of the European Union, which now includes many of the countries of the continent. It seems, however, that the great hopes and promises of peace and prosperity were soon to be shattered. Indeed we cannot say that after a quarter of a century the world has become a better place to live in.

We are still witnessing wars, brutal dictatorships, famine and misery in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa and in the Middle East. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is still dragging on after more than 60 years. Major wars have been fought in the name of freedom, but with disastrous consequences, as in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq. The threat of terrorism has been very real, especially after the 11th September 2001 attacks in the USA. The Arab Spring has characterised this year with major revolutions in many countries in North Africa and the Middle East, particularly Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria. We are still holding our breath to see what will happen in these countries, which should have switched on from brutal dictatorships into democratic states. The threat of militant Islamism remains strong and dangerous, particularly in the persecution of Christians in Egypt, Pakistan, Indonesia and other countries of the region. The western world is beset with the woes of a global recession and with floods of poor immigrants from Africa and Asia in search of a better future.

That is why praying for peace and working for peace and justice is more important than ever. The choice of Assisi is again a sign of the importance that the hometown of Saint Francis still has in order to evoke the Christian message of peace and reconciliation. It is high time that the world wakes up to the cries of the poor and oppressed of our times if it wants true peace. That was the choice of the poor little man of Assisi some 8 centuries ago and it is still the dream of all those who genuinely follow his spirit.

Noel Muscat OFM

THE LAST SUPPER OF SAINT FRANCIS AND THE IMAGE OF THE NEW ADAM (2)

Noel Muscat ofm

Christ, the new Adam, in the paschal meal of Holy Thursday and in the “last supper” of Saint Francis

When Saint Francis was dying at the Portiuncula, during the first days of October 1226, he wanted to re-live with his brothers the episode of the last supper of the Lord on the day of Holy Thursday. For Francis, the celebration of the supper of the Lord was linked in an inseparable way with the Eucharist, the ministerial priesthood and the commandment of fraternal charity. Before going into the analysis of the episode of the so-called “last supper of Saint Francis” as it is handed down to us in the Sources, we have to take a look at the references to the supper of the Lord in the writings of the Saint.

The most important reference to the Lord’s supper is found in the *Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful*, within the context of the reflection that Francis makes regarding the Word of the Father:

“And as His Passion was near, He celebrated the Passover with His disciples and, taking bread, gave thanks, blessed and broke it, saying: *Take and eat: This is My Body*. And taking the cup He said: *This is My Blood of the New Covenant which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.*”¹

The text forms part of the first section of the *Second Version of the Letter to the Faithful*, which speaks about “The Word of the Father”, and immediately follows upon the words that regard the mystery of the Incarnation of Christ, true man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and of his choice of radical poverty. We know that Francis often returns upon this theme, particularly in his defence of the true humanity of Christ, in opposition to the doctrine of the Cathars who denied the truth of the Incarnation. The reference to the supper of the Lord is inserted within the paschal

context according to the narrative of Matthew. There is nothing that is original of Francis in these words, which in substance are the repetition of the evangelical text. However, after a reference to the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, where Francis underlines the obedience of the Lord to the will of the Father, we find a more original comment that links the last supper of Jesus with his sacrificial death on the cross:

“His Father’s will was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and Who was born for us, should offer Himself through His own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: not for Himself *through Whom all things were made* (cfr. Jn 1:3), but for our sins, leaving us an example that we might follow His footsteps. And He wishes all of us to be saved through Him and receive Him with our heart pure and our body chaste. But, even though His *yoke is easy* and His *burden light* (Mt 11:30), there are few who wish to receive Him and be saved through Him.”²

The object of the will of the Father, according to Francis, was the sacrificial death of His Son on the cross, which is described as an altar. In these words we already note the link between the paschal meal and the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. The reason for this death is found in the sins of humankind, since Christ could not die for himself, since according to John 1:3, *all things were made through Him*. In these words the evangelist links the entire creative activity of the Father with his *Logos*, or eternal Word, which becomes the prototype of the entire creation. The reference to man’s sin as the reason why Christ offers himself as a victim of expiation is also related to the sin of the first man, Adam, who was the origin of human nature corrupted by sin after having been created to the image and likeness of the Son (always according to the interpretation of Francis).

With his death on the cross Christ leaves us an example in order that we might follow in his footsteps.

1Peter 2:21 is a verse dear to Francis' sensibility, and he quotes it at other times in his writings.³ This verse reminds us of the obedient following of Christ, who submitted his will to the will of the Father, not like Adam, the first man, who was a rebel and was disobedient through an act of pride. The obedience of Christ, Son of God and new Adam, is expressed in a unique way during the moment of agony in Gethsemane and during the death on the cross. The imitation of this attitude is necessary in order to regain the original image of Adam in the earthly paradise, but it is also necessary to carry Christ's sweet yoke and light burden (cfr. Mt 11:30), that is, to accept the reality of the cross. We cannot live this reality in fullness if we do not unite ourselves with Christ who is sacrificed for us in the mystery of the Eucharist. In this way we can be saved through his death and resurrection, which we live once again in the paschal meal. Therefore, the institution of the Eucharist during the last supper, the prayer of obedience during the agony in Gethsemane, the sacrificial offering on the altar of the cross, and the following of Christ crucified, constitute a precise theological discourse and are mutually related.

The constitutive elements of the liturgy of Holy Thursday are found united together in various texts in which Francis speaks about the Eucharist, ministerial priesthood and the gesture of Jesus who washes the feet of his disciples as a concrete sign of his love unto death on the cross. The three elements that we have mentioned, however, can also be found in the episode of the dying Francis who wanted to re-lived the supper of the Lord that the Church celebrates in a solemn way on Holy Thursday.⁴

The texts from the Sources which we shall analyse have in common various elements that make them draw their inspiration from one source, that can be linked to the documentary material of the companions of Saint Francis, sent with an accompanying letter by the "Three Companions" of Greccio on 11th August 1246 to the minister general Crescenzo da Iesi. Here we cannot enter into the merits of the synoptic study of the three texts, since such a study has already been accomplished with expertise by renowned scholars of the mediaeval sources for the life of Saint Francis.⁵ What is of interest to us is to study, in the text we analyse, those elements that correspond to the paschal celebration of Holy Thursday, which Francis wanted to re-live in that extreme moment before departing from this world. The *transitus* of Saint Francis at the Portiuncula is presented by the biographers as a paschal celebration, which enters into the living texture of the mystery of Christ who offers himself to us during the last supper, during his passion on the altar of the cross, as a victim for our sins. We shall not only try to make emerge these themes, but also to see them in the light of Christ who, as a new Adam, restores the image and likeness of God, spoiled by sin in the old Adam and

his descendants. In this way Francis re-lives in his own suffering flesh, during a time of sickness when he was near death, the drama of the first Adam who was redeemed by Christ crucified, the new Adam.

The first text that we shall take into examination is that of *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* by Thomas of Celano, written in 1246-1247, with the help of the documentary material of the companions of Greccio. Already in the *Life of Saint Francis* Celano had spoken about the *transitus* of Saint Francis,⁶ and had mentioned in a particular way the blessing of the dying Francis, the prayer of Psalm 142(141), "With a loud voice I cried out to the Lord," the reading of the Gospel of John from chapter 13 onwards, and the fact that Francis wanted the friars to sprinkle his body with ashes at the point of death. In the *Memoriale*, however, Celano adds some other details, and in a special manner the episode of the so-called "last supper of Saint Francis."

"As the brothers shed bitter tears and wept inconsolably, the holy father had *bread brought* to him. He *blessed* and *broke* it (Mt 14:17.18; Mt 26:26), and gave each of them a piece to eat. He also ordered a Book of the Gospels to be brought and asked that the Gospel according to Saint John be read to him starting from that place which begins: *Before the feast of Passover* (Jn 13:1). He was remembering that most sacred Supper, the last one the Lord celebrated *with his disciples* (Mt 26:20). In reverent memory of this, to show his brothers how much he loved them, he did all of this.

The few days that remained to him before his passing he spent in praise of God, teaching his beloved companions how to praise Christ with him. As best he could, he broke out in this psalm, *With my voice I cried to the Lord, With my voice I beseeched the Lord* (Ps 142:2-8). He also invited all creatures to the praise of God, and exhorted them to love by some words which he had composed earlier. Even death itself, terrible and hateful to everyone, he exhorted to praise, and going to meet her joyfully, invited her to be his guest, saying: 'Welcome, my Sister Death!' And to the doctor he said: 'Be bold, Brother Doctor, foretell death is near; for to me she will be the gate of Life!' But to the brothers he said: 'When you see I have come to my end put me out naked on the ground as you saw me naked the day before yesterday, and once I am dead, allow me to lie there for as long as it takes to walk a leisurely mile.' The *hour came* (Jn 4:21). All the *mysteries of Christ* (Col 4:3) were fulfilled in him, and he happily flew off to God."⁷

Thomas of Celano recalls the gestures of the Lord Jesus, who receives the five loaves and multiplies them in the miracle recorded in Mt 14:19 and parallel synoptic texts, who blesses and breaks bread during the last supper in Mt 26:26, and lastly who loves his own to the very end by bowing down to wash the feet of

the disciples during the last supper in Jn 13:1ff. The link between the gestures of Francis and those of Jesus during the supper on Holy Thursday is underlined by Celano in the expression: “He was remembering that most sacred Supper, the last one the Lord celebrated with his disciples.” The text, however, contains various elements that are linked with the profound meaning of the paschal meal of the Lord. We shall try to individuate some of them.

The gestures of Francis, who imitates the actions of Christ during the last supper, remind us of the constitutive elements of the liturgy of Holy Thursday. Francis asks the brothers to bring him some bread, then he blesses it and breaks it. This was the Eucharistic gesture of the Lord, who instituted the Eucharist during the last supper. At the same time it is also the gesture of the priest who presides in the person of Christ during the Eucharistic sacrifice. This paraliturgical representation of the supper has its importance, because it comes from Francis, who was not a priest, but who demonstrated respect and reverence to the ordained ministers of the Church. Francis distributed the bread to all the brothers gathered around his deathbed, just as Christ distributed the bread to the apostles during the last supper. With this action Francis expressed the communion of love that should reign among the brothers, which is truly signified in the Eucharistic celebration. After this gesture Francis commanded the brothers to bring to him the book of the Gospels, and wanted to listen to the text of the Gospel of John 13:1ff, in which the evangelist recounts the gesture of Jesus who loves his disciples to the end by washing their feet. This is the third element of the paschal meal of Holy Thursday, and we know how fundamental this action is not only in the reading of the Gospel text during the liturgy of this particular day, but also in the tradition to re-enact the gestures of Jesus in a concrete way in the rite of the *Mandatum*, or foot washing. In the Middle Ages the custom to wash the feet of poor persons was widespread in the monasteries and cathedrals, and was called *Mandatum*, from the first word of the antiphon that is sung during the celebration: *Mandatum novum dabo vobis* (I will give you a new commandment), echoing in this way the words of Jesus in Jn 13:34. Francis accomplished this paraliturgical action with his brothers, and in the reading of the text from John’s Gospel he certainly wanted to re-live in a spiritual way this experience of fraternal charity towards those who he loved to the very end, on the example of the Master.

Even though the most important elements of the paschal meal are found in these gestures on the part of Francis, we can add others that refer to the experience of Jesus before the passion. On the point of dying Francis recites Psalm 142(141), which begins with the Latin words *Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi*. It is a psalm of anguish but also of hope, of sadness but also of liberation. It is a psalm that, placed on the

lips of Francis at the extreme moment of his departure from this life, expresses in a unique way the sentiments of Christ in the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection. In a particular way it reminds us of the agony of Jesus in Gethsemane, which immediately follows the paschal meal. In his agony Christ abandons himself in an attitude of obedience in the hands of the Father, in order to win over the ancient adversary. As we have already seen, already in Gethsemane Jesus expiates the sin of disobedience of the first Adam with his action of free and voluntary obedience in the hands of the Father, and thus becomes the new Adam who gives back to man his lost freedom.

The welcoming of “sister death” reminds us of the serenity by which Christ went out to encounter his death on the cross, and of his words of total trust in the Father to the extreme moment of his death, according to Luke 23:46. Celano then insists upon the fact that, in the person of the dying Francis, all the mysteries of the life of Christ were accomplished. This is a reference to the theme of the *conformitas* with Christ, which is already evident in the writings of Celano, but which is then developed in the later Sources of the 14th century. Francis gathers in his person the same life of Christ, and in the moment of his *transitus* he appears truly as the one who, with Christ, accomplishes the passage from this world to the Father.

The second text that we shall take into consideration is that of the *Assisi Compilation*. Since it comes from the same source, it is very similar to the text of Celano. The references to Holy Scripture are less marked, the style is simpler and the content is shorter. All these are indications that probably this text of the *Compilatio* served as a source for Thomas of Celano, and that in its original nucleus it was closer to the witness of the companions of Greccio. The text insists upon the day of the week, namely a Thursday, when Francis had the intention to celebrate his “last supper” with the brothers:

“One night blessed Francis was so afflicted with the pains of his illness that he could barely rest or sleep that night. In the morning, when his pain eased a bit, he had all the brothers staying in that place called to him, and when they were seated around him, he considered them and regarded them as representatives of all the brothers.

Beginning with one brother, he blessed them, placing his right hand on the head of each one, and he blessed all who were in the religion and all who were to come until the end of the world. He seemed to feel sorry for himself because he was not able to see his sons and brothers before his death.

Afterwards he ordered loaves of bread to be brought to him and he blessed them. Unable to break them because of his illness, he had them broken into many little pieces by one of the brothers. Taking them, he offered each of the brothers a little piece, telling

them to eat all of it. Just as the Lord desired to eat with the apostles on the Thursday before his death, it seemed to those brothers that, in a similar way, blessed Francis, before his death, wanted to bless them and, in them, all the other brothers, and that they should eat that blessed bread as if in some way they were eating with the rest of their brothers.

And we can consider this obvious because, while it was a day other than Thursday, he told the brothers that he believed it was Thursday.

One of the brothers kept a piece of that bread, and after the death of blessed Francis some people who tasted it were immediately freed from their illnesses.”⁸

The text is very similar to that of Celano, but insists upon the fact that Francis wanted, at least intentionally, to celebrate his “last supper” with the brothers on a Thursday, in order to imitate the Lord who celebrated his last supper on Holy Thursday before his passion. The supper is placed in relation with the last blessing of Francis, who appears like the patriarch Jacob who blesses his sons in the Genesis account. The testament of love of Francis is sealed by the gesture of sharing the blessed bread. According to the authors of the *Compilatio*, this bread also assumed miraculous powers in order to heal sick persons who tasted it after the death of Francis.

The same episode is also recounted nearly *verbatim* in the *Mirror of Perfection* (Sabatier edition). Here we also present this text in order to show the similarities with the text of the *Assisi Compilation*. Although the *Speculum* is of late composition, being dated 1318, it makes abundant use of the documentary material of the companions of Saint Francis, particularly of the scrolls of brother Leo, and therefore is a privileged witness among the biographical sources for the life of Saint Francis:

“One night blessed Francis was so afflicted with the pains of his illness that he could barely rest or sleep that night. In the morning, when his pain eased a bit, he had all the brothers staying in that place called to him, and when they were seated around him, he considered them and regarded them as representatives of all the brothers.

Placing his right hand of the head (Gn 48:17) of each one, he blessed all who were present and absent in the religion and all who were to come to the Order until the end of the world. He seemed to feel sorry for himself because he was not able to see all his sons and brothers before his death.

Desiring to imitate his Lord and Master in death as he had so perfectly done in his life, he ordered *loaves of bread* to be brought to him. *And he blessed* (Mt 26:26) them and had them broken into many little pieces because he was unable to do so because he was extremely weak. Taking them, he offered each of the brothers a little piece, telling them to eat all of it. Just as the Lord *desired to eat* (Lk 22:15) with the apostles

as a sign of His love on the Thursday before His death, in the same way His perfect imitator, blessed Francis, wanted to show the same sign of love to his brothers.

And it is clear he wished to do this in imitation of Christ, because he later asked if the day were a Thursday. And since it was another day, he said he thought it was Thursday.

One of the brothers kept a piece of that bread, and after the death of blessed Francis many sick people who tasted it were immediately freed from their illnesses.”⁹

The text of the *Speculum* insists upon the verb *imitari* (to imitate). Francis, “desiring to *imitate* his Lord and Master in death as he had so perfectly done in his life, he ordered loaves of bread to be brought to him.” Again, “before His death, in the same way His perfect *imitator*, blessed Francis, wanted to show the same sign of love to his brothers.” These references to the imitation of Christ’s gestures and attitudes are underlined in the *Speculum* in such a way as to make us understand the importance of this source that comes from the first quarter of the 14th century, when the theme of conformity to Christ and imitation of his actions were part and parcel of Franciscan spirituality, particularly in the family of the Spirituels, from which the *Speculum* draws its inspiration.

The characteristic elements of the supper of the Lord are all evident in these three texts, which are related to one another since they come from the same source and witness of the companions of the Saint. We have noted how Francis re-lives the experience of the last supper of the Lord in the re-enactment of the same paschal meal some time before he died. In this representation, that has all the characteristics of a paraliturgical celebration, Francis renders present to the brothers the dramatic moment of the passing over (*transitus*) of Christ, in order to insert his personal *transitus* from this life within the Christological context of the paschal mystery.

One can ask where we can find the link between these texts of the Sources and what we have already seen in the writings of the Saint, regarding the figure of Adam, the first sinner, and of the new Adam, Christ, redeemer of humankind. We shall now try to make this element more evident, since it does not seem to have been neglected neither by Francis nor by his biographers.

The “last supper” of Saint Francis in the light of the new Adam

A synthetic analysis of the life of Francis of Assisi as it is narrated by the biographical sources of the 13th century, shows that the Saint often accomplished symbolic gestures modelled upon those of the biblical narratives of the Old Testament and upon those of Christ

in the New Testament. The moment of the *transitus* of the Saint is full of these symbolic actions, which we have already underlined. Francis blessed his brothers like Jacob who, on his deathbed, blessed the twelve tribes of Israel. Francis wanted that the brothers make him lay down naked on the naked earth, and in this way re-enacted the death of Christ, poor and naked on the cross, but also the episode of the creation of the first man, Adam, who was naked in front of God until the moment when he distanced himself from his Creator by sinning, and who was destined to return to the earth from which he had been made. Francis asked his brothers to bring him bread, just as Christ had requested the apostles in the episode of the miraculous multiplication of loaves. Francis blessed and broke the bread just as Christ did during the last supper on Holy Thursday, and in this way he instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist and the ministerial priesthood. Francis commanded his brothers to share the pieces of bread as a sign of love and communion between themselves, in the same spirit of Christ during the last supper and also during the miracle of the multiplication of loaves. Francis asked the brothers to read out aloud to him the texts of John 13:1ff, which speak of the great commandment of love, the *mandatum*, that Christ leaves to his apostles before his passion and death, and which he expresses particularly in the humble gesture of the washing of the feet of the disciples, always within the context of the paschal meal on Holy Thursday.

In all these symbolic actions Francis succeeds in making emerge in his own person the figure of Christ, new Adam, who restores the image of the first Adam that had been tarnished by sin. Man, created to the image and likeness of the Creator, but also of Christ, Word of the Father, prototype of the entire creation, becomes the centre of creation and of history of salvation. God blesses Adam in his offspring, and also when man distances himself from his Creator, God does not abandon him forever, but promises a new blessing in the same human offspring, which would bruise the head of the infernal serpent. The personal responsibility of man regarding his sin is underlined by Francis, as we have seen, in the fifth *Admonition*, where he affirms that not even the devil has crucified the Lord, but that man did so with his vices and sins.

The remedy to all these evils was the human nature of the Incarnate Word in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who restored the image of the old Adam in his paschal mystery. Francis wanted his friars to understand how, during his supper, agony, passion, death on the cross and resurrection, Jesus restored to man the dignity that he had lost because of original sin. In this way Christ becomes the new Adam, and in him every man can find once again the dignity and harmony with creation, that he had lost in the earthly paradise. In his person, Francis regained this dignity and harmony with creation, since he united himself to Christ in a



sublime way, in such a way that he became conformed to Him in everything.¹⁰

During the last supper Christ anticipated his paschal mystery of his death on the cross. By accomplishing the same actions of Christ during the supper, Francis wanted to re-live the extreme moment of his love towards the brothers. We can say that the supper of Holy Thursday signified the opposite of the situation of the sin of the first Adam. In the earthly paradise the first Adam was tempted by the devil to eat of the forbidden fruit, and thus he generated the entire human race in the spiritual death of original sin and in the corporal death that was its consequence. In the Cenacle Christ invited his disciples to eat His body and drink His blood, and loved them to the very end by washing their feet as a slave would do. In these actions Christ anticipated his sacrificial death on the cross, in such a way as to offer himself as the true paschal lamb in order to confound the devil with the true death of his body of flesh on the cross, in which he was hiding his divinity. In this way Christ donated to men eternal life that wins over sin and death. In this way the eating of the forbidden fruit that led Adam to sin and death was changed in the eating of the bread of life during the paschal meal of Christ, the new Adam. Francis, who was going to accomplish his passage from death to life, wanted to re-live this dimension in his person and in that of his brothers that stood around him, and in this way he himself became, in some way, the figure of Christ, the new Adam, who took away the sin of the old Adam. In the Bible the act of eating is a sign of communion, in the case of Adam of communion in sin

and in death, and in the case of Christ, of communion in grace and in life.

The paschal passage from death to life is presented by Francis as a participation in the paschal mystery the dead and risen Christ. The biographers describe Francis who, during his life represented the figure of Christ crucified, particularly in the sign of the stigmata that he carried in his body,¹¹ and during his death he already represented the candour of resurrection.¹² Bonaventure speaks about this passage in an important text of his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, which could be applied to the *transitus* of Francis:

“Whoever turns his face fully to the Mercy Seat and with faith, hope and love, devotion, admiration, exultation, appreciation, praise and joy beholds him hanging upon the cross, such a one makes the Pasch, that is, the passover, with Christ. By the staff of the cross he passes over the Red Sea, going from Egypt into the desert, where he will taste the hidden manna; and with Christ he rests in the tomb, as if dead to the outer world, but experiencing, as far as is possible in this wayfarer’s state, what is said on the cross to the thief who adhered to Christ: *Today you shall be with me in paradise* (Lk 23:43).”¹³

For Bonaventure this state is the final stage of the journey into God, which departs from the reality of the creatures, to go into that of the soul with its faculties of intellect and will, and then elevates itself to God, One and Three, and to God who is Love. At the centre of the journey stands the key to understand the whole mystery of the itinerary. The key opens the door to lead into the mystery of God who is Christ crucified in his paschal mystery. Participation in this mystery leads one to the sabbatical repose and to the state of ecstasy that Francis tasted in the episode of the stigmatisation on La Verna.

In this light Francis truly becomes the new man, recreated to the image and likeness of Christ. The invitation of Christ to the good thief, namely to enter with him into paradise, echoes the turning upside down of the tragic situation of Adam who was expelled from the earthly paradise when he went against God’s commandment. Christ, the new Adam, restores peace and serenity of paradise for man, who with him passes from tribulations and sufferings in order to enter into the peace of mystical union through the mystery of the cross. The passage of Francis from this world to the Father was expressed in such an itinerary towards the peace of paradise, promised to Adam who is regenerated in Christ. In this way, the body of the Poverello, who rested naked on the naked earth, with the signs of the nails in his hands, feet and the wound in his side, becomes a faithful icon of the dead and glorified body of Christ, and is vested with the candour of the resurrection that does not cancel the signs of the wounds that have healed the wounds of the first Adam.

The experience of Holy Thursday of Saint Clare

God placed Adam in a profound torpor and from his side He took a rib and created Eve, mother of all living human beings. The Fathers of the Church often speak about Adam and Christ, Eve and Mary. In the Franciscan Sources we can also see the link Francis-Clare within the context of the celebration of the supper of Holy Thursday and the meditation of the death of Christ on the cross.

The *Legend of Saint Clare*, written in 1255, two years after the death of the Saint, which occurred on 11th August 1253, presents an interesting episode which, in some way, is linked with our theme:

“Once, the day of the most sacred Supper arrived, in which *the Lord loved His own until the end* (Jn 13:1). Near evening, as the agony of the Lord was approaching, Clare, sad and afflicted, shut herself up in the privacy of her cell. While in her own prayer she was accompanying the praying Saviour and when *saddened even to death* (Mt 26:38) she experienced the effect of His sadness, she was filled at once with the memory of His capture and of the whole mockery and she sank down on her bed. All that night and the following day, she was so absorbed that she remained out of her senses. She seemed to be joined to Christ and to be otherwise totally insensible always focusing the light of her eyes on one thing.

A certain sister close to her often went to see if she might want something and always found her the same way. But with Friday night coming on, the devoted daughter lit a candle and, with a sign not a word, reminded her mother of the command of Saint Francis. For the saint had commanded her that no day should pass without some food.

With that [sister] standing by, Clare, as if returning from another world, offered this word: ‘What need is there for a candle? Isn’t it daytime?’ ‘Mother,’ she replied, ‘the night has gone and a day has passed, and another night has returned!’ To which Clare said: ‘May that vision be blessed, most dear daughter! Because after having desired it for so long, it has been given to me. But, be careful not to tell anyone about that vision while I am still in the flesh.’”¹⁴

We shall note here only some parallel elements between the texts of the Sources of the life of Saint Francis we have already seen and this text. The anonymous author of the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae virginis* notes that Clare had this mystical experience during the night of Holy Thursday, and makes reference to the text of Jn 13:1, as well as to that of Mk 14:34, where Jesus retires in Gethsemane for his agony and passion. Clare appears “joined (literally nailed) to Christ and to be otherwise totally insensible”

to all that was happening around her. Her prolonged ecstasy made her lose the sense of time, just like the mystical experience of the “last supper” of Francis had made him lose sense of time (he thought that it was a Thursday the day on which he had shared bread with the brothers). If we enter into the dimension of the ecstasy and mystical union with Christ nailed to the cross, which we have already seen described by Bonaventure in the *Itinerarium mentis*, the vision of Clare was an image of the death that she wanted to taste with Christ, but which for her became a paschal experience. Clare also appears as a redeemed Eve, as the one who stands close to Francis, and who ennoble human nature in a wholesome way in the light of the paschal mystery of Christ.

The same episode is narrated in a poetic form in the *Versified Legend of Saint Clare*, which depends upon this episode of the *Legenda*, and which we quote in the notes for ulterior analysis.¹⁵

Conclusion

In the cycle of frescoes by Giotto in the upper Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, where the life of Saint Francis according to the *Legenda Maior* of Saint Bonaventure is depicted, we are struck by the image of Francis who lays off his clothes in front of bishop Guido of Assisi, and hands them over to his father Pietro di Bernardone, remaining naked in the hands of the Father in heaven. This is probably the most beautiful image of Francis who becomes a new man in his conformity to Christ, the new Adam, who restores the beauty and innocence to the first Adam, with whom the entire humankind was in a state of solidarity in sin. In the naked Francis at the beginning of his conversion, and in the naked dead Francis lying on the naked earth after having celebrated his “last supper” with the brothers, we have one of the clearest examples of the restoration of the image and likeness of God in sinful man, in Adam expelled from Paradise, who becomes a new man when he finds the true tree of life in the cross of Christ, the new Adam, and regains his lost dignity, and who lives the paschal experience of death and resurrection, celebrated in the mystery of the supper that the Lord shared with his disciples on Holy Thursday.

NOTES

- 1 *EpFid II*, 6-7 (FAED I, 46).
- 2 *EpFid II*, 11-15 (FAED I, 46).
- 3 *RegNB* 22,2; *EpFid II*, 13; *OffPass* 7,8; 15,13.
- 4 C. CIAMMARUCONI, *L'ultima cena di Francesco d'Assisi. Una pericope dei «Nos, qui cum eo fuimus»?*, in *Miscellanea Franciscana* 98/3-4 (1998) 791-811.

5 R. MANSELLI, «*Nos, qui cum eo fuimus*». *Contributo alla questione francescana*, Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, Roma 1980.

6 1C 109-110 (FAED I, 277-278).

7 2C 217 (FAED II, 387-388). Latin text: THOMAS DE CELANO, *Memoriale in Desiderio Animae*, 217, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 631-632: “Cum itaque amarissime lacrimarentur fratres et inconsolabiliter deplorarent, iussit pater sanctus panem sibi afferri (cfr. Mt 14,17.18). Quem benedixit et fregit (cfr. Mt 26,26; Lc 24,30), et particulam unicuique ad manducandum porrexit. Codicem etiam Evangeliorum apportari praeciens, Evangelium secundum Ioannem ab eo loco qui incipit: *Ante diem festum Paschae* (Ioa 13,1) etc, sibi legi poposcit. Recordabatur illius sacratissimae coenae, quam Dominus cum suis discipulis (cfr. Mt 26,20) ultimam celebravit. In illius enim veneranda memoria, ostendens quem ad fratres habebat amoris affectum, fecit hoc totum. Proinde paucos dies, qui usque ad transitum eius restabant, expendit in laudem, socios suos valde dilectos secum Christum laudare instituens. Ipse vero, prout potuit, in hunc psalmum erupit: *Voce mea ad Dominum clamavi, voce mea ad Dominum deprecatus sum* (Ps 141,2-8) etc. Invitabat etiam omnes creaturas ad laudem Dei (Lc 18,43), et per verba quaedam quae olim composuerat, ipse eas ad divinum hortabatur amorem. Nam et mortem ipsam, cunctis terribilem et exosam, hortabatur ad laudem, *eique laetus occurrens* (cfr. Iudc 19,3), ad suum invitabat hospitium: «Bene veniat», inquit, «soror mea mors!». Ad medicum autem: «Audacter, frater medice, proximam prognostica mortem, quae mihi erit ianua vitae!». Ad fratres vero: «Cum me videritis ad extrema perducere, sicut me nudiustertius nudum vidistis, sic me super humum exponite, et per tam longum spatium iam defunctum sic iacere sinatis, quod unius milliarii tractum suaviter quis perficere posset». – *Venit igitur hora* (cfr. Ioa 4,21), et cunctis in eum *Christi* completis *mysteriis* (cfr. Col 4,3), feliciter volavit ad Deum.”

8 CA 22 (FAED II, 135). Latin Text: *Compilatio Assisiensis*, 22, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 1500-1502: “Quadam nocte beatus Franciscus tantum fuit doloribus infirmitatum pregravatus quod fere in illa nocte nec quiescere potuit nec dormire. Mane, cessante aliquantulum dolore, fecit vocari omnes fratres existentes in loco, et, illis sedentibus coram ipso, consideravit et prospexit eos in personis omnium fratrum. Et incipiens ab uno fratre benedixit eos, *ponens dexteram manum in capitibus* (cfr. Gen 48,17) singulorum; benedixitque omnes, qui erant in Religione et *qui venturi erant usque in finem saeculi* (cfr. Ioa 1,15; Dan 7,18); et videbatur compati sibi ipsi eo quod non poterat videre filios et fratres suos ante mortem suam. Postea iussit apportari coram se *panes et benedixit* (cfr. Mt 26,26) eos; et quia propter infirmitatem eos frangere non poterat, fecit a quodam fratre ipsos in plurimas particulas *frangi*; et *accipiens*, unicuique fratrum porrexit particulam, praeciens ut totam *manducaret* (cfr. Mc 14,22; 1Cor 11,24). Nam sicut Dominus feria V cum apostolis voluit manducare ante mortem suam, sic quodammodo visum fuit fratribus illis, quod beatus Franciscus antem mortem suam voluit benedicere illis et in eis omnibus aliis fratribus, et quod manducarent illum panem benedictum, quasi quodammodo cum ceteris fratribus suis manducarent. Et hoc manifeste considerare possumus, quia, cum esset alia dies quam feria V, ipse dixit fratribus quod credebatur feriam V esse. Unus ex illis fratribus reservavit particulam unam de illo pane. Et post mortem beati Francisci aliqui, qui gustaverunt de eo in suis infirmitatibus, liberati sunt statim.”

9 SP 88 (FAED III, 336-337). Latin Text: *Speculum Perfectionis*, 88, ed. Sabatier, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 1995-1996: “Volens autem in morte imitari suum Dominum et magistrum quem in vita sua perfecte fuerat imitatus, iussit apportari sibi *panes et benedixit* (cfr. Mt 26,26) eos, atque in plurimas particulas fecit frangi, quia prae nimia debilitate frangere non valebat. Et accipiens unicuique fratrum porrexit particulam, praeciens ut totam quilibet manducaret. Unde sicut Dominus ante mortem suam voluit in signum dilectionis cum apostolis quinta feria manducare, ita perfectus imitator ipsius beatus Franciscus voluit idem signum dilectionis ostendere fratribus suis. Et quod ad similitudinem

Christi voluerit hoc facere patet manifeste, quia postea quaesivit si erat tunc feria quinta. Et cum esset tunc alia dies dixit quod putabat esse feriam quintam. Unus autem ex illis fratribus reservavit unam particulam de ipso pane, et post mortem beati Francisci multi infirmi qui de ipso gustaverunt statim fuerunt a suis infirmitatibus liberati.”

10 The conformity of Francis with Christ is expressed in a special way in 2C 219 (FAED II, 389): “At the very same hour that evening the glorious father appeared to another brother of praiseworthy life, who was at that moment absorbed in prayer. He appeared to him clothed in a purple dalmatic and followed by an innumerable crowd of people. Several separated themselves from the crowd and said to that brother: ‘Is this not Christ, brother?’ And he replied: ‘It is he.’ Others asked him again, saying: ‘Isn’t this Saint Francis?’ And the brother likewise replied that it was he. For it really seemed to that brother, and to the whole crowd, as if Christ and Saint Francis were one person.” Latin text in *Fontes Franciscani*, 634-635: “Alteri fratri vitae laudabilis, tunc temporis orationi suspensus, nocte illa et hora, gloriosus pater purpurea dalmatica vestitus apparuit, quem turba hominum innumera sequebatur. A qua se plurimi sequestrantes, dixerunt ad fratrem: «Nonne hic est Christus, o frater?» Et ille dicebat: «Ipse est.» Alii vero iterum perquirebant dicentes: «Nonne hic est sanctus Franciscus?» Frater ipsum esse similiter respondebat. Videbatur revera fratri et omnium comitantium turbae, quod Christi et beati Francisci una persona foret.”

11 LMj 14,1 (FAED II, 640): “*Now fixed with Christ to the cross* (Gal 2:19), in both body and spirit, Francis not only burned with a seraphic love into God but also *thirsted* (Jn 19:28) with Christ crucified for the multitude of those to be saved. Since he could not walk because of the nails protruding from his feet, he had his half-dead body carried *through the towns and villages* (Lk 8:1) to arouse others to *carry the cross* (Lk 9,23) of Christ.”

12 1C 112 (FAED I, 280): “In fact, there appeared in him the form of the cross and passion of the *spotless lamb* (1Pt 1:19) *who washed away the sins of the world* (Rv 1:5). It seemed he had just been taken down from the cross, his hands and feet pierced by nails and his right *side* wounded by a lance (Jn 19:34). They looked at his skin which was black before but now shining white in its beauty, promising the rewards of the blessed resurrection.”

13 ST. BONAVENTURE, *Bonaventure. The Soul's Journey into God. The Tree of Life. The Life of St. Francis*, Translation and introduction by Ewert Cousins, Preface by Ignatius Brady, Paulist Press, New Jersey 1978, 111-112. Latin text: *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, in *S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, Vol. V, 312: “Ad quod propitiatorium qui aspicit plena conversione vultus, aspiciendo eum in cruce suspensum per fidem, spem et caritatem, devotionem, admirationem, exultationem, appetitionem, laudem et iubilationem; pascha, hoc est transitum, cum eo facit, ut per virgam crucis transeat mare rubrum, ab Aegypto intrans desertum, ubi gustet manna absconditum, et cum Christo requiescat in tumulo quasi exterius mortuus, sentiens tamen, quantum possibile est secundum statum viae, quod in cruce dictum est latroni cohaerenti Christo: *Hodie mecum eris in paradiso* (Lc 23:43).”

14 LegCl 31, in *Clare of Assisi. The Lady. Early Documents* (CAED), revised edition and translation by R.J. Armstrong, New City Press, New York – London – Manila 2006, 307-308. Latin Text: *Legenda sanctae Clarae, virginis*, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 2433-2434: “Advenerat quodam tempore dies sacratissimae Coenae, qua Dominus *in fine dilexerat suos* (cfr. Ioa 13,1). Circa sero, appropinquante Domini agonia, Clara contristata et maestra, in cellae secretarium se reclusit. Cumque orantem Dominum orans prosequeretur, et *tristis usque ad mortem anima* (cfr. Mt 26,38) tristitiae illius hausisset affectum, iam iamque captionis et totius illusionis memoria debriata, lecto resedit. Tota igitur nocte illa et die sequenti sic absorpta, sic a seipsa permanet aliena, ut irreverberatis circa unum semper intenta luminibus, confixa Christo, ac prorsus insensibilis videretur. Redit familiaris quaedam filia saepe ad ipsam, si forte aliquid velit, et semper eodem modo se habere reperit. Nocte vero diei sabbati veniente, filia devota candelam accendit,

et praeceptum S. Francisci, ad matris memoriam signo, non verbo reducit. Praeceperat enim sanctus, ne ullum sine commestione transiret diem. Illa igitur assistente, Clara quasi aliunde rediens, hoc protulit verbum: «Quae candelae necessitas? Numquid non dies est?». «Mater, ait illa, nox abiit, et dies transivit, noxque altera rediit». Cui Clara: «Benedictus sit somnus iste, carissima filia; quoniam diu optatus, donatus est mihi. Sed cave ne somnum istum cuiquam referas, dum vixero ipsa in carne».”

15 English text in CAED 232-234. Latin text in *Legenda versificata sanctae Clarae*, 27, 888-925, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 2374-2375:

“Accidit, et recitare iuvat, quod tempore quodam
Advenit Cene Domini revolutio sacra;
Noxque propinquabat, qua proditor ille Magistrum
Vendere non timuit, praesumpsit pacis alumpnum
Corruptor pacis sub pacis prodere signo,
Et tenebris dampnare diem, caligine lucem
Perdere, mortali contractu vendere vitam.
Iamque pavor mortis instabat et ille cruentus
Sudor agonie, qua *Patrem* Filius orat
Humanum sapiens *calicis* (cfr. Lc 22,42-44) quod transeat [h]
austus.
Secretum celle petiit, se virgo reclusit.
Orans prosequitur orantem, mestaque mestum;
Captio crudelis, illusio turpis, amara
Que tulit ille pius et mansuetissimus agnus,
Virignis in mentem subeunt, vehementius herent.
Singula dum recolit, dum mens se cogit ad ista,
Per totam noctem pia virgo diemque sequentem
Extra se rapitur, sua lumina cogit in unum.
Affectus vigilant anime, faciuntque silere
Corporis offitia; peragit mens otia sancta,
Dum sic fixa manet, dum sic immobilis extat.
Sepe redit famula matrem visura, videtque
Immotam stare; non in diversa feru[n]tur
Vultus. Cumque dies Veneris transacta fuisset,
Noxque sequeretur que prevenit illa beata
Sabbata, devot repetit tunc filia matrem.
Accendit lumen, memorat per signa statutum
Id, quod vir sanctus dudum preceperat illi,
Quod nulla sibi virgo die postponeret esum.
Evigilat mater, quasi tunc aliunde rediret:
«Non opus est», inquit, «candela; nonne dies est?»
Respondet famula domine: «Nox transiit illa,
Succedensque dies abiit; nox altera venit».
Tunc sibi mater ait: «Benedictus sit sopor iste,
Quem nimis optavi; tandem votiva recepi!».
Ne tamen hinc fa[u]stus surgat, vel laude tumescat
Humana, veniit mater dixitque puelle:
«Hoc dum corpus ago, caveas exponere cuiquam».”

BROTHER LEO OF ASSISI, COMPANION OF SAINT FRANCIS (2)

Wieslaw Block

English translation and adaptation of a paper by Wieslaw Block, published in «Frate Francesco» 77/1 (2011) 7-32.

2.2 Brother Leo master of the spiritual life and of the living “memory” of the past

After the death of Francis, Leo and some other friars found themselves increasingly in an awkward situation, in order to be able to live this “difficult legacy”¹ that the Saint had left with his death. P. Messa is right when he states: “In fact the brothers were divided, on general lines, in two camps: some opted completely for a life inserted in the apostolate, with all that this brought with it, while others retreated in the hermitages in search for an ideal return to the origins and intuitions of Francis.”² But in reality – continues Messa – both positions were far away from what it meant “living according to the form of the holy Gospel.” Both were far away from that equilibrium between contemplative-eremitical life and apostolic life that characterised the life of Francis of Assisi. The dramatic exclamation of brother Giles: “The ship is broken and a conflict has ensued; who can escape should escape, and who can retreat should do so if he can”, quoted by a late Source, the *Chronica XXIV Generalium*,³ although it seems manipulated or newly elaborated with a strong polemic taste by those friars who, inside the Order, represented the view of the Spirituals during the beginning of the 14th century, in a certain way reveals the global situation of the *post mortem* of Francis.⁴ With the passing of time, the situation became even more serious, so that not even the mediation of Bonaventure succeeded in resolving the difficulties of the Minors during the second half of the 13th century. To the internal obstacles were added also the external ones: a bitter quarrel between the mendicants and the secular masters of the University of Paris on the way of life of the mendicants, to which one adds the scandal brought about by the condemnation of the Joachimite text *Introductorium in Evangelium Aeternum* of Gerardo di Borgo San Donnino.

In this context the role that Leo assumed was

principally spiritual: he had to be the living witness of the true face of Francis and of the life of the friars Minor. This happened essentially in two forms: Leo was the first living “museum” of the memory of Francis, both through the writings that the Saint left in his care, as well as through the words, the oral and written narratives that Leo transmitted to the brothers. This first form of behaviour was founded upon a second aspect – which was even more relevant – by which Leo never lost his youthful desire to follow in a better way the footsteps and poverty of Jesus and his apostles. By being the living memory of Francis and of his witness, Leo slowly became a master of spiritual life, and with the passage of time the other friars gathered around him.

We find a beautiful example of the role assumed by Leo in the witness of brother Francesco da Fabriano,⁵ who met him in Assisi in 1268, when Leo was showing and reading to the young friars the memories of some writings of Francis (maybe a reference to the *chartula*).⁶

Brother Leo, who was custodian of the parchments that Francis had given him, marked these documents with his “glosse” or comments, with the unique aim of transmitting in a better way the memory of Francis. Among the first scholars, who stopped to reflect upon the additions of Leo, we should mention Chiara Frugoni. She does not consider the “glosse” of Leo present in the *chartula* only for their value as information, but arrives at the conclusion, that “with the declarations that Leo personally wrote he changed the nature of the parchment from a private sign of affection on the part of Francis to a public witness of the truthfulness of the apparition of the Seraph and of the manifestation of the stigmata. In any case Leo decided to intervene on the relic [...] many years after his stay on La Verna.”⁷ The additions of Leo reveal the graphic maturity of a man of between 35 and 60 years of age, a handwriting that “betrays notable skill and competence, since Leo was a cleric [...] as well as a

beautiful tiny semi-gothic library.”⁸

This is the text of the rubrics of brother Leo written on the *chartula* with red ink: “Two years before his death, the blessed Francis spent forty days on Mount La Verna from the Feast of the Assumption of the holy Virgin Mary until the September Feast of Saint Michael, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, and the blessed Michael the Archangel. And the Lord’s hand was upon him. After the vision and message of the Seraph and the impression of Christ’s stigmata upon his body, he composed these praises written on the other side of this page and wrote them in his own hand, thanking God for the kindness bestowed on him.

The blessed Francis wrote this blessing for me with his own hand. In a similar way he made with his own hand the this sign Tau together with a skull.”⁹

It was from that moment that, for the first time, the name of Leo came out of the shadows and silence. It is exactly Leo the person who, until that moment was never mentioned neither by Celano nor by Bonaventure, and now presents himself in the first person, not only as witness, but also as the one to whom this parchment was destined. The reason for the abandonment of the anonymity on the part of Leo seems therefore to lie in the defence of the reality of the stigmata, against which some doubts had been raised by then. Leo affirms clearly that he was present on La Verna when – after the vision and the words of the Seraph – the stigmata of Christ were impressed on the body of Francis. One can also come out with the hypothesis that the additions of Leo were inspired by the three letters which Gregory IX had written in 1237, addressing them to all those who were doubting regarding the truth of the stigmata of Saint Francis.

On 31st March Pope Gregory wrote to the bishop of Olomuc in Bohemia, requesting him to change his teaching. Bishop Robert, who was a Cistercian, had sent a letter to the clergy of the diocese of Olomuc, in which he stated that it was “only the Son of the eternal Father who was crucified for the salvation of humanity, and therefore Christians should adore his wounds with special devotion, and consequently neither Saint Francis nor any other among the saints could be presented with the stigmata in the Church of God, and whoever reasons in a different way sins.”¹⁰ Gregory IX, who had personally fought in favour of the truth of the stigmata of Francis, asked this bishop to change this position and to preach the contrary of what he was saying.¹¹ Another Bulla was sent to the provincial and to the superiors of the Dominicans. In it the Pope mentions a certain brother Evechardus, who during a homily at Oppava in Moravia said that the stigmata were false and that the friars Minor were themselves false preachers.¹² The third letter *Confessor Domini* was addressed to all Christians, who were asked to believe in the miracle of the stigmata and

not give reason to false witnesses. The Pope offered his own direct witness, with that of other cardinals,¹³ affirming that, during the process of canonisation of Francis, it was exactly the fact of the stigmata one of the principal motives for them to recognise the holiness of the Saint.¹⁴

In truth, we can never know when Leo added his “glosse”, but in the description of his spirituality, what is more important for us than the exact date is the reason that pushed “brother little lamb” to abandon his hiding place, his anonymity, and to become the defender of the extraordinary gift that the Poverello had received on Mount La Verna in September 1224.

Proceeding in the description of the spirituality of brother Leo, we find some additions by his own handwriting in the so-called *Breviary of Saint Francis*, that express very well his spirit. The analysis of van Dijk and Attilio Bartoli Langeli clarifies the genesis of the manuscript and permits us to understand better the contribution of brother Leo.¹⁵

The breviary is witness to the liturgical reform of Pope Innocent III;¹⁶ its origins were in the environment of the papal curia and it was acquired by Francis after 23rd November 1223, when the *Later Rule* introduced the dispositions on the recitation of the divine office “according to the rite of the holy Roman Church.”¹⁷ The breviary also contains an addition in the form of a psalter, written by another hand. Francis himself, some time later, asked someone to write the Gospel texts, and this also reflects the reform of Innocent.¹⁸ After the death of the Poverello, Leo and Angelo continued to use the breviary and the Gospel book, and they adapted the first volume (breviary and psalter) to the prescriptions established by the general chapter of 1239, in line with the so-called “pre-Narbonne” Constitutions. Lastly, between 1257 and 1260, they bound the two books together, and on the inner cover they wrote the memorial note.¹⁹ Then they donated the entire volume to Benedetta, the first abbess of San Damiano after Clare,²⁰ so that “it would always be kept in custody with all due care.”²¹ The following is the memorial note of Leo at the beginning of the manuscript:

“Blessed Francis acquired this breviary for his companions Brother Angelo and Brother Leo, and when he was well he wished always to say the Office, as is stated by the Rule. At the time when he was sick and not able to recite it, he wished to listen to it. And he continued to do this for as long as he lived. He also had the Book of the Gospels copied, and whenever he would be unable to hear Mass due to infirmity or any other manifest impediment, he had that Gospel read to him, which on that day was read at Mass in Church. And he continued to do this until his death. For he used to say: ‘When I do not hear Mass, I adore the Body of Christ in prayer with the eyes of my mind, just as I adore It when I see it during Mass.’ After blessed

Francis read the Gospel or listened to it, he always kissed the Gospel out of the greatest reverence for the Lord. For this reason Brother Angelo and Brother Leo, as much as they can, humbly beg Lady Benedetta, the abbess of the Poor Ladies of the Monastery of Saint Clare, and all the abbesses of the same monastery who are to come after her, that in memory of and out of devotion to our holy Father they always preserve in the Monastery of Saint Clare this book out of which he so many times read.”²²

The principal “glossa” was written on the *recto* of the parchment that Leo had erased, conserving only the initial «B» in red ink. Nowadays we cannot read anything, but we can conclude that the cancelled handwriting was shorter than the one that substituted it: one counts 12 instead of 15 lines. This initial «B» that remained indicates that the *incipit* had to be the same one as the present one, namely “Beatus Franciscus”. Attilio Bartoli Langeli proposes the following explanation: “Leo first wrote one thing, than he changed his mind and wrote another. It seems evident that the change did not regard the narrative part (lines 1-11) but the final section, the dedication and *commendatio*. Thus we can conclude that the scribe or whoever possessed the breviary had already thought about its final destination, and finally decided to change idea and leave at the monastery of Saint Clare.”²³

The “glossa” of Leo on the inner cover refers to three diverse realities: breviary, Gospel book, and lastly the memory of Francis. With reference to the breviary, we come to know that Francis procured it personally for his two companions, Angelo and Leo. Both Angelo Tancredi, a native of Rieti and a noble layman, and Leo, who was a priest, certainly knew how to read, and as the *Earlier Rule* prescribes, they could have breviaries: “They may have only the books necessary to fulfil their office. The lay brothers who know how to read the psalter may have one.”²⁴ Francis wanted that his two companions could grow spiritually through the prayer of the breviary, but at the same time Francis himself made use of the breviary. Particularly when he was sick, and could not recite the divine office personally, Francis asked somebody else who could read to pray the office to him. Brother Leo says that Francis “continued to do this until his death.” Even Francis reminds in his *Testament*: “And although I may be simple and infirm, I nevertheless want to have a cleric always with me who will celebrate the Office for me as it is prescribed in the Rule.”²⁵ The recital of the divine office was certainly for Francis and his companions a source of spiritual richness, and even Leo certainly drew inspiration from this fountain of grace. Afterwards Leo mentions the Gospel book, which was written on the request of Francis in order that he might listen to the Gospel texts of the day, when it was not possible for him to be present for Mass. This witness is very important because we come to know

that “hearing” Mass was the daily bread for the first fraternity.

Leo decided to entrust the relic to the nuns of the monastery of Saint Clare in order to conserve the memory and devotion of the Saint. His “glossa” does not explain why the relic was not entrusted to the friars of the Sacro Convento or the Portiuncula, or else left in some other place. It could also be that this choice was simply linked with the fact that, during those years, Leo was the chaplain of the Clares.

The *Breviary of Saint Francis* contains various additional notes dated to the 13th century. They come from other hands, and the only ones we can attribute certainly to brother Leo’s pen are recognisable thanks to a painstaking work of confrontation of the dedication placed at the beginning of the breviary with the other notes that Leo had written on the parchment containing the blessing that Francis had given to him on La Verna. Pietro Messa affirms that the corrections introduced by brother Leo are the result of the will to bring the breviary, and in particular the calendar, in agreement with the new norms of the various general chapters, with the Constitutions of 1239 and with the reform of Haymo of Faversham of 1244; in other words, they make part of the liturgical evolution of the newly-born Franciscan family.²⁶ In it, since the very beginning, the liturgy of the friars Minor and their way of reciting the office went through necessary elaborations. It was not a mummified liturgy, but a living liturgy, and therefore it was open to all the evolutions of the fraternity.²⁷ Even the ordinals of Haymo of Faversham were not his own invention, but rather a reasoned revision and a harmonious, complete and ordered edition of the rubrics, which depended directly upon the previous Franciscan liturgy and also upon the customs of the papal curia of the time of Innocent III.²⁸ Thus, the actual state of the breviary reflected different steps in its process of adaptation, which were signed by the presence of various episodes and many introductions of a liturgical, papal and Franciscan type, in which one clearly sees also the work that brother Leo had accomplished. The history of the breviary, however, did not end with the entrusting of the same volume to the abbess Benedetta. The Clares, in a first moment, considered the volume as a breviary that could be used, and they also made some marginal additions to it. It was only in a secondary moment that they began to consider it as a relic of Saint Francis.

The witness left by brother Leo – an untiring “secretary” of the Gospel adventure of Francis and of the first companions – was motivated by a unique aim: to transmit the memory of these first times so that the same memory could lead to a more radical evangelical life, which would be more faithful to the form of life of the beginnings of the Order. Brother Leo, custodian and witness of the life and holiness of Francis, appears also as a witness of the life and holiness of Clare of

Assisi.²⁹

From the research conducted by the young scholar Marco Guida, it results that, some of the companions (*socii*) of Francis, but above all Leo, were a privileged source for the author of the *Legenda Sanctae Clarae*, in which: “thanks to brother Leo, who was the one who cherished the memory of the beginnings of the Order of friars Minor” we can know many details of the life of Saint Clare.³⁰ Among these episodes, the most important seem to be the following:

- the role that the *Legenda* attributes to the Portiuncula;
- the recognition of the link, even on the juridical level, between Francis and Clare, who through the promise of obedience, forms part of the primitive *fraternitas*;
- the mentioning and the literal role of some important Sources for the Life of Saint Clare, like the *Privilegium paupertatis* of Innocent III, the *Testamentum*, the *Forma vitae* and the *Benedictio* of Clare;
- the dialogue between Clare and Gregory IX who wanted to give possessions to the community of San Damiano;
- the strong reaction of Clare to the prescriptions of *Quo elongati*, by which Gregory IX disciplined the relationship of the friars with the monastery of Assisi;
- the witness of the physical presence of so many friars Minor at San Damiano – including the same brother Leo – in the days preceding the *transitus* of Clare.

Concluding his interesting research, Marco Guida adds also that although the *socii* did not testify in the process of canonisation, the hagiographer made use of his work in order to hand over the companions’ memory of the Saint of Assisi.

The final affirmations of Leo are rather sad and inform us on the date of the death of some companions. We find them in the famous *Capitolario* of the Sacro Convento with the *Ordo breviarum* of Haymo of Faversham that is already marked as Assisi 261.

In the *Calendar*, which was adjourned by many hands, there are certainly two texts coming from the hand of brother Leo. The first is dated 11th March: *Obitus sancti fratris Angeli socii beati Francisci* (the death of brother Angelo, companion of Saint Francis). The second is dated 13th November: *Obitus sancti fratris Rufini de quo beatus Franciscus testimonium perhibuit quod vivus iam canonicatus esset in sanctum ab ipso* (death of brother Rufino, of whom Saint Francis gave witness that he would have canonised him while he was still alive) (Rufino † 1249). We can imagine that one day, probably after the death of Angelo, Leo had the possibility to go through that *Calendar* and noted that under the date 10th June there was a note regarding the death of brother Bernard (*obitus sancti fratris Bernardi primi fratris post beatum Franciscum*), but that nothing was said regarding the death of Angelo and Rufino. He put a remedy to this lacuna, by writing down a note regarding the day of their death, but in the case of Rufino he does not refrain from adding his

personal witness, by giving a hint to a “canonisation”. Here we truly find the spirit of brother Leo and his great desire to leave to the memory of future generations the reference to those early times.

In the *Calendar*, however, there is another final note: after the death of Leo another unknown person registered, immediately beneath the obituary note of brother Rufino: *Eadem die, revolutis XXII^{bus} annis, obiit sancti frater Leo, anno Domini MCCLXX* (That same day, when 22 years had passed, the holy brother Leo died, in the year of the Lord 1270).³¹

We do not have other witnesses relative to the last years of the life of Leo. Certainly he continued to the very end to write and narrate the episodes of the life of Francis and of the first *fraternitas*.

His duty was that of giving witness to the life, the acts and the words of Saint Francis. When we go through the pages of the Franciscan hagiographical sources, we find ample direct witness of brother Leo. He appears as a strong point of reference. More than once we hear the repetition – sometimes with holy pride – that these facts had been received from the companion of Francis, brother Leo. The following are some examples:

- The *Chronicle* of Salimbene de Adam: “In fact, as has been recounted to me by brother Leo, his companion [companion of Francis] who was present when [Francis] who had just died was being washed in preparation of the burial [...]”³²

- The *Liber exemplorum*: “Brother Bonaventure narrated that he had heard this fact from brother Leo, companion of Saint Francis.”

- The *Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus* of Ubertino da Casale presents the witness of brother Conrad of Offida regarding the sayings and the writings of Leo: “I have often heard this holy man Brother Conrad say that he himself heard of the things we have been speaking about, and many others of even greater moment, from the holy man Brother Leo.”³³

We can multiply similar observations, and therefore we can conclude our analysis on the brother whom Francis called “brother little lamb”, who lived the second part of his life especially with the specific aim of leaving the legacy of the memory of his holy friend and of his companions. The merit of Luigi Pellegrini is that of having shown how brother Leo knew how to collaborate with the leaders of the Order not only to transmit his knowledge of Francis and the facts of his life, but also the *corpus* of the writings of the Poverello. The Assisi Codex 338³⁴ could well have been one of the fruits of this *corpus*, that was then officially sanctioned by the general Chapter of Genoa (1244) and maybe – as Luigi Pellegrini thinks – the group of writings of Francis present in this codex would thus come *de manu fratris Leonis* (from the hands of brother Leo).³⁵ This was destined, or at least was utilised later on for reading in the community: the witness to this

fact is given by the diacritical signs (accents, phonetic signs), which indicate pauses and rhythm for reading in public.³⁶ Therefore the relationship with the official destination and the modalities of organisation evidence that the collection was not destined for a small group of friars, who were more or less in disagreement with the choices of the institutional development of the Order, but for the entire community in Assisi, where it was and is still officially kept in custody.³⁷ The Assisi collection shows evident relationships also with the other manuscripts that are witness to the great diffusion of that exemplar, and therefore of the circle of influence of the work carried out and in a certain way marked by the collaborative presence of brother Leo, which became the most pure and significant space of the presence of the Minors in Assisi.³⁸

Leo died on 13th November 1271, offering to the future generations of friars Minor and to the entire Franciscan family the memory of that unique beginning of Franciscan history and of the adventure that started in Assisi with the conversion of the son of Pietro di Bernardone, baptised as Giovanni and known as Francis of Assisi.

NOTES

1 R. LAMBERTINI – A. TABARRONI, *Dopo Francesco. L'eredità difficile*, Torino 1989.

2 P. MESSA, *Tra vita eremitica e predicazione. Il percorso di Francesco d'Assisi e della sua fraternità*, Assisi 2009, 143.

3 *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Minorum (Analecta Franciscana III)*, ex typ. Collegii S. Bonaventurae, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) 1897, 143.

4 In this view, even the words of welcome that brother Giles addressed to the new Minister General John of Parma (1247-1257), transmitted by Angelo Clareno in the *Liber Chronicarum* (1335): “bene et opportune venisti, sed tardi venisti” (it is good and opportune that you came, but you have come late), appears as an exaggerated expression, since it is transmitted within the framework of the seven tribulations of the disciples of Saint Francis.

5 Blessed Francesco Venimbeni da Fabriano (1251-1322) was a novice of the Province of the Marches of the Friars Minor in 1268. He had the opportunity to go on pilgrimage to Assisi in order to acquire the Portiuncula Indulgence. On that occasion, as he himself states in his *Cronaca* (of which today we only possess fragments), he could read a report on the origin of the Indulgence conceded to the church of Saint Mary of the Angels. The document was authenticated by the seal of bishop Teobaldo of Assisi. On the same occasion, Francesco met brother Leo, who showed him the writings of Saint Francis. Venimbeni, therefore, is recognised as the first librarian of the Order. Unfortunately, from the rich library which he gathered, only some remains have come down to us, for example, the Latin Vatican Codex 1053 that was in the property of Cardinal Giovanni Minio da Murrovalle, who had been minister general of the Order; cfr. *Beato Francesco Venimbeni da Fabriano*, in *Frati Minori, Santi e Beati*, a cura di S. BRACCI – A. POZZEBON, Roma 2009, 110-113.

6 “Et hoc testificatus est frater Leo, unus de sociis beati Francisci, vir probatae vitae, quem ego frater Franciscus vidi in anno quo veni ad fratres, quando fui ad dictam indulgentiam. Dixit enim dictus frater Leo se audivisse ab ore beati Francisci de dicta indulgentia ab eo, ut predicetur, impetrata”. G. PAGNANI, *Frammenti*

della *Cronaca del B. Francesco Venimbeni da Fabriano* (†1322), in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 52/2-3 (1959) 170.

7 C. FRUGONI, *Francesco e l'invenzione delle stimate. Una storia per parole e immagini fino a Bonaventura e Giotto*, Torino 1993, 76. Maybe we shall never know when Leo wrote the glosse on the autograph of Saint Francis. The majority of scholars regards as a *terminus post quem*, the date 16th July 1228, the day of the canonisation of Francis, and as the *terminus ante quem*, the date 11th August 1246, when Leo and the companions wrote the *Letter of Greccio*; cfr. G. MICCOLI, *Considerazioni sulle stimate*, in *Il fatto delle stimate di S. Francesco*. Atti della tavola rotonda tenuta alla Porziuncola di Assisi il 17 settembre 1996, Assisi 1997, 22.

8 BARTOLI LANGELI, *Gli autografi*, 89.

9 Latin text in C. PAOLAZZI, *Scritti di Francesco d'Assisi*, 116: “Beatus Franciscus duobus annis ante mortem suam fecit quadragesimam in loco Alvernae, ad honorem beatae Virginis Matris Dei et beati Michaelis Archangeli, a festo Assumptionis sanctae Marie Virginis usque ad festum sancti Michaelis septembris; et facta est super eum manus Domini. Post visionem et allocutionem Seraphim et impressionem stigmatum Christi in corpore suo, fecit has laudes ex alio latere cartule scriptas et manu sua scripsit, gratias agens Deo de beneficio sibi collato. // Beatus Franciscus scripsit manu sua istam benedictionem michi fratri Leoni. // Simili modo fecit istud signum thau cum capite, manu sua.”

10 R.B. BROOKE, *The image of St. Francis: Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge 2006, 166-167.

11 GREGORIUS IX, *Usque ad terminos* (31st March 1237), in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, t. I, Romae 1759, 211-212.

12 GREGORIUS IX, *Non minus dolentes* (31st March 1237), in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, t. I, Romae 1759, 213.

13 “Meanwhile, a solemn assembly was called for the canonization of the saint and the eminent body of cardinals met frequently to consider the matter. Many who had been freed from their illnesses through the holy man of God came from far and wide, and from here and there countless miracles gleamed: these miracles were heard, verified, accepted and approved [...] ‘The holy life of this man – they said – does not require the evidence of miracles for we have seen it with our eyes and touched it with our hands and tested it with truth as our guide’” (IC 123-124: FAED I, 293).

14 GREGORIUS IX, *Confessor Domini* (5th April 1237) in *Bullarium Franciscanum*, t. I, Romae 1759, 214.

15 For the *Breviarium sancti Francisci* see: P. MESSA, *Un testimone dell'evoluzione liturgica della «fraternitas» francescana primitiva: il «Breviarium sancti Francisci»*, in *«Revirescent chartae», codices, documenta, textus*. Miscellanea in honorem fr. Caesaris Cenci ofm, I, curantibus A. Cacciotti e P. Sella, Romae 2002, 35-36; VAN DIJK, *The Breviary of St. Francis*, in *Franciscan Studies* 9 (1949) 17-20.

16 Pope Innocent III, probably at the time of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), had introduced for the Roman clergy a divine office in a single volume and abbreviated form (hence *breviarium*).

17 *RegB* 3,1 (FAED I, 101).

18 For the Gospel book cfr. L. GALLANT, *L'évangélique de saint François d'Assise*, in *Collectanea Franciscana* 53 (1983) 5-22.

19 It is interesting to note that brother Leo is mentioned in a testament of April 1258, as one of the three brothers who were assisting at the monastery of Saint Clare, cfr. *Le carte duecentesche del Sacro Convento d'Assisi (Istrumenti, 1168-1300)*, a cura di A. BARTOLI LANGELI, Padova 1997, 83.

20 A. VAUCHEZ affirms that Leo had left to the community of the Clares of Assisi also his other writings and memories of Francis: “It is to her (Clare) that brother Leo entrusted the mysterious scrolls of parchment in which he had written the memories of the Poverello of Assisi that he had conserved, since he had been very close to him.” A. VAUCHEZ, *Francesco d'Assisi. Tra storia e memoria*, Assisi 2010, 187.

21 Pietro Messa singles out in the *Breviary of Cambrai* (Ms. 33), conserved in the communal Library of Cambrai, and says that

he found in it an agreement with the style of brother Leo; cfr. P. MESSA, *Un testimone dell'evoluzione liturgica*, 30-32.

22 English text of the *Inscription of Brother Leo (1257-60)*, in FAED III, 773. Latin original text in *Testimonia Minora Saeculi XIII de S. Francisco Assisiensi*, compiled and edited by Leonardus LEMMENS (Ad Claras Aquas: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1926), 61. The explanatory note in FAED III, 773 says: "This inscription by Brother Leo is at the beginning of the so-called Breviary of St. Francis, which is still preserved today in the protomonastery of St. Clare in Assisi. It appears to have been written at the time he donated the breviary to the community, with whom he had a close connection. This can be dated with some precision from the inscription itself: the Sister Benedetta mentioned in the letter succeeded Clare as abbess of San Damiano in 1253, but she would not have been the 'Abbess of the monastery of St. Clare' until 1257, when the Poor Ladies obtained possession of the former church of San Giorgio, where Clare's body had been buried, and thus could initiate their plans of moving their community to that location. Benedetta herself died in 1260, shortly after the dedication of the new basilica of St. Clare."

23 BARTOLI LANGELI, *Gli autografi*, 84-85.

24 RegNB 3,7-8 (FAED I, 65).

25 Test 29 (FAED I, 126).

26 For all the details of the work and additions by brother Leo, cfr. MESSA, *Un testimone dell'evoluzione liturgica*, 35-133; VAN DIJK, *The Breviary of Saint Francis*, in *Franciscan Studies* 9 (1949) 15-18.

27 Cfr. the book review of V. Raffa of S.J.P. VAN DIJK, *The Ordinal of the Papal Court. Innocent III to Boniface VIII and Related Documents*, in *Ephemerides liturgicae* 91 (1977), 271.

28 The work of Haymo in substance included two groups of changes: additions and suppressions. The additions regarded in a particular way the updating of the Proper of the Saints, namely the feast of Saint Francis (4th October), the feast of the translation of his relics (25th May), the feast of Saint Anthony (13th June), of Saint Dominic (5th August), of Saint Elizabeth (17th November) and of Saint Catherine of Alexandria (25th November). Further additions were the prayer *Absolve quaesumus Domine*, for the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, while the prayer *Excita quaesumus Domine*, which before was common to both the last two Sundays after Pentecost, was now reserved exclusively for the 24th Sunday. The suppressions, instead, partly regarded the codification of preceding privileges, such as the one obtained from Gregory IX to shorten the litanies, and on the other the suppression of two feasts of dedication which were limited in their appeal beyond the Church in Rome (the dedication of the basilica of Saint Saviour and of the basilicas of Saint Peter and Saint Paul). Cfr. VAN DIJK, *Il carattere della correzione liturgica di fra Aimone da Faversham, o.f.m. (1243-1244)*, in *Ephemerides liturgicae* 59 (1945) 210-214.

29 M. Guida reports this interesting fact: "On 8th April 1258 in the church of Saint Francis in Assisi, a testament was drawn, in which *Iohanna filia quondam Benvenuti Bonaventure*, left as legacy to *fratri Leoni pro una tunica XL solidos*; the same donation was made also for brother Bartolo and brother Pietro. These three brothers appear distinct from the other members of the two communities of Santa Maria della Porziuncola and San Francesco, to which the lady Iohanna also left some money: in fact it is said that these brothers were living close to the nuns of Santa Chiara." M. GUIDA, *Una legenda in cerca d'autore: la «Vita» di santa Chiara d'Assisi. Studio delle fonti e sinossi intertestuale*, Bruxelles 2010, 181-182.

30 Cfr. M. GUIDA, *Lo «Speculum» della «Legenda sanctae Clarae Virginis»: una proposta di vita spirituale per il monachesimo femminile*, in *Studi francescani* 105 (2008) 40.

31 BARTOLI LANGELI, *Gli autografi*, 93.

32 SALIMBENE DE ADAM DA PARMA, *Cronica*, a cura di G. Scalia, traduzione di B. Rossi, prefazione di L. Malerba, Parma 2007, 806.

33 UBERTINO DA CASALE, *The Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus*, Book 5, Chapter 3 (FAED III, 183). Regarding the "writings

and sayings" of brother Leo that later on Conrad of Offida reported, A. Vauchez writes: "The majority of the authors (of the *Legendae*) were variously inspired by the *dossier* written in 1244-46 by the first companions and, in particular, by brother Leo, who continued to enrich it until his death, which occurred in 1271, with the addition of a group of *Verba Sancti Francisci* (*Words of Saint Francis*) and some considerations on the interpretation of the Rule known as *Intentio Regulae* (*Intention of the Rule*). Two Friars Minor who came from the Marches, which was the region in which the Spirituals took refuge, namely Conrad of Offida and Giacomo of Massa, transmitted this legacy to the eminent dissident personages of the last decades of the 13th century and the first decades of the 14th, namely Angelo Clareno and Ubertino da Casale. The latter took care to keep in safekeeping the scrolls that Leo had left under the care of the abbess of Saint Clare of Assisi and made use of them in order to defend his polemic arguments against the Community during the Council of Vienne, when he referred in a specific way to the acts and words of Francis transmitted in those scrolls." VAUCHEZ, *Francesco d'Assisi*, 219-220.

34 For the Codex 338 of the Biblioteca Comunale of Assisi, which is now conserved in the Library of the Sacro Convento, cfr. L. PELLEGRINI, *La raccolta di testi francescani del Codice assisano 338. Un manoscritto composito e miscellaneo*, in «*Revirescunt chartae*», *codices, documenta, textus*, 333-338.

35 The scholar affirms that "in the inventory of the Library of Saint Mary of the Angels, compiled by the guardian Benedetto Accursini and then transcribed by Giovanni di Iolo, there is registered a codex with the indication *Regula fratrum minorum de manu fratris Leonis sotii beati Francisci, et dicta sancti patris Francisci, cum postibus*. One should also take into consideration what Ubertino da Casale wrote in 1311 regarding the *Verba sancti Francisci, que per sanctum virum Leonem eius socium [...] fuerunt solemniter conscripta in libro qui habetur in armario fratrum de Assisio*. If we give credit to this affirmation, it could, and maybe should, be interpreted in the sense of a collection of *dicta* (sayings) or *verba* (words) of the saint, not of "writings", and less so of official writings, which would have been destined for a vast audience, such as the ones transmitted in the Assisi Codex. Maybe the affirmation of Ubertino, linked with the note on the inventory of the library of the Portiuncula, could open a ray of hope in order to solve our problem, and make us think in favour of possible transfers of codexes from one library to the other among the two libraries of the friars Minor of Assisi. If this were the case the collection of the writings of the Saint, contained in the actual ms. 338, or at least its exemplar, could very well be the writing *de manu fratris Leonis*." PELLEGRINI, *La raccolta di testi francescani del Codice assisano* 338, 312-313.

36 PELLEGRINI, *La raccolta di testi francescani del Codice assisano* 338, 312-313.

37 In the past many studies have been published in which various texts regarding Saint Francis were attributed to brother Leo. These were born as a fruit of the tensions that would have been present since the mid-13th century, tensions which would have found a strong reference in the faithful companion of the Saint and in his records registered on parchment, in order to make of him the inspirator of the taking of positions of a rather not well defined group of brothers, animated by a spirit of faithfulness to the original inspiration of the minoritic fraternity. The Portiuncula would have been regarded, since those first decades, as the emblematic place of the jealous custody of the memory and practical actualisation of such an inspiration; cfr. L. PELLEGRINI, *Gli Scritti e la reinterpretazione della proposta francescana nella storia dell'Ordine minoritico*, in «*Verba Domini mei*». *Gli «Opuscula» di Francesco d'Assisi a 25 anni dalla edizione di Kajetan Esser*, o.f.m. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Roma, 10-12 aprile 2002), a cura di A. Cacciotti, Romae 2003, 122.

38 PELLEGRINI, *Gli Scritti e la reinterpretazione della proposta francescana nella storia dell'Ordine minoritico*, 122-125.

PAUL SABATIER

«LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI»

Translated into English by Louise Seymour Houghton, (Hodder and Stoughton), London 1908.

Chapter XVII THE STIGMATA 1224

[287] The upper valley of the Arno forms in the very centre of Italy a country apart, the Casentino, which through centuries had its own life, somewhat like an island in the midst of the ocean.

The river flows out from it by a narrow defile at the south, and on all other sides the Apennines encircle it with a girdle of inaccessible mountains.

This plain, some ten leagues in diameter, is enlivened with picturesque villages, finely posted on hillocks at the base of which flows the stream; here are Bibbiena, Poppi, the antique Romena sung by Dante, the Camaldoli, and up there on the crest Chiusi, long ago the capital of the country, with the ruins of Count Orlando's castle.

The people are charming and refined; the mountains have sheltered them from wars, and on every side we see the signs of labour, prosperity, a gentle gayety. At any moment we might fancy ourselves transported into some valley of the Vivarais or Provence. The vegetation on the borders of the Arno is thoroughly tropical; the olive and the mulberry marry with the vine. On the lower hill-slopes are wheat fields divided by meadows; [288] then come the chestnuts and the oaks, higher still the pine, the fir, the larch, and above all the bare rock.

Among all the peaks there is one which especially attracts the attention; instead of a rounded and so to say flattened top, it uplifts itself slender, proud, isolated; it is the Verna.

One might think it an immense rock fallen from the sky. It is in fact an erratic block set there, a little like a petrified Noah's ark on the summit of Mount Ararat. The basaltic mass, perpendicular on all sides, is crowned with a plateau planted with pines and gigantic beeches, and accessible only by a footpath.

Such was the solitude which Orlando had given

to Francis, and to which Francis had already many a time come for quiet and contemplation.

Seated upon the few stones of the Penna, he heard only the whispering of the wind among the trees, but in the splendour of the sunrise or the sunset he could see nearly all the districts in which he had sown the seed of the gospel: the Romagna and the March of Ancona, losing themselves on the horizon in the waves of the Adriatic; Umbria, and farther away, Tuscany, vanishing in the waters of the Mediterranean.

The impression on this height is not crushing like that which one has in the Alps: a feeling infinitely calm and [289] sweet flows over you; you are high enough to judge of men from above, not high enough to forget their existence.

Besides the wide horizons, Francis found there other objects of delight; in this forest, one of the noblest in Europe, live legions of birds, which never having been hunted are surprisingly tame. Subtle perfumes arise from the ground, and in the midst of borage and lichens frail and exquisite cyclamens blossom in fantastic variety.

He desired to return thither after the chapter of 1224. This meeting, held in the beginning of June, was the last at which he was present. The new Rule was there put into the hands of the ministers, and the mission to England decided upon.

It was in the early days of August that Francis took his way toward Verna. With him were only a few Brothers, Masseo, Angelo, and Leo. The first had been charged to direct the little band, and spare him all duties except that of prayer.

They had been two days on the road when it became necessary to seek for an ass for Francis, who was too much enfeebled to go farther on foot.

The Brothers, in asking for this service, had not concealed the name of their master, and the peasant, to whom they had addressed themselves respectfully, asked leave to guide the beast himself. After going on a certain time, "Is it true," he said, "that you are Brother Francis of Assisi?" "Very well," he went on, [290] after the answer in the affirmative, "apply yourself to be as good as folk say you are, that they may not be deceived

in their expectation; that is my advice.” Francis immediately got down from his beast and, prostrating himself before the peasant, thanked him warmly.

Meanwhile the warmest hour of the day had come on. The peasant, exhausted with fatigue, little by little forgot his surprise and joy; one does not feel the burning of thirst the less for walking beside a saint. He had begun to regret his kindness, when Francis pointed with his finger to a spring, unknown till then, and which has never since been seen.

At last they arrived at the foot of the last precipice. Before scaling it they paused to rest a little under a great oak, and immediately flocks of birds gathered around them, testifying their joy by songs and fluttering of their wings. Hovering around Francis, they alighted on his head, his shoulders, or his arms. “I see,” he said joyfully to his companions, “that it is pleasing to our Lord Jesus that we live in this solitary mount, since our brothers and sisters the birds have shown such great delight at our coming.”

This mountain was at once his Tabor and his Calvary. We must not wonder, then, that legends have flourished here even more numerous than at any other period of his life; the greater number of them have the exquisite charm of the little flowers, rosy and perfumed, which hide themselves modestly at the feet of the fir-trees of Verna.

The summer nights up there are of unparalleled beauty: nature, stifled by the heat of the sun, seems then to breathe anew. In the trees, behind the rocks, on the [291] turf, a thousand voices rise up, sweetly harmonizing with the murmur of the great woods; but among all these voices there is not one which forces itself upon the attention, it is a melody which you enjoy without listening. You let your eyes wander over the landscape, still for long hours illumined with hieratic tints by the departed star of the day, and the peaks of the Apennines, flooded with rainbow hues, drop down into your soul what the Franciscan poet called the nostalgia of the everlasting hills.

More than anyone Francis felt it. The very evening of their arrival, seated upon a mound in the midst of his Brothers, he gave them his directions for their dwelling-place.

The quiet of nature would have sufficed to sow in their hearts some germs of sadness, and the voice of the master harmonized with the emotion of the last gleams of light; he spoke with them of his approaching death, with the regret of the labourer overtaken by the shades of evening before the completion of his task, with the sighs of the father who trembles for the future of his children.

For himself he desired from this time to prepare himself for death by prayer and contemplation; and he begged them to protect him from all intrusion. Orlando, who had already come to bid them welcome and offer his services, had at his request hastily caused

a hut of boughs to be made, at the foot of a great beech. It was there that he desired to dwell, at a stone’s throw from the cells inhabited by his companions. Brother Leo was charged to bring him each day that which he would need.

[292] He retired to it immediately after this memorable conversation, but several days later, embarrassed no doubt by the pious curiosity of the friars, who watched all his movements, he went farther into the woods, and on Assumption Day he there began the Lent which he desired to observe in honour of the Archangel Michael and the celestial host.

Genius has its modesty as well as love. The poet, the artist, the saint, need to be alone when the Spirit comes to move them. Every effort of thought, of imagination, or of will is a prayer, and one does not pray in public.

Alas for the man who has not in his inmost heart some secret which may not be told, because it cannot be spoken, and because if it were spoken it could not be understood. SECRETRUM MEUM MIHI! Jesus felt it deeply: the raptures of Tabor are brief; they may not be told.

Before these soul mysteries materialists and devotees often meet and are of one mind in demanding precision in those things which can the least endure it.

The believer asks in what spot on the Verna Francis received the stigmata; whether the seraph which appeared to him was Jesus or a celestial spirit; what words were spoken as he imprinted them upon him; and he no more understands that hour when Francis swooned with woe and love than the materialist, who asks to see with his eyes and touch with his hands the gaping wound.

Let us try to avoid these extremes. Let us hear what the documents give us, and not seek to do them violence, to wrest from them what they do not tell, what they cannot tell.

[293] They show us Francis distressed for the future of the Order, and with an infinite desire for new spiritual progress.

He was consumed with the fever of saints, that need of immolation which wrung St. Theresa the passionate cry, “Either to suffer or to die!” He was bitterly reproaching himself with not having been found worthy of martyrdom, not having been able to give himself for Him who gave himself for us.

We touch here upon one of the most powerful and mysterious elements of the Christian life. We may very easily not understand it, but we may not for all that deny it. It is the root of true mysticism. The really new thing that Jesus brought into the world was that, feeling himself in perfect union with the heavenly Father, he called all men to unite themselves to him and through him to God: “I am the vine, and ye are the branches; he who abides in me and I in him brings forth much fruit, for apart from me ye can do nothing.”

The Christ not only preached this union, he made it felt. On the evening of his last day he instituted its sacrament, and there is probably no sect which denies that communion is at once the symbol, the principle, and the end of the religious life. For eighteen centuries Christians who differ on everything else cannot but look with one accord to him who in the upper chamber instituted the rite of the new times.

The night before he died he took the bread and brake [294] it and distributed it to them, saying: "TAKE AND EAT, FOR THIS IS MY BODY."

Jesus, while presenting union with himself as the very foundation of the new life, took care to point out to his brethren that this union was before all things a sharing in his work, in his struggles, and his sufferings: "Let him that would be my disciple take up his cross and follow me."

St. Paul entered so perfectly into the Master's thought in this respect that he uttered a few years later this cry of a mysticism that has never been equalled: "I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live ... or rather, it is not I who live, but Christ who liveth in me." This utterance is not an isolated exclamation with him, it is the very centre of his religious consciousness, and he goes so far as to say, at the risk of scandalizing many a Christian: "I fill up in my body that which is lacking of the sufferings of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the Church."

Perhaps it has not been useless to enter into these thoughts, to show to what point Francis during the last years of his life, where he renews in his body the passion of Christ, is allied to the apostolic tradition.

In the solitudes of the Verna, as formerly at St. Damian, Jesus presented himself to him under his form of the Crucified One, the man of sorrows.

That this intercourse has been described to us in a poetic and inexact form is nothing surprising. It is the contrary that would be surprising. In the paroxysms [295] of divine love there are *ineffabilies* which, far from being able to relate them or make them understood, we can hardly recall to our own minds.

Francis on the Verna was even more absorbed than usual in his ardent desire to suffer for Jesus and with him. His days went by divided between exercises of piety in the humble sanctuary on the mountain-top and meditation in the depths of the forest. It even happened to him to forget the services, and to remain several days alone in some cave of the rock, going over in his heart the memories of Golgotha. At other times he would remain for long hours at the foot of the altar, reading and re-reading the Gospel, and entreating God to show him the way in which he ought to walk.

The book almost always opened of itself to the story of the Passion, and this simple coincidence, though easy enough to explain, was enough of itself to excite him.

The vision of the Crucified One took the fuller

possession of his faculties as the day of the Elevation of the Holy Cross drew near (September 14th), a festival now relegated to the background, but in the thirteenth century celebrated with a fervour and zeal very natural for a solemnity which might be considered the patronal festival of the Crusades.

Francis doubled his fasts and prayers, "quite transformed into Jesus by love and compassion," says one of the legends. He passed the night before the festival alone in prayer, not far from the hermitage. In the morning he had a vision. In the rays of the rising sun, which after the chill of night came to revive his body, he suddenly perceived a strange form.

A seraph, with outspread wings, flew toward him from the edge of the horizon, and bathed his soul in raptures unutterable. In the centre of the vision [260] appeared a cross, and the seraph was nailed upon it. When the vision disappeared, he felt sharp sufferings mingling with the ecstasy of the first moments. Stirred to the very depths of his being, he was anxiously seeking the meaning of it all, when he perceived upon his body the stigmata of the Crucified.

Chapter XVII THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN Autumn 1224 – Autumn 1225

[297] The morning after St. Michael's Day (September 30, 1224) Francis quitted Verna and went to Portiuncula. He was too much exhausted to think of making the journey on foot, and Count Orlando put a horse at his disposal.

We can imagine the emotion with which he bade adieu to the mountain on which had been unfolded the drama of love and pain which had consummated the union of his entire being with the Crucified One.

Amor, amor, Gesu desideroso,
Amor voglio morire,
Te abrazando
Amor, dolce Gesu, mio sposo,
Amor, amor, la morte te domando,
Amor, amor, Gesu si pietoso
Tu me te dai in te trasformato
Pensa ch'io vo spasmando
Non so o io me sia
Gesu speranza mia
Ormai va, dormi in amore.

So sang Giacomone dei Todi in the raptures of a like love.

[298] If we are to believe a recently published

document, Brother Masseo, one of those who remained on the Verna, made a written account of the events of this day.

They set out early in the morning. Francis, after having given his directions to the Brothers, had had a look and a word for everything around; for the rocks, the flowers, the trees, for brother hawk, a privileged character which was authorized to enter his cell at all times, and which came every morning, with the first glimmer of dawn, to remind him of the hour of service.

Then the little band set forth upon the path leading to Monte Acuto. Arrived at the gap from whence one gets the last sight of the Verna, Francis alighted from his horse, and kneeling upon the earth, his face turned toward the mountain, "Adieu," he said, "mountain of God, sacred mountain, *mons coagulatus, mons pinguis, mons in quo bene placitum est Deo habitare*; adieu Monte Verna, may God bless thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; abide in peace; we shall never see one another more."

Has not this artless scene a delicious and poignant sweetness? He must surely have uttered these words, in which suddenly the Italian does not suffice and Fran-[299]cis is obliged to resort to the mystical language of the breviary to express his feelings.

A few minutes later the rock of the ecstasy had disappeared. The descent into the valley is rapid. The Brothers had decided to spend the night at Monte Casale, the little hermitage above Borgo San Sepolcro. All of them, even those who were to remain on the Verna, were still following their master. As for him, absorbed in thought he had become entirely oblivious to what was going on, and did not even perceive the noisy enthusiasm which his passage aroused in the numerous villages along the Tiber.

At Borgo San Sepolcro he received a real ovation without even then coming to himself; but when they had some time quitted the town, he seemed suddenly to awake, and asked his companion if they ought not soon to arrive there.

The first evening at Monte Casale was marked by a miracle. Francis healed a friar who was possessed. The next morning, having decided to pass several days in this hermitage, he sent the brothers back to the Verna, and with them Count Orlando's horse.

In one of the villages through which they had passed the day before a woman had been lying several days between death and life unable to give birth to her child. Those about her had only learned of the passage of the saint through their village when he was too far distant to be overtaken. We may judge of the joy of these poor people when the rumour was spread that he was about to return. They went to meet him, and were terribly disappointed on finding only the friars. Suddenly an idea occurred to them; taking the bridle of the horse consecrated by the touch of Francis's hands,



they carried it [300] to the sufferer, who, having laid it upon her body, gave birth to her child without the slightest pain.

This miracle, established by narratives entirely authentic, shows the degree of enthusiasm felt by the people for the person of Francis. As for him, after a few days at Monte Casale, he set out with Brother Leo for Città di Castello. He there healed a woman suffering from frightful nervous disorders, and remained an entire month preaching in this city and its environs. When he once more set forth winter had almost closed in. A peasant lent him his ass, but the roads were so bad that they were unable to reach any sort of shelter before nightfall. The unhappy travellers were obliged to pass the night under a rock; the shelter was more than rudimentary, the wind drifted the snow in upon them, and nearly froze the unlucky peasant, who with abominable oaths heaped curses on Francis; but the latter replied with such cheerfulness that he made him at last forget both the cold and his bad humour.

On the morrow the saint reached Portiuncula. He seems to have made only a brief halt there, and to have set forth again almost immediately to evangelize Southern Umbria.

It is impossible to follow him in this mission. Brother Elias accompanied him, but so feeble was he that Elias could not conceal his uneasiness as to his life.

Ever since his return from Syria (August, 1220), he had been growing continually weaker, but his fervour had increased from day to day. Nothing could check him, neither suffering nor the entreaties of the Brothers; seated on an ass we would sometimes go over three or four villages in one day. Such excessive toil brought on [301] an infirmity even more painful than any he had hitherto suffered from: he was threatened

with loss of sight.

Meanwhile a sedition had forced Honorius III to leave Rome (end of April, 1225). After passing a few weeks at Tivoli, he established himself at Rieti, where he remained until the end of 1226.

The pope's arrival had drawn to this city, with the entire pontifical court, several physicians of renown; Cardinal Ugolini, who had come in the pope's train, hearing of Francis's malady, summoned him to Rieti for treatment. But notwithstanding Brother Elias's entreaties Francis hesitated a long time as to accepting the invitation. It seemed to him that a sick man has but one thing to do; place himself purely and simply in the hands of the heavenly Father. What is pain to a soul that is fixed in God!

Elias, however, at last overcome his objections, and the journey was determined upon, but first Francis desired to go and take leave of Clara, and enjoy a little rest near her.

He remained at St. Damian much longer than he had proposed to do (end of July to beginning of September, 1225). His arrival at this beloved monastery was marked by a terrible aggravation of his malady. For fifteen days he was so completely blind that he could not even distinguish light. The care lavished upon him produced no result, since every day he passed long hours in weeping – tears of penitence, he said, but also of regret. Ah, how different they were from those tears of [302] his moments of inspiration and emotion, which had flowed over a countenance all illumined with joy! They had seen him, in such moments, take up two bits of wood, and, accompanying himself with this rustic violin, improvise French songs in which he would pour out the abundance of his heart.

But the radiance of genius and hope had become dimmed. Rachel weeps for her children, and will not be comforted because they are not. There are in the tears of Francis this same *quia non sunt* for his spiritual sons.

But if there are irremediable pains there are none which may not be at once elevated and softened, when we endure them at the side of those who love us.

In this respect his companions could not be of much help to him. Moral consolations are possible only from our peers, or when two hearts are united by a mystical passion so great that they mingle and understand one another.

"Ah, if the Brothers knew what I suffer," St. Francis said a few days before the impression of the stigmata, "with what pity and compassion they would be moved!"

But they, seeing him who had laid cheerfulness upon them as a duty becoming more and more sad and keeping aloof from them, imagined that he was tortured with temptations of the devil.

Clara divined that which could not be uttered. At St. Damian her friend was looking back over all the

past: what memories lived again in a single glance! Here, the olive-tree to which, a brilliant cavalier, he had fastened his horse; there, the stone bench where his friend, the priest of the poor chapel, used to sit; yonder, the hiding-place in which he had taken refuge from the [303] paternal wrath, and above all, the sanctuary with the mysterious crucifix of the decisive hour.

In living over these pictures of the radiant past, Francis aggravated his pain; yet they spoke to him of other things than death and regret. Clara was there, as steadfast, as ardent as ever. Long ago transformed by admiration, she was now transfigured by compassion. Seated at the feet of him whom she loved with more than earthly love she felt the soreness of his soul, and the failing of his heart. After that, what did it matter that Francis's tears became more abundant to the point of making him blind for a fortnight? Soothing would come; the sister of consolation would give him peace once more.

And first she kept him near her, and, herself taking part in the labor, she made him a large cell of reeds in the monastery garden, that he might be entirely at liberty as to his movements.

How could he refuse a hospitality so thoroughly Franciscan? It was indeed only too much so: legions of rats and mice infested this retired spot; at night they ran over Francis's bed with an infernal uproar, so that he could find no repose from his sufferings. But he soon forgot all that when near his sister-friend. Once again she gave back to him faith and courage. "A single sunbeam," he used to say, "is enough to drive away many shadows!"

Little by little the man of the former days began to show himself, and at times the Sisters would hear, mingling with the murmur of the olive trees and pines, the echo of unfamiliar songs, which seemed to come from the cell of reeds.

One day he had seated himself at the monastery table after a long conversation with Clara. The meal had hardly begun when suddenly he seemed to be rapt away in ecstasy.

[304] "*Laudato sia lo Signore!*" he cried on coming to himself. He had just composed the Cantic of the Sun.

TEXT

*INCIPIUNT LAUDES CREATURARUM
QUAS FECIT BEATUS FRANCISCUS AD LAUDEM
ET HONOREM DEI
CUM ESSET INFIRMUS AD SANCTUM DAMIANUM.*

ALTISSIMU, onnipotente, bon signore,
tue so le laude la gloria e l'onore et onne benedictione.
Ad te solo, altissimo, se konfano
et nullu homo ene dignu de mentovare.
Laudato sie, mi signore, cum tucte le tue creature

spetialmente messor lo frate sole,
lo quale jorna, et illumini per lui;
Et ellu è bellu e radiante cum grande spendore;
de te, altissimo, porta significatione.
Laudato si, mi signore, per sora luna e le stele,
in celu l'ài formate clarite et pretiose et belle.
Laudato si, mi signore, per frate vento
et per aere et nubilo et sereno et onne tempo,
per le quale a le tue creature dai sustentamento.
[305] Laudato si, mi signore, per sor acqua,
la quale è multo utile et humele et pretiosa et casta.
Laudato si, mi signore, per frate focu,
per lo quale ennallumini la nocte,
ed ello è bello et jucundo et robustoso et forte.
Laudato si, mi signore, per sora nostra matre terra,
la quale ne sustenta et governa
et produce diversi fructi con colorite flori et herba.
Laudato si, mi signore, per quilli ke perdonano per lo
tuo amore
et sostengo infirmitate et tribulatione.
Beati quilli ke sosterrano in pace,
ka da te, altissimo, sirano incoronati.
Laudato si, mi signore, per sora nostra morte corporale,
de la quale nullu homo vivente po skappare:
guai a quilli ke morrano ne le peccata mortali;
beati quilli ke se trovarà ne le tue sanctissime voluntati,
ka la morte secunda nol farrà male.
Laudate et benedicete mi signore et rengratiate
et serviteli cum grande humilitate.

TRANSLATION

O most high, almighty, good Lord God, to thee
belong praise, glory, honor, and all blessing!

Praised be my Lord God with all his creatures,
and specially our brother the sun, who brings us the day
and who brings us the light; fair is he and shines with a
very great splendor: O Lord, he signifies to us thee!

Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon,
and for the stars, the which he has set clear and lovely
in heaven.

Praised be my Lord for our brother the wind,
and for air and cloud, calms and all weather by the
which thou upholdest life in all creatures.

[306] Praised be my Lord for our sister water,
who is very serviceable unto us and humble and
precious and clean.

Praised by my Lord for our brother fire,
through whom thou givest us light in the darkness; and
he is bright and pleasant and very mighty and strong.

Praised by my Lord for our mother the earth,
the which doth sustain us and keep us, and bringeth
forth divers fruit and flowers of many colors, and grass.

Praised be my Lord for all those who pardon one
another for his love's sake, and who endure weakness
and tribulation; blessed are they who peaceably shall
endure, for thou, O most Highest, shalt give them a

crown.

Praised be my Lord for our sister, the death of
the body, from which no man escapeth. Woe to him
who dieth in mortal sin! Blessed are they who are
found walking by thy most holy will, for the second
death shall have no power to do them harm.

Praise ye and bless the Lord, and give thanks
unto him and serve him with great humility.

Joy had returned to Francis, joy as deep as
ever. For a whole week he forsook his breviary and
passed his days in repeating the Cantic of the Sun.

During a night of sleeplessness he had heard
a voice saying to him, "If thou hadst faith as a grain
of mustard seed, thou wouldst say to this mountain,
'Be thou removed from there,' and it would move
away." Was not the mountain that of his sufferings,
the temptation to murmur and despair? "Be it, Lord,
according to thy word," he had replied with all his heart,
and immediately he had felt that he was delivered.

He might have perceived that the mountain had
not greatly changed its place, but for several days he
had [307] turned his eyes away from it, he had been
able to forget its existence.

For a moment he thought of summoning to
his side Brother Pacifico, the King of Verse, to retouch
his cantic; his idea was to attach to him a certain
number of friars, who would go with him from village
to village, preaching. After the sermon they would sing
the Hymn of the Sun; and they were to close by saying
to the crowd gathered around them in the public places,
"We are God's jugglers. We desire to be paid for our
sermon and our song. Our payment shall be that you
persevere in penitence."

"Is it not in fact true," he would add, "that the
servants of God are really like jugglers, intended to
revive the hearts of men and lead them into spiritual
joy?"

The Francis of the old raptures had come back,
the laymen, the poet, the artist.

The Cantic of the Creatures is very noble: it
lacks, however, one strophe; if it was not upon Francis's
lips, it was surely in his heart:

Be praised, Lord, for Sister Clara;
thou hast made her silent, active, and sagacious,
and by her thy light shines in our hearts.

Mission of the Pontificia Università Antonianum

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Credo che sia questa una buona occasione per riflettere, anche se brevemente, sulla natura della nostra Università. Come ogni Università Pontificia anche la nostra può essere definita come la Comunità, formata da Professori e Studenti, che cerca la Verità e il Bene in tutti i campi del sapere umano. L'Università è la casa dove si cerca la Verità e il Bene, che per noi hanno un nome: Cristo. È Lui, infatti, la Verità piena (cf. Gv 14,6), è Lui il Bene totale (LodAl 3). Benedetto XVI afferma che l'Università deve «mantenere sveglia la sensibilità per la verità, invitando sempre la ragione a cercare la verità, a cercare il bene, a cercare Dio». È questo che fa diventare tutta la Comunità accademica direttamente missionaria e l'Università stessa piattaforma privilegiata di evangelizzazione in questo mondo post-moderno o, addirittura, pre-cristiano in cui viviamo. E poiché la Verità e il Bene nella loro totalità non sono mai raggiungibili dalla ragione umana, tutti noi, senza distinzione alcuna, dovremmo sentirci mendicanti della Verità e del Bene, allievi e studenti nella scuola della loro conoscenza, e comportarci in quanto tali.

Questa ricerca, sempre iniziata e mai conclusa, proprio perché rimane sempre aperta, deve camminare assieme all'umiltà, come ci insegna il Poverello Francesco, uomo semplice ma profondamente saggio, che saluta la «regina sapienza» con la sua sorella la «santa e pura semplicità» (Salvir I). Chi è veramente saggio vede nell'umiltà una virtù che lo protegge da ogni vanità che impedisce di accedere alla Verità. Dio, infatti, rivela i suoi segreti ai piccoli, non ai superbi (cf. Mt 11,25ss). L'umiltà è quella che distingue il vero dal falso uomo saggio. E questo pone i Professori e gli Studenti davanti a un'esigenza: i Professori devono aver chiaro che non debbono attirare gli studenti a loro, ma incamminarli verso la Verità e il Bene che tutti noi cerchiamo e dei quali tutti noi abbiamo bisogno; gli Studenti non devono accontentarsi mai di superare semplicemente gli esami e neppure di avere un voto alto. Per loro la meta è quella di avvicinarsi ogni volta di più alla Verità e al Bene. ”

*Homily of the Minister General
José Rodríguez Carballo ofm
on the occasion of the inauguration
of the new academic year
of the Pontificia Università Antonianum
Rome (20th October 2011)*

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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Spirit + Life