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FRANCISCANS AND THE MASS-MEDIA

This year the Franciscan family is commemorating the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Clare of Assisi as patron saint of radio and television by Pope Pius XII on 17th February 1958. The motive which inspired the Franciscan family to request this proclamation, was the event of Christmas night of 1252, when Clare felt that she was physically transported to the basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, and took part in the solemn singing of the night vigil office.

Fifty years have passed, and nowadays television is still a very important means of communication. During this half-century, however, we have witnessed the invention of many other means of mass-media, of which we can make ample use for our own benefit today. The most important in recent times is obviously the use of the Internet, which has created a true revolution in the way people look at the importance of communication and speed with which news arrives in real time.

Christians have sometimes been criticised of having been rather suspicious of these new means of communication, judging them to be dangerous for morals. This could be partly true, but it is also true that many Christians are now making good use of the modern means of mass-media for the benefit of the spreading of the Gospel message.

During these last ten to fifteen years, it is surprising to see the increase of Franciscan web-sites on the Internet. This is a good sign of progress in our Franciscan charism. The Maltese Franciscan Province has been at the forefront in this endeavour, launching its own web-site in 1996. The use of the Internet has made communication of Franciscan spirituality and culture a true possibility, and made it possible to receive online news about the Franciscan family in real time.

In the field of Franciscan culture the use of the Internet is now a must. We have understood this new possibility and are trying to make good use of it to the best of our abilities. This present quarterly review is now on-line, with the hope that it can be downloaded by a much wider audience than the limited number of Franciscan religious and lay people who reside in Malta.

The Maltese Franciscan Province intends to continue using this vital means of communication. On behalf of all our readers we also give our best regards to the new Minister Provincial of the Franciscan Maltese Province, Fr. Sandro Overend OFM, and his team. We are sure that they will continue supporting our small contribution to make known the good talents which we have in our small Province to our readers who hail from much larger communities, having much greater means, financial or otherwise, for publishing and making use of the modern means of mass-media

Fr. Noel Muscat ofm

«MINISTERIUM FRATRUM»

Noel Muscat OFM

Francis of Assisi is regarded as being the founder of one of the most important religious families in the history of the Church. He is considered as the founder of the Friars Minor (First Order), of the Poor Clares (Second Order), and of the Regular and Secular Franciscans (Third Order). Yet, it never dawned to Francis' mind to found a religious Order. His experience of the Gospel calling drew to him a limited number of followers right from the very start, but these men lived together according to a very simple form of life, modelled upon the life of Jesus Christ and the apostles. The earliest references to the brotherhood initiated by Francis of Assisi try to explain the difference between the brothers and other lay evangelical movements in the 13th century.¹ The friars were basically a *fraternitas*, that is, a family of brothers.² In this they were radically distinct from all the other types of religious life present in the Church up till the 13th century, since these other models, particularly the monastic Orders and the canons regular, were based upon the concept of *communitas*, that is, a common sharing of life and means, according to the example of the primitive Christian community of the early Church.

One of the early chroniclers of the history of the Order, Jacques de Vitry, who was bishop of Acre and not a member of the Order, and therefore gives us an unbiased picture of the way he looked at Francis and the brothers, speaks about a "new order" in the 13th century Church, alongside the traditional forms of life of the hermits, monks, and canons.³

The beautiful liturgical sequence, *Sanctitatis nova signa*, attributed to Thomas of Celano, describes the Franciscan family as:

"An order new, a life-form new / Appeared on earth out of the blue; / Its sanctioned rule was to renew / The pattern the gospels teach."⁴

This *novitas* (novelty) born out of Francis' genius was the power, which transformed a fraternity into an Order,⁵ an intuition into an institution.⁶ Much has been written to try to understand whether this transformation, which marks Franciscan history from the very beginning, was truly a continuation of Francis' own ideals, or a totally different experience, sanctioned by the authority and moral power of the Catholic Church. What is of interest to us, however, is not the historical question as such, but rather

the true content of Francis' own intention when he founded an Order of brothers, whom he called *fratres minores* (Friars Minor).⁷

In what way can Francis be considered to be the founder of the Friars Minor? What kind of religious family did he intend to establish? How did he remain faithful to his Gospel calling in giving a structure to this religious family, which was initially problematic to Church legislation in the 13th century? And how did the Church eventually accept this novelty and make it part and parcel of its own structure?

In order to answer these questions we need to delve into Francis' own writings and the early biographies, in order to understand the concrete nature of the early Franciscan fraternity, in which there was also need for a Rule and for principles of government and organisation. We shall analyse the terminology that Francis uses in order to describe the role of authority and government in the Order, by looking at the theological foundations of such an intuition. And, hopefully, we intend to present a faithful picture of how Franciscan authority and service should look like, in order not to fall into the temptation of a naïve vision of the ministry of the brothers (*ministerium fratrum*), which is going through a moment of crisis in our Order today.

Franciscan terminology: minister et servus fratrum

The fundamental difference, which marks the Franciscan Order right from the very start as distinct from all other contemporary religious, is that of terminology. The monastic tradition of the Rule of St. Benedict regards the abbot (*abbas*) as having supreme authority in the monastery, on the model of the Roman *paterfamilias*. The canonical tradition of the Rule of St. Augustine speaks about the prior (*prior*) as superior of the community, a Latin word meaning "the foremost" or "the first". This term was also taken from monastic circles, where the prior is an official superior of a community living under the direction of the abbot of a larger monastery, which functioned as a kind of motherhouse to the priorate.

The Dominican tradition, contemporary to Francis, accepted as its norm of life the Rule of St. Augustine, and hence the terminology used in this Rule. The early Dominican constitutions speak about the General Prior, the Provincial Prior and the Conventual Prior.⁸

Francis of Assisi was aware of this terminology, and yet he adamantly refused to accept it in his religious family. In the *Earlier Rule* of 1221 we find the first and most clear reference to the fact that no brother in the Order was to be called "prior":

"Let no one be called "*prior*," but let everyone

in general be called a friar minor. Let one wash the feet of the other.”⁹

The verse is based upon explicit Gospel references. These include the following: (1) Mt 20:26-27 – “anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave”; (2) Mt 23:8 – “You, however, must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one Master, and you are all brothers”; (3) Lk 22:26 – “the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves”; (4) Jn 13:14 – “If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other’s feet.”

The terminology in the Gospel refers to a situation in which one is a Master (Rabbi) or has a position of priority (great, first). The last two references are taken from the episode of the Last Supper, and particularly from that of the washing of the feet of the apostles in Jn 13.

The fact that Francis never wanted to accept a type of monastic or canonical structure in his Order is shown clearly in the medieval sources. The most important episode regarding this decision on the part of St. Francis is to be found in the *Assisi Compilation*:

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

Then blessed Francis, on hearing the cardinal’s advice about this, took him by the hand and led him to the brothers assembled in chapter, and spoke to the brothers in this way: ‘My brothers! My brothers! God has called me by the way of simplicity and showed me the way of simplicity. I do not want you to mention to me any *Rule*, whether of Saint Augustine, or of Saint Bernard, or of Saint Benedict. And the Lord told me what He wanted: He wanted me to be a new fool in the world. God did not wish to lead us by any way other than his knowledge, but God will confound you by your knowledge and wisdom. But I trust in the Lord’s police that through them He will punish you, and you will return to your state, to your blame, like it or not.’ The cardinal was shocked, and said nothing, and all the brothers were afraid.”¹⁰

This episode shows the tension which existed

even when Francis was still alive, between the Gospel ideals of simplicity of the first brothers and the new generations of brothers who were intellectually prepared, and who regarded the early years of the Order as heroic, but incapable of offering any future perspective to its life and mission. The ideals of these brothers were certainly modelled upon the experience of religious life in the Church, based essentially upon monastic or conventual discipline. We do find an example of this trend in the writings of Jacques de Vitry.

In his *Letter written from Damietta in 1220*, Jacques de Vitry is highly critical of the seemingly undisciplined structure of the early Franciscan fraternity, and states: “But to our way of thinking, this Order is quite risky, because it sends out two by two throughout the world, not only formed religious, but also immature young men who should first be tested and subjected to *conventual discipline* for a time.”¹¹

A Church prelate like Jacques de Vitry regarded true religious as being those who live in *conventual discipline*. Now, the term would simply imply a religious living in a monastic or canonical setting. No other form of religious life could guarantee conventual discipline. The fact that Francis had to accept the introduction of the year of novitiate, with the Bulla *Cum secundum consilium* (22nd September 1220), is a sign that the Church was struggling to give a kind of structure to the Friars Minor, without going against the genuine intentions of St. Francis, who would not listen to anybody suggesting to him to choose the monastic or canonical lifestyle for his brothers.

In order to safeguard his intuition, while at the same time accepting that his Order had to become an institution in the Church, Francis created a new kind of hierarchy at the helm of the Order, by using terms which are intimately linked with Christ’s words in the Gospel. Thus, in early Franciscan legislation, we meet the expression *minister et servus fratrum* (minister and servants of the brothers) applied to the official in charge of the whole Order (general minister), to the official in charge of an entity of the Order (provincial minister), and to the local officials (here the terms vary: *custos*, *minister loci*, *guardianus*). We will now take a brief look at the use and significance of these particular terms.

Franciscan “hierarchy”: minister, custos, guardianus

The Franciscan Order introduced a totally new concept of centralised authority in the history of religious life. The monastic Orders were all established upon the notion of the local supreme

authority of the abbot or prior, with each monastery being distinct and independent of all the others. The Friars Minor were born as a centralised religious family with a superior general presiding over all. What is interesting and new in the Franciscan spring is the fact that the binding force of the Order, from the very beginning, was the charismatic figure of St. Francis.¹²

Thus the concept of authority in the Order gradually evolved into a series of offices, emanating from the central authority of the minister general. We have already noted the fact that Francis wanted to use the term *minister* in order to underline the service of authority in the brotherhood. Here we will see how this term began to be used in the case of the central authority of the minister general, in the case of the entities born in the Order after 1217, where the authority was vested in the minister provincial, and in the subdivision of these same entities in the authority of the *custos* and *guardianus*.

The Later Rule of 1223 speaks about the minister general of the Order. "Let all the brothers always be bound to have one of the brothers of this Order as general minister and servant of the whole fraternity and let them be strictly bound to obey him."¹³ Thus, in the Order of Friars Minor, the highest superior in the Order bears the name *minister generalis*, and this name has been in use ever since in order to denote his title of office.

Francis even goes on to describe the explicit duties of the *minister et servus fratrum*, the minister and servant of the brothers. There is a familiar relationship between the minister, who is certainly responsible for authority in the Order, and the brothers, towards whom he should show fatherly and brotherly care, particularly in the case of brothers who sin. Thus the role of the minister general, as well as that of the minister provincial, is that of guaranteeing the unity and brotherly love of the fraternity. In the Franciscan Order we can speak about the *ministerium fratrum*, the ministry of the brothers. Let us have a look at what the Later Rule says regarding this style of leadership in the Order.

"If any brother, at the instigation of the enemy, sins mortally in regard to those sins concerning which it has been decreed among the brothers to have recourse only to the provincial ministers, let him have recourse as quickly as possible and without delay. If these ministers are priests, with a heart full of mercy let them impose on him a penance; but, if the ministers are not priests, let them have it imposed by others who are priests of the Order, as in the sight of God appears to them more expedient. They must be careful not to be angry or disturbed at the sin of another, for anger and disturbance impede charity in themselves and in others."¹⁴

The notion of familiarity is therefore central to the relationship between the ministers (both general and provincial) and the brothers.¹⁵ It became more evident as the Order grew in numbers, particularly after the General Chapter of 1217, when the Order was divided into provinces for the first time.¹⁶

One of the main duties of the minister general or provincial is that of being physically close to the brothers, by visiting them. The Later Rule states: "Let the brothers who are the ministers and servants of the others visit and admonish their brothers and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything that is against their soul or our rule."¹⁷

The novelty of the term *minister et servus* in the Franciscan movement was such that, in the biographies and other testimonies coming from the pen of men living outside the Order, it was necessary to explain these new terms, which were radically distinct from the old monastic names of *abbas*, *prior*, or *praelatus*.¹⁸

The Anonymous monk of the Benedictine monastery of Oberaltaich, in Germany, author of the so-called *Legenda Monacensis* (c.1275), says: "In view also of the virtue of humility he did not want in the Rule to call the rulers of the Order by names signifying dignity, such as, abbots, presidents, or priors, but ministers and custodians, so that by this the brothers would understand that they were servants of their brothers rather than lords, and preservers of souls and not dispensers of them, according to this passage from Matthew: *He who is the greatest among you shall be your servant* (Mt 23:11), and this passage from the Song of Songs: *The peaceable one had a vineyard, in that which has people: he let out the same to custodians* (Sg 8:11). The word 'guardian,' which has the same meaning as 'custodian,' is not from the Rule, but from its use in the Romance tongue and taken to express a difference of duties."¹⁹

The term *minister* is well documented in the early Sources, but the other two terms *custos* and *guardianus* are less clearly defined, and it is important to stop for a moment to consider the development of these roles in the Order. Regarding the term *custos* (custodian), Kajetan Esser writes:

"In the documents of the Roman Curia itself – and that well into the reign of Gregory IX – can be detected a certain perplexity in regard to this office; as, for example, when a title of office is used for the first time in 1220: 'To the beloved sons, the priors or custodes of the Friars Minor' (*dilectis filiis prioribus seu custodibus minorum fratrum*). The term *custos* had not been used hitherto for the superiors of the Friars Minor, since its use in the Order can be traced only to a later date. It appears

here, therefore, for the first time. The term does not seem to have been used at first in a proper sense only, inasmuch as the Final Rule prescribes that, in place of an incompetent minister general, the friars are to 'elect for themselves another as *custos* in the name of the Lord.' Thus, the term could apply even to the highest superior in the Order. In the same chapter we read: 'At his death, the election of a successor must be made *by the provincial ministers and custodes* at the Chapter of Pentecost, in which the *provincial ministers* are always bound to convene...' As only the provincial ministers come to the Chapter, the term *custos* cannot refer here either to any specific office; *minister et custos* is, in all probability, originally a repetition similar to *minister et servus*. Accordingly, we may interpret the address of the papal letter just mentioned to mean that *custos* at first, like *minister*, was a general designation of office in the Order. Yet by the time St. Francis wrote his *Testament* the word had certainly come to mean a clearly defined office. The provinces by that time were, obviously, subdivided into smaller administrative units, headed by the *custos*. When used then in 1230, it was certainly the title given the friar who was to govern a smaller administrative unit of a province."²⁰

The term *guardianus* is even more complicated, since in the very beginning of the Order it had various connotations, and was sometimes mixed up with the role of the *custos*, and could refer both to a personal jurisdiction exercised over one friar (as in the case of St. Francis, who had a "guardian") or to the local superior (sometimes called a *minister loci*, "minister of the place", that is of the friary). The following is Esser's expert explanation of the term:

"The *Legenda Monacensis* says: 'The term guardian, which means the same as *custos*, is not from the Rule, but is taken from the usage of the Roman tongue to distinguish the offices. The house superiors are called *guardiani* in both chronicles (Jordan of Giano and Thomas of Eccleston) from the beginning. All the evidence shows that the friars took with them to Germany and England, in 1221 and 1224 respectively, both the name and the office as a firmly established institution [...] Jordan reports that, as guardian of Speyer, he sang the solemn Mass at the Chapter there in 1223, and that, as *custos* of Thuringia, in 1225, he sent a letter to Brother Nicholas at Erfurt 'that he was to be guardian there.' [...] The same holds good for the English Province, according to Thomas of Eccleston. He names the first guardians of the most important convents, among them several lay brothers.

For Italy the position is not so unequivocally clear. It was probably in the year 1222 that the sermon which, according to the evidence of the *Legenda Assidua*, revealed the talent of St. Anthony

was given. He was called upon by the 'minister of the place' to give his sermon. But the latter can only have been a superior of the house there. This 'minister of the place' [...] is actually called 'guardian' in the later legends. Thus, in Italy, the house superiors were at first called 'minister'.

Neither do the writings of St. Francis give any clear information on this question. Although the word 'guardian' occurs quite often – even as a designation of office – it is never explicitly defined.

In his *Testament* the Saint proclaims that he wishes strictly to obey that guardian whom it may please the Minister General to give him. It must not be understood simply as 'house superior,' for it designates merely the Saint's personal superior who, as may be seen from the context, accompanies him also on his journeys.

As soon as the friars settled down, it was only natural to transfer to the house superior the name that had been given to the leader of the group up to that. In any case, 'guardian' then becomes the official designation for the superior of the smallest unit of friars, over whom the *custos* and the minister are placed as the responsible leaders of the larger groups. The hierarchy of the Order is seen in this same sense in the *Letter to a Chapter*, which belongs to the last stage of the life of St. Francis.

The titles 'minister, custos, guardian' occur also in the *Letter to a Minister*. The minister is to tell the guardians that they are to have mercy on the friars who sin. Such friars are then expected to have recourse to their guardians. The other friars must 'send (such a one) to his *custos* with a companion.' The guardians mentioned here are obviously the leaders of the itinerant groups of friars, who do not always have each of their friars near them. The *custos*, however, is the provincial minister, who is entrusted with the spiritual direction of the friars.

We may say by way of summing up that the titles of office in the Order had at first a personal character. 'Minister of the Friars' is an older title than 'Minister of the Province.' Thus, too, the guardian's function as leader of a group of friars is older than his function as a house superior. He is the protector of his friars to preserve them from evil and keep them good."²¹

As a conclusion we can state that the term *minister* (*minister et servus*), referring to the general or provincial minister, was used from the beginnings of the Order. The term *custos* was originally mixed with the office of minister, but it gradually assumed the meaning of a superior in charge of a group of friaries within a particular province, and hence acting under the direction of the minister provincial. The term *guardian* is the most problematic, since it originally seems to have denoted the office of

a superior of a group of itinerant friars, or even a personal guardian, as in the case of St. Francis. Only later did it distinguish itself as denoting specifically a local superior (*minister loci*) of a particular friary. The sense of the Latin terms *custos* and *guardianus* is very similar, since both indicate the office of protection and safeguarding of the brothers.

Authority and service in contemporary Franciscan legislation

The current legislation of the Order of Friars Minor reflects in a faithful way the concept of authority as service as contained in the Sources we have just referred to. Nowadays, the respective roles of Minister General, Minister Provincial, Custos, and Guardian, are well-defined and distinct one from the other. But they are still based upon the same concept of service underlined by Francis in his writings and in the examples of his life. We shall simply refer to what the General Constitutions of the Order of Friars Minor say regarding each level of authority and service in the Order. Regarding the *ministerium fratrum*, the Constitutions speak about the underlying notion of authority with humility:

“The Ministers and Guardians are to carry out their service of authority with humility; and docile to God’s will in fulfilling their duty, they are to watch over the friars (*fratres custodiant*) as children of God and they are to encourage their voluntary obedience with respect for the human person.”²²

The duty of watching over the brothers is expressed by the Latin verb *custodiant*, which is typical in the Franciscan tradition.²³

The first duty of custody of the brothers falls within the competence of the Minister General of the Order:

“The Minister General, either personally or through others, is obliged, according to special Statutes, to make a canonical visitation of Provinces and other entities of the Order dependent on Provinces at the time a Minister Provincial must be elected in Chapter; he is to visit other entities at a suitable time. He is also to visit them fraternally to foster and strengthen their Franciscan spirit.”²⁴

The exercise of authority in the Order and in the Provinces is best expressed by the personal contact of the Minister with each and every brother. The Minister General can certainly accomplish such a difficult task, but he needs the collaboration of the Ministers Provincial. That is why the Constitutions are more specific about the duties of the service of authority of the Minister Provincial:

“The Minister Provincial is to visit his friars frequently, admonish and comfort them spiritually, and correct them humbly and charitably. At the

time specified by the General Statutes, he is obliged to make canonical visitation of all the Houses and friars.”²⁵

A close look at the verbs used in Latin throws light upon the specific duties of the Minister Provincial. He should visit his friars frequently (*saepe visitet fratres*). During these visitations he is to spiritually admonish and comfort them (*moneat et confortet fratres*). This duty is best carried out when he corrects them humbly and charitably (*humiliter and caritative corrigat eos*). The duty of visiting the friars and dealing with them with brotherly familiarity does not diminish in the least the minister’s duty of admonishing and correcting the faults of the brothers, who are bound in conscience to obey his commands. Humility and charity on all sides are the best guarantee for an effective exercise of the service of authority and the friars’ generous response to it.

Last, but not least, the Constitutions describe the important role of the Guardian, which is maybe the most problematic in the Order, given that the authority on the local level is, according to my way of seeing things, in a deep crisis in the Order today:

“In accordance with universal law and the proper law of the Order, the principal responsibility of the Guardian is to foster the welfare of the fraternity and of the friars, to exercise watchful care over the religious life and discipline, to direct activities, to promote an active and responsible obedience among the friars in a spirit of true fraternity.”²⁶

The principal office of the Guardian (*guardiani officium praecipuum*) is that of being faithful to the universal law of the Church and the Order, by fostering (*fovere*) the welfare (*bonum*) of the brothers. He is to do this by being a custodian (*vigilantem curam gerere*) of the religious life and discipline. Therefore he is responsible to see that the brothers truly live the Franciscan values of their religious consecration, community prayer, fraternal life in community, poverty and humility, evangelization, and that they take care of their ongoing formation. The Guardian also is the moderator (*moderari*) of the activities of the fraternity. In other words, he is the animator of whatever happens in the fraternity, and is to see to it that no friar lives and acts by himself, without any reference to the mandate given to him by the fraternity. In this way the Guardian promotes (*promovere*) a truly active and responsible obedience in order to build a true fraternity. In the exercise of these duties the Guardian has a daunting challenge, but also a sound tradition of 800 years of experience in a fraternity that was founded by a man who conceived authority as service of loving the brothers by washing their feet as the Lord Jesus Christ did as Servant and Master.

Notes

¹ The earliest reference to the name “Friars Minor” seems to be that given by Burchard of Ursperg, a canon of the Premonstratensian abbey of Ursperg in the diocese of Augsburg. Writing c. 1228-1230 he says: “At that time, when the world was already growing old, there arose two religious orders in the Church, whose youth is continually renewed like the eagle’s, and which were approved by the Apostolic See, namely the Friars Minor and the Friars Preachers. Perhaps they were approved at that time because two sects, which had previously sprung up in Italy, were still around: one was called the Humiliati and the other the Poor Men of Lyons. Pope Lucius had not long before listed them among the heretics [...] At that time we saw some of their number, who were called the Poor Men of Lyons, at the Apostolic See with one of their ministers whose name, I think, was Bernard. He was seeking to have his sect confirmed and given privileges by the Apostolic See. In fact, they went about through towns and villages, saying that they were living the life of the apostles, not wishing to possess anything or to have a definite place to live [...] In place of these the Lord Pope approved certain others then on the rise who called themselves ‘Poor Minors.’ They rejected the above-mentioned superstitious and scandalous practices, but travelled about both in winter and in summer absolutely barefoot; they accepted neither money nor anything else besides food, and occasionally a needed garment that someone might spontaneously offer them, for they would not ask anything from anyone. However, later on these men realized that their name could possibly lead to self-glorification under the cover of great humility and that, as many bear the title ‘poor’ to no purpose, they could boast in vain before God; therefore, obedient to the Apostolic See in all things, they preferred to be called Friars Minor instead of Poor Minors.” Text quoted from FAED I, 593-594. Quotations of the Writings and Sources for the Life of St. Francis from: *Francis of Assisi. Early Documents*, Vol. I: The Saint; Vol. II: The Founder; Vol. III: The Prophet, edited by R.J. Armstrong, J.A. Hellmann, W.J. Short, New City Press, New York – London – Manila 1999-2001 (abbreviated as FAED, plus volume no, plus page no.).

Personal note: I prefer to use the official name Order of Friars Minor (*Ordo Fratrum Minorum*), and not Order of Lesser Brothers, used by the translators of the latest edition of the Sources of St. Francis, for the simple reason that it is a more faithful reflection of the Latin original. The term “brothers” could be taken as a good translation of the Latin term *fratres*. The same cannot be said regarding the translation of *minores* into “lesser.”

² GIOVANNI MICCOLI, “The Writings of Francis as Sources for the History of the Franciscan Origins,” *Greyfriars Review* (GR) 18,1 (2004) 1-22.

³ JACQUES DE VITRY, *Historia Occidentalis*, 1 (FAED I, 582): “There have been three religious orders: hermits, monks, and canons. But in order that the state of those living according to a rule might rest firmly on a solid foundation, the Lord in these days has added a fourth form of religious life, the embellishment of a new order, and the holiness of a new rule.”

⁴ *The Liturgical Texts. Sequences in honour of St. Francis* (FAED I, 356).

⁵ KAJETAN ESSER, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1970, 17-135, especially page 23: “Francis himself, in those writings of his which have come down to us, preferred to use ‘fraternitas’ to describe the community which had grown around him, because this word gives expression to an essential characteristic of his followers. Yet, just as often, he calls it ‘religio’ and ‘ordo.’”

⁶ DAVID FLOOD – WILLIBROARD VANDIJK – THADÉE MATURA, *The Birth of a Movement*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1976; THÉOPHILE DESBONNETS, *From Intuition to Institution: The Franciscans*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1988.

⁷ 1C 38 (FAED I, 217): “(Francis) himself originally planted the Order of Friars Minor and on the occasion of its founding gave it this name. For when it was written in the Rule, ‘Let them be minors...,’ at the uttering of this statement, at that same moment he said, ‘I want this fraternity to be called the Order of Friars Minor.’”

⁸ These primitive Dominican Constitutions were written before the revised edition of St. Raymond of Peñafort which went into effect in 1241. The full text in English of these constitutions can be downloaded from <http://www.domcentral.org/trad/domdocs/0011.htm>

⁹ *Regula non bullata* 6,3 (FAED I, 68).

¹⁰ AC 18 (FAED II, 132-133).

¹¹ JACQUES DE VITRY, *Letter written from Damietta in 1220*, (FAED I, 582).

¹² KAJETAN ESSER, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, 58-59: “The little groups of friars, with no stable abode, by the very nature of things needed strong ties to the man whose spirit inspired them all. And so, a further novel element is introduced, namely, that the whole body of friars, and not just individual groups, is guided by one man. From the outset, therefore, there exist, not heads of smaller fraternities or of individual monasteries who, as they merge into one body, elect a superior to whom all others are subject, but one man whose personal life inspired the whole movement and who ruled it with full authority.”

¹³ *Regula bullata*, 8,1 (FAED I, 104).

¹⁴ *Regula bullata*, 7 (FAED I, 103-104).

¹⁵ KAJETAN ESSER, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, 65: “The expression *minister et servus* was not conceived by Francis as a kind of title or designation of office, but taken rather in the full literalness of its

meaning. Thus, in the Final Rule, after he has enjoined upon the friars 'who are subject' total obedience to their ministers, he gives these latter a most serious warning to show such *familiaritas* towards their friars 'that they may act with them as masters with their servants.' That this admonition means exactly what it says is proved by the reasoning, which follows and which leaves no room for doubt: 'for thus it ought to be, that the ministers be the servants of all the friars.' Here the relationship between the superior and those subject to him is viewed entirely in the light of the Gospel [...] The 'service' in the office of the superior was to guarantee also that the superior himself would actually remain a 'friar minor,' imbued with the spirit of the whole community. It may well have been for this reason that the 'ministry of the friars,' except for the office of Minister General, was not conferred for life."

¹⁶ KAJETAN ESSER, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, 64: "We have good reason to believe that a 'province' was understood to be a more corporate entity, with definite territorial limits, corresponding to some extent to the existing monastic abbeys and priories. In the same way, those functions which at that time belonged to abbots and priors fell as a matter of course to the minister provincial."

¹⁷ *Regula Bullata* 10,1 (FAED I, 105).

¹⁸ The word *praelatus* (prelate), is however, used by Francis in the *Admonitions*. Examples include *Adm* 3 (FAED I, 130), and also *Adm* 4,2 (FAED I, 130), where Francis speaks about the one who is placed over the others (*prior*). But note that, in this last case, Francis is clear about what he intends by prior: "Let those who are placed over others boast about that position as much as they would if they were assigned the duty of washing the feet of their brothers."

¹⁹ ANONYMOUS OSB, *Legenda Monacensis*, 55 (FAED III, 858).

²⁰ KAJETAN ESSER, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, 67-68.

²¹ KAJETAN ESSER, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, 172-175.

²² *General Constitutions OFM*, General OFM Curia, Rome 2004, Art. 185 §1.

²³ The duty of being Custodians in the Franciscan Order touches some core issues of Franciscan life, presence and mission: the ministers and servants are custodians of the brothers, the Franciscan friars are custodians of the Holy Places in the Holy Land, the Franciscan friars are custodians of the tomb of Saint Francis and of the chapel of the Porziuncola in Assisi.

²⁴ *General Constitutions OFM*, Art. 199.

²⁵ *General Constitutions OFM*, Art. 221, §1.

²⁶ *General Constitutions OFM*, Art. 237.

SAINT CLARE PATRON OF TV 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Stefano Brufani and

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[«Porziuncola» 84,5 (May 2008) 6-9]

This year we are commemorating the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Clare of Assisi as patron of television. With the papal brief *Clarius explendescit* of 17th February 1958, Pius XII proclaimed Clare as patron saint of one of the most revolutionary technological inventions of the last century. According to the Pope's words, television is a means "out of which great benefits will ensue, but that can unfortunately also prove harmful." The pontifical document was the final result of a revival of studies on Saint Clare, which began with the celebration of the 7th centenary of her death (1253-1953).

Towards the conclusion of that centenary year, the lawyer Arnaldo Fortini, who was President of the International Society of Franciscan Studies, wrote a letter to the bishop of Assisi Placido Nicolini, to promote the initiative of proclaiming Clare as patron saint of television, in front of the Apostolic See. On the occasion of the radiophonic transmission of 27th December 1953, the bishop formulated the proposal to "elect Saint Clare as Patron of Radio and Television."

This idea was born out of a famous episode in the life of Saint Clare. During Christmas night of 1252, Clare was immobile because of her sickness and was confined to her bed in the nuns' dormitory. Therefore she could not participate in the vigil liturgy held in the church of San Damiano, together with the Poor Ladies of that monastery. Sick as she was in the dormitory, she received the grace of hearing the singing of the friars who were singing the Office, and she could see the crib with her own eyes:

"She immediately began to hear the organ, responsories, and the entire Office of the brothers in the Church of Saint Francis, as if she were present there [...] She had heard from Lady Clare that, on the night of the Lord's Nativity, she also saw the manger of our Lord Jesus Christ" (*ProcCan* III,30; IV,16, in *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, Revised Edition and Translation by R.J. Armstrong, New City Press, New York 2006, 161. 165).

The vision of Clare in that Christmas night of

1252 was not transmitted by any human means, but was entirely the fruit of divine grace. Her desire to participate in the celebrations of the Nativity of the Lord was so intense to make her obtain from God the privilege of going beyond the laws of nature and experience something which the human race would only physically discover many centuries later. The various images, which she saw were impressed on her mind and in her heart, and opened her vision to recognise the presence of the Lord. The experience of Clare was a “seeing” which won over the solitude of that lonely Christmas vigil, and which brought her to the acts of “celebrating” and “announcing.” In fact, after the vision, Clare announces the joy she experienced to the sisters.

The vision of the crib indicated that Clare would have come to know the place where it was to be found, namely the lower Basilica of Saint Francis. The vision did not indicate the physical place in which Clare felt to have been carried, but it also indicated the intimate link between Clare and the memory of Francis, which was enshrined in the monumental church built in his honour, where his mortal remains are venerated. Clare entered into a communion with the liturgy, with the Church and with the world. That is why it is not surprising that a contemplative woman like Saint Clare would be declared patron of television, just as another cloistered nun, Saint Therese of Lisieux, would be declared patron of missions.

This was truly a miraculous audio-vision, since Clare could see and hear at a distance what was truly happening in the church of Saint Francis. This episode encouraged the bishop to take the initiative with the Congregation of Rites, with the explicit support of the local Franciscan superiors and the Franciscan Ministers General, among whom we mention the hard work of Fr. Augustine Sépinski, Minister General OFM.

This vision, however, was not the only one, which Clare had during her life. We can mention the vision narrated by Sister Filippa of Leonardo di Ghislerio in the *Acts of the Process of Canonization*: “Lady Clare also related how once, in a vision, it seemed to her she brought a bowl of hot water to Saint Francis along with a towel for drying his hands. She was climbing a very high stairway, but was going very quickly, almost as though she were going on level ground. When she reached Saint Francis, the saint bared his breast and said to Lady Clare: ‘Come, take, and drink.’ After she had sucked from it, the saint admonished her to imbibe once again. After she did so what she had tasted was so sweet and delightful she in no way could describe it. After she had imbibed, the nipple or opening of the breast from which the milk comes remained between the

lips of blessed Clare. After she took what remained in her mouth in her hands, it seemed to her it was gold so clear and bright that everything was seen in it as in a mirror” (*ProcCan* III,29, in *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, 161).

Another important vision is that which Saint Clare had just before dying at San Damiano: “The most holy virgin, turning toward herself, silently addressed her soul. ‘Go without anxiety,’ she said, ‘for you have a good escort for your journey. Go, for He Who created you has made you holy. And, always protecting you as a mother her child, He has loved you with a tender love. May you be blessed, O Lord, You Who have created my soul!’ [...] She turned her attention to the door of the house. And, behold, a multitude of virgins in white garments entered, all of whom wore gold garlands on their heads. One more splendid than the others walked among them and from her crown, which at its peak gave the appearance of a latticed thurible, such a splendour came forth that it turned the night within the house into daylight. She moved toward the bed where the spouse of the Son was reposing and, bending most lovingly over her, gave her a most tender embrace. A mantle of the most remarkable beauty was brought by the virgins and, with all of them working zealously, the body of Clare was covered and the bridal bed was decorated” (*LegCl* 46, in *Clare of Assisi. Early Documents*, 317).

The proclamation of Saint Clare as patron of TV occurred at a moment of great enthusiasm for this new technological miracle and in a climate of cinematographic neo-realism. It will help us to remember that true vision, namely, the beatific vision, which is much more real than any human image, towards which Clare aspired through her entire life.

SECULAR FRANCISCAN SAINTS: BLESSED LUCHESIUS

Noel Muscat OFM

Historical documents about Blessed Luchesi

The sources for the life of blessed Luchesi (Luchesi) of Poggibonsi, considered by popular tradition to have been the first Franciscan Tertiary, are rather late.¹ Only a fragment of the original *legenda* has survived, the work of an anonymous monk of Vallambrosa written around the mid-14th century, which also repeats the model of many other *legendae* regarding Tuscan saints.

The *Vita* compiled in 1370 seems richer in historical references. This also has come down to us in a 15th century exemplar of the Friar Minor Bartolomeo de' Tolomei of Siena. But even this second *legenda* is a late transcription made in 1477 by another Franciscan, Bartolomeo da Colle.

Life of Blessed Luchesi

Luchesi was born in Gaggiano, a village close to Radda in Chianti, in the neighbourhood of Siena in Tuscany, in an uncertain date between the end of the 12th and the beginning of the 13th century. He was married, but his wife's name has not survived. She is known simply as Bonadonna, because of her conversion in the Order of Penance of Saint Francis. As a young man he went to live at Poggibonsi. The importance of the area grew from the 10th to the 12th centuries, thanks to the strategic position of Poggibonsi on the Via Francigena, the main road of the merchants leading from Rome to France. Luchesi settled in this town and became a very rich merchant and a powerful man. He also became involved in the intestinal struggles of the town.

This couple has been popularly known as the first couple of Tertiary Franciscans. There is a lack of historical documents to prove this. However, the local tradition at Poggibonsi is strongly in favour. It is said that the conversion of Luchesi and Bonadonna occurred around the year 1221. After the General Chapter of Pentecost of that year, known as the Chapter of Mats, held at the Porziuncola in Assisi, Francis went on a preaching tour in Tuscany. He met Luchesi at Poggibonsi. Now Luchesi

had just gone through an intense period of spiritual conversion, together with his wife Bonadonna. They had given all their riches to the poor, and kept just a small field in order to earn their daily living by the work of their hands. It seems that Francis had known Luchesi before. Indeed, there is tradition that says that Pietro di Bernardone, Francis' father, was a merchant from the town of Lucca in Tuscany.² According to tradition Francis invited Luchesi to accept the habit of the *Ordo Poenitentium*, or Order of Penance.

The first references to the fact that Luchesi was a Franciscan Tertiary appear in the *Chronicle of the XXIV Ministers General of the Order of Friars Minor*, composed by Arnald of Sarrant in the mid-14th century (1369-1374). The author says that the Third Order founded by Francis of Assisi had, as its first member, a certain *sanctus Lucius*, who has been identified with Luchesi.³

The Chronicle of Mariano da Firenze states that it was at Poggibonsi that the Third Order was founded and that Luchesi was the first Tertiary.⁴

The problem of the exact date of the founding of the Third Order has been tackled by G. Meersseman.⁵ In fact, scholars today agree that the Order of Penance predated St. Francis, and was part and parcel of the diverse lay evangelical movements and confraternities present in northern Italy and southern France, like the Humiliati in Milan and the Poor Men of Lyons. In the case of the two great Mendicant Orders (the Minors and the Preachers), the Order of Penance could rely upon a Catholic foundation regarding doctrine, which was certainly more acceptable to the Roman Curia.

In fact it was Cardinal Hugolino who gave the Penitents their first form of life, known as *Memoriale Propositi*, in 1221. Therefore, the indication of 1221 as the year of foundation of the Third Order is, in fact, simply a sign of a more coherent legislation, applicable to both Dominican and Franciscan Penitents, which was to go on developing until the Bull of the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV, *Supra montem* (18th August 1289), which approved the first Rule of the Order of Penance, which henceforth became to be regarded as the creation of Francis himself, and hence as the Third Secular Franciscan Order.

Luchesi lived in poverty and charity, and rendered his services at the local hospital of Poggibonsi. He is said to have died on 28th April 1260, the day when his feast is commemorated, and was buried in the church of the Friars Minor.

On his tomb the following inscription is recorded: "Here lies the body of Saint Luchesi who was the first one in the Third Order of Penance instituted by Saint Francis in 1221."



Knisja S. Lukkesju - Poggibonsi

Bona, or Bonadonna, Luchesius' wife, is said to have died on the very same day as her husband, according to the Franciscan Martyrology.

Cult of Blessed Luchesius

The cult of Luchesius acquired a form of intense participation on the part of the population right after his death, and is documented by the rebuilding of the church of the Friars Minor in the beginning of the 14th century, as well as by the *legenda* of his life.

The Basilica of San Lucchese, the main artistic feature of Poggibonsi, is located on the hills surrounding the town. It is a large Gothic church, built around 1252 over a pre-existing smaller church, traces of which can be seen in the current façade and left wall. The church was enlarged in the apses during the 14th century, while the entrance portico is from the 17th century. The interior houses a terracotta of the Immaculate Conception by Giovanni della Robbia. The remains of San Luchesius are venerated in a special chapel.

The commune of Poggibonsi immediately considered Luchesius as its patron. The first statutes of 1331 commemorated his feast annually and in 1314 the local authorities enacted laws regarding the celebration of the annual festivity in the church of the Friars Minor.

The public cult of Blessed Luchesius was witnessed by Pope Gregory X himself, who is said to have passed through Poggibonsi in 1273. The cult of Luchesius as a Blessed of the Franciscan Order was approved first by the bishop of Colle Valdelsa in 1608, and then was confirmed by the Congregation of Rites on 27th March 1697.

Notes

¹ This article is based upon the study of RAFFAELLO VOLPINI, *Lucchese di Poggibonsi, beato*, in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, Pontificia Università Lateranense, Roma, Vol. VIII (1967) 230-234. Popular lives of Blessed Luchesius include: L. DA CLARY and G. GUZZO, *Beato Lucchese, I Terziario Franciscano*, in *Aureola Serafica. Vite dei Santi e Beati dei Tre Ordini di San Francesco*, Custodia di Terra Santa, Venezia 1951, Vol. II, 677-684; CECILY

HALLACK – PETER FREDERICK ANSON – MARION ALPHONSE HABICK, *These Made Peace: Studies in the Life of the Beatified and Canonized Members of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi*, St. Anthony Guild Press, New Jersey 1957; MARION HABIG, *The Franciscan Book of Saints*, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1959.

² Regarding Pietro di Bernardone's origins in Lucca and regarding Tuscan merchants, cfr. OMAR ENGLEBERT, *Saint Francis of Assisi*, Franciscan Press, Quincy 1965, Appendix III, 397-402. There is also a theory regarding a Jewish ancestry of the family of Pietro di Bernardone, and hence of St. Francis. Cfr. RALPH BROWN, *The Roots of St. Francis*, Franciscan Press, Quincy 1982.

³ *Analecta Franciscana* III, Quaracchi 1897, 27: "In the year of the Lord 1221 blessed Francis instituted the Third Order, which is known by the name of Order of Penitents, in which those who are joined in matrimony begin to do acts of penance and bodily chastisement. The first among them was Saint Lucius."

⁴ MARIANO DA FIRENZE, *Compendium chronicarum fratrum minorum*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 2 (1909), 98. Cfr. A. VAN DEN WYNGAERT, *De sanctis et beatis Tertii Ordinis iuxta codicem Fr. Mariani Florentini*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 14 (1921), 4-10, 26, 33-34.

⁵ G. MEERSSEMAN, *Le dossier de l'Ordre de la pénitence au XIII^e siècle*, Fribourg 1961 [*Spicilegium Friburgense*, 7].

PAUL SABATIER

«LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI»

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

Chapter III – THE CHURCH ABOUT 1209

[28] St. Francis was inspired as much as any man may be, but it would be a palpable error to study him apart from his age and from the conditions in which he lived.

We know that he desired and believed his life to be an imitation of Jesus, but what we know about the Christ is in fact so little, that St. Francis's life loses none of its strangeness for that. His conviction that he was but an imitator preserved him from all temptation to pride, and enabled him to proclaim his views with incomparable vigour, without seeming in the least to be preaching himself.

We must therefore neither isolate him from external influences nor show him too dependent on them. During the period of his life at which we are now arrived, 1205-1206, the religious situation of Italy must more than any other time have influenced his thought and urged him into the path which he finally entered.

The morals of the clergy as corrupt as ever, rendering any serious reform impossible. If some among the heresies of the time were pure and without reproach, many were trivial and impure. Here and there a few voices were raised in protest, but the prophecies of Gioacchino di Fiore had no more power than those of St. Hildegarde to put a stop to wickedness. Luke Wadding, the pious Franciscan annalist, begins his chronicle with [29] this appalling picture. The advance in historic research permits us to retouch it somewhat more in detail, but the conclusion remains the same; without Francis of Assisi the Church would perhaps have foundered and the Cathari would have won the day. The *little poor man*, driven away, cast out of doors by the creatures of Innocent III, saved Christianity.

We cannot here make a thorough study of the state of the Church at the beginning of the thirteenth century; it will suffice to trace some of its most prominent features.

The first glance at the secular clergy brings out

into startling prominence the ravages of simony; the traffic in ecclesiastical places was carried on with boundless audacity; benefices were put up to the highest bidder, and Innocent III admitted that the fire and sword alone could heal this plague. Prelates who declined to be bought by *propinae*, fees, were held up as astounding exceptions!

"They are stones for understanding," if was said of the officers of the Roman *curia*, "wood for justice, fire for wrath, iron for forgiveness; deceitful as foxes, proud as bulls, greedy and insatiate as the minotaur." The praises showered upon Pope Eugenius III, for rebuffing a priest who, at the beginning of a lawsuit, offered him a golden mark, speak only too plainly as to the morals of Rome in this respect.

The bishops, on their part, found a thousand methods, often most out of keeping with their calling, for extorting [30] money from the simple priests. Violent, quarrelsome, contentious, they were held up to ridicule in popular ballads from one end of Europe to the other. As to the priests, they bent all their powers to accumulate benefices, and secure inheritances from the dying, stooping to the most despicable measures for providing for their bastards.

The monastic orders were hardly more reputable. A great number of these had sprung up in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; their reputation for sanctity soon stimulated the liberality of the faithful, and thus fatally brought about their own decadence. Few communities had shown the discretion of the first monks of the Order of Grammont in the diocese of Limoges. When Stephen de Muret, its founder, began to manifest his sanctity by giving sight to a blind man, his disciples took alarm at the thought of the wealth and notoriety which was likely to come to them from this cause. Pierre of Limoges, who had succeeded Stephen as prior, went at once to his tomb, saying:

[31] "O servant of God, thou hast shown us the way of poverty, and behold, thou wouldst make us leave the strait and difficult path of salvation, and wouldst set us in the broad road of eternal death. Thou hast preached to us (the virtues of) solitude, and thou art about to change this place into a fair and a market place. We know well that thou art a saint! Thou hast no need to prove it to us by performing miracles which will destroy our humility. Be not so zealous for thy reputation as to augment it to the injury of our salvation. This is what we ask of thee, expecting it of thy love. If not, we declare unto thee by the obedience which we once owned to thee, we will unearth thy bones and throw them into the river."

Stephen obeyed up to the time of his canonization (1189), but from that time forward ambition, avarice,

and luxury made such inroads upon the solitude of Grammont that its monks became the byword and scoff of the Christian world.

Pierre of Limoges was not entirely without reason in fearing that his monastery would be transformed into a fair-ground; members of the chapters of most of the cathedrals kept wine-shops literally under their shadows, and certain monasteries did not hesitate to attract custom by jugglers of all kinds and even by courtesans.

To form an idea of the degradation of the greater number of the monks it is not enough to read the oratorical and often exaggerated reproaches of preachers obliged to strike hard in order to produce an effect. We must run through the collection of bulls, where appeals to the court of Rome against assassinations, [32] violations, incests, adulteries, recur on almost every page. It is easy to see that even an Innocent III might feel himself helpless and tempted to yield to discouragement, in the face of so many ills.

The best spirits were turning toward the Orient, asking themselves if perchance the Greek Church might not suddenly come forward to purify all these abuses, and receive for herself the inheritance of her sister.

The clergy, though no longer respected, still overawed the people through their superstitious terror of their power. Here and there might have been perceived many a forewarning of direful revolts; the roads to Rome were crowded with monks hastening to claim the protection of the Holy See against the people among whom they lived. The Pope would promptly declare an interdict, but it was not to be expected that such a resource would avail forever.

To maintain the privileges of the Church the papacy was often obliged to spread the mantle of its protection over those who deserved it least. Its clients were not always as interesting as the unfortunate Ingelburge. It would be easier to give universal admiration to the conduct of Innocent III if in this matter one could feel certain that his only interest was to maintain the cause of a poor abandoned woman. But it is only too evident that he desired above all to keep up the ecclesiastical [33] immunities. This is very evident in his intervention in favor of Waldemar, Bishop of Schleswig.

Yet we must not assume that all was corrupt in the bosom of the Church; then, as always, the evil made more noise than the good, and the voices of those who desired a reformation aroused only passing interest.

Among the populace there was superstition unimaginable; the pulpit, which ought to have shed abroad some little light, was as yet open only to the bishops, and the few pastors who did not neglect

their duty in this regard accomplished very little, being too much absorbed in other duties. It was the birth of the mendicant orders which obliged the entire body of secular clergy to take up the practice of preaching.

Public worship, reduced to liturgical ceremonies, no longer preserved anything which appealed to the intelligence; it was more and more becoming a sort of self-acting magic formula. Once upon this road, the absurd was not far distant. Those who deemed themselves pious told of miracles performed by relics with no need of aid from the moral act of faith.

In one case a parrot, being carried away by a kite, uttered the invocation dear to his mistress, "*Sancte Thoma adjuva me,*" and was miraculously rescued. In another, a merchant of Groningen, having purloined an arm of St. John the Baptist, grew rich as if by enchantment so long as he kept it concealed in his house, but was reduced to beggary so soon as, his secret being discovered, the relic was taken away from him and placed in a church.

These stories, we must observe, do not come from ignorant enthusiasts, hidden away in obscure country places; they are given us by one of the most learned monks of his time, who relates them to a novice by way of forming his mind!

Relics, then, were held to be neither more nor less than talismans. Not alone did they perform miracles upon those who were in no special state of faith or devotion, the more potent among them healed the sick in spite of themselves. A chronicler relates that the body of Saint Martin of Tours had in 887 been secretly transported to some remote hiding place for fear of the Danish invasion. When the time came for bringing it home again, there were in Touraine two impotent men who, thanks to their infirmity, gained large sums by begging. They were thrown into great terror by the tidings that the relics were being brought back: Saint Martin would certainly heal them and take away their means of livelihood. Their fears were only too well founded. They had taken to flight, but being too lame to walk fast they had not yet crossed the frontier of Touraine when the saint arrived and healed them!

Hundreds of similar stories might be collected, statistics might be made up to show, at the accession of Innocent III, the greater number of episcopal thrones occupied by unworthy bishops, the religious houses peopled with idle and debauched monks; but would this give a truly accurate picture of the Church at this epoch? I do not think so. In the first place, we must reckon with the choice spirits, who were without doubt more numerous than is generally supposed. Five righteous men would have saved Sodom; the Almighty did not find them there, but

he perhaps might have found them had He Himself made search for them instead of trusting to Lot. The Church of the thirteenth century had them, and it was for their sakes that the whirlwind of heresy did not sweep it away.

[35] But this is not all: the Church of that time offered a noble spectacle of moral grandeur. We must learn to lift our eyes from the wretched state of things which has just been pointed out and fix them on the pontifical throne and recognize the beauty of struggle there going on: a power wholly spiritual undertaking to command the rulers of the world, as the soul masters the body, and triumphing in the end. It is true that both soldiers and generals of this army were often little better than ruffians, but here again, in order to be just, we must understand the end they aimed at.

In that iron age, when brute force was the only force, the Church, notwithstanding its wounds, offered to the world the spectacle of peasants and labouring men receiving the humble homage of the highest potentates of earth, simply because, seated on the throne of Saint Peter, they represented the moral law. That is why Alighieri and many others before and after him, though they might heap curses on wicked ministers, yet in the depths of their heart were never without an immense compassion and an ardent love for the Church which they never ceased to call their mother.

Still, everybody was not like them, and the vices of the clergy explain the innumerable heresies of that day. All of them had a certain success, from those which were simply the outcry of an outraged conscience, like that of the Waldenses, to the most absurd of them all, like that of Eon de l'Étoile. Some of these movements were for great and sacred causes; but we must not let our sympathies be so moved by the persecutions suffered by heretics as to cloud our judgment. It would have been better had Rome triumphed by gentleness, by education and holiness, but unhappily a soldier may not always choose his weapons, and when life is at stake he seizes the first he finds within his reach. The papacy has not [36] always been reactionary and obscurantist; when it overthrew the Cathari, for example, its victory was that of reason and good sense.

The list of the heresies of the thirteenth century is already long, but it is increasing every day, to the great joy of those erudite ones who are making strenuous efforts to classify everything in that tohu-bohu of mysticism and folly. In that day heresy was very much alive; it was consequently very complex and its powers of transformation infinite. One may indicate its currents, mark its direction, but to go farther is to condemn oneself to utter confusion in this medley of impulsive, passionate,

fantastic movements which were born, shot upward, and fell to earth again, at the caprice of a thousand incomprehensible circumstances. In certain counties of England there are at the present day villages having as many as eight and ten places of worship for a few hundreds of inhabitants. Many of these people change their denomination every three or four years, returning to that they first quitted, leaving it again only to enter it anew, and so on as long as they live. Their leaders set the example, throwing themselves enthusiastically into each new movement only to leave it before long. They would all alike find it difficult to give an intelligible reason for these changes. They say that the Spirit guides them, and it would be unfair to disbelieve them, but the historian who should investigate conditions like these would lose his head in the labyrinth unless he made a separate study of each of these Protean movements. They are surely not worth the trouble.

In a somewhat similar condition was a great part of Christendom under Innocent III, but while the sects of which I have just spoken move in a very narrow circle of dogmas and ideas, in the thirteenth century every sort of excess followed in rapid succession. Without the [37] slightest pause of transition men passed through the most contradictory systems of belief. Still, a few general characteristics may be observed; in the first place, heresies are no longer metaphysical subtleties as in earlier days; Aris and Priscillian, Nestorius and Eutychus are dead indeed. In the second place, they no longer arise in the upper and governing class, but proceed especially from the inferior clergy and the common people. The blows which actually threatened the Church of the Middle Ages were struck by obscure labouring men, by the poor and the oppressed, who in their wretchedness and degradation felt that she had failed in her mission.

No sooner was a voice uplifted, preaching austerity and simplicity, than it drew together not the laity only, but members of the clergy as well. Toward the close of the twelfth century we find a certain Pons rousing all Perigord, preaching evangelical poverty before the coming of St. Francis.

Two great currents are apparent: on one side the Cathari, on the other, innumerable sects revolting from the Church by very fidelity to Christianity and the desire to return to the primitive Church.

Among the sects of the second category the close of the twelfth century saw in Italy the rise of the *Poor Men*, who without doubt were a part of the movement of Arnold of Brescia; they denied the efficacy of sacraments administered by unworthy hands.

A true attempt at reform was made by the Waldenses. Their history, although better known,

still remains obscure on certain sides; their name, *Poor Men of Lyons*, recalls the former movement, with which they were in [38] close agreement, as also with the Humiliants. All these names involuntarily suggest that by which St. Francis afterward called his Order. The analogy between the inspiration of Peter Waldo and that of St. Francis was so close that one might be tempted to believe the latter a sort of imitation of the former. It would be a mistake: the same causes produced in all quarters the same effects; ideas of reform, of a return to gospel poverty, were in the air, and this helps us to understand how it was that before many years the Franciscan preaching reverberated through the entire world. If at the outset the careers of these two men were alike, their later lives were very different. Waldo, driven into heresy almost in spite of himself, was obliged to accept the consequences of the premises which he himself had laid down; while Francis, remaining the obedient son of the Church, bent all his efforts to develop the inner life in himself and his disciples. It is indeed most likely that through his father Francis had become acquainted with the movement of the *Poor Men of Lyons*. Hence his oft-repeated counsels to his friars of the duty of submission to the clergy. When he went to seek the approbation of Innocent III, it is evident that the prelates with whom he had relations warned him, by the very example of Waldo, of the dangers inherent in his own movement.

The latter had gone to Rome in 1179, accompanied by a few followers, to ask at the same time the approbation of their translation of the Scriptures into the vulgar [39] tongue and the permission to preach. They were granted both requests on condition of gaining for their preaching the authorization of their local clergy. Walter Map (†1210), who was charged with their examination, was constrained, while ridiculing their simplicity, to admire their poverty and zeal for the apostolic life. Two or three years later they met a very different reception at Rome, and in 1184 they were anathematized by the Council of Verona. From that day nothing could stop them, even to the forming of a new Church. They multiplied with a rapidity hardly exceeded afterward by the Franciscans. By the end of the twelfth century we find them spread abroad from Hungary to Spain; the first attempts to hunt them down were made in the latter country. Other countries were at first satisfied with treating them as excommunicated persons.

Obliged to hide themselves, reduced to the impossibility of holding their chapters, which ought to have come together once or twice a year, and which, had they done so, might have maintained among them a certain unity of doctrine, the Waldensians rapidly underwent a change according to their environment;

some obstinately insisting upon calling themselves good Catholics, others going so far as to preach the overthrow of the hierarchy and the uselessness of sacraments. Hence that multiplicity of differing and even hostile branches which seemed to develop almost hourly.

A common persecution brought them nearer to the [40] Cathari and favoured the fusion of their ideas. Their activity was inconceivable. Under pretext of pilgrimages to Rome they were always on the road, simple and insinuating. The methods of travel of that day were peculiarly favourable to the diffusion of ideas. While retailing news to those whose hospitality they received, they would speak of the unhappy state of the Church and the reforms that were needed. Such conversations were a means of apostleship much more efficacious than those of the present day, the book and the newspaper; there is nothing like the *viva vox* for spreading thought.

Many vile stories have been told of the Waldenses; calumny is far too facile a weapon not to tempt an adversary at bay. Thus they have been charged with the same indecent promiscuities of which the early Christians were accused. In reality their true strength was in their virtues, which strongly contrasted with the vices of the clergy.

The most powerful and determined enemies of the Church were the Cathari. Sincere, audacious, often learned and keen in argument, having among them some choice spirits and men of great intellectual powers, they were pre-eminently the heretics of the thirteenth century. Their revolt did not bear upon points of detail and questions of discipline, like that of the early Waldenses; it had a definite doctrinal basis, taking issue with the whole body of Catholic dogma. But, although this heresy flourished in Italy and under the very eyes of St. Francis, there is [41] need only to indicate it briefly. His work may have received many infiltrations from the Waldensian movement, but Catharism was wholly foreign to it.

This is naturally explained by the fact that St. Francis never consented to occupy himself with questions of doctrine. For him faith was not of the intellectual but the moral domain; it is the consecration of the heart. Time spent in dogmatizing appeared to him time lost.

An incident in the life of Brother Egidio well brings out the slight esteem in which theology was held by the early Brothers Minor. One day, in the presence of St. Bonaventura, he cried, perhaps not without a touch of irony, "Alas! what shall we ignorant and simple ones do to merit the favor of God?" "My brother," replied the famous divine, "you know very well that it suffices to love the Lord." "Are you sure of that?" replied Egidio; "do you believe that a simple woman might please Him as



well as a master of theology?" Upon the affirmative response of his interlocutor, he ran out into the street and calling to a beggar woman with all his might, "Poor old creature," he exclaimed, "rejoice, for if you love God, you may have a higher place in the kingdom of heaven than Brother Bonaventura!"

The Cathari, then, had no direct influence upon St. Francis, but nothing could better prove the disturbance [42] of thought at this epoch than that resurrection of Manicheism. To what a depth of lassitude and folly must religious Italy have fallen for this mixture of Buddhism, Mazdeism, and gnosticism to have taken such hold upon it! The Catharist doctrine rested upon the antagonism of two principles, one bad, the other good. The first had created matter; the second, the soul, which, for generation after generation passes from one body to another until it achieves salvation. Matter is the cause and the seat of evil; all contact with it constitutes a blemish, consequently the Cathari renounced marriage and property and advocated suicide. All this was mixed up with most complicated cosmogonical myths.

Their adherents were divided into two classes – the pure or perfect, and the believers, who were proselytes in the second degree, and whose obligations were very simple. The adepts, properly

so called, were initiated by the ceremony of the *consolamentum* or imposition of hands, which induced the descent upon them of the Consoling Spirit. Among them were enthusiasts who after this ceremony placed themselves in *endura* – that is to say, they starved themselves to death in order not to descend from this state of grace.

In Languedoc, where this sect went by the name of Albigenses, they had an organization which embraced all Central Europe, and everywhere supported flourishing schools attended by the children of the nobles. In Italy they were hardly less powerful; Concorrezzo, near [43] Monza in Lombardy, and Bagnolo, gave their names to two congregations slightly different from those in Languedoc.

But it was especially from Milan that they spread abroad over all the Peninsula, making proselytes even in the most remote districts of Calabria. The state of anarchy prevailing in the country was very favourable to them. The papacy was too much occupied in baffling the spasmodic efforts of the Hohenstaufen, to put the necessary perseverance and system into its struggles against heresy. Thus the new ideas were preached under the very shadow of the Lateran; in 1209, Otho IV, coming to Rome to be crowned, found there a school in which Manicheism was publicly taught.

With all his energy Innocent III had not been able to check this evil in the States of the Church. The case of Viterbo tells much of the difficulty of repressing it; in March, 1199, the pope wrote to the clergy and people of this town to recall to their minds, and at the same time to increase, the penalties pronounced against heresy. For all that, the Patarini had the majority in 1205, and succeeded in naming one of themselves consul.

[44] The wrath of the pontiff at this event was unbounded; he fulminated a bull menacing the city with fire and sword, and commanding the neighbouring towns to throw themselves upon her if within a fortnight she had not given satisfaction. It was all in vain: the Patarini were dealt with only as a matter of form; it needed the presence of the pope himself to assure the execution of his orders and obtain the demolition of the houses of the heretics and their abettors (autumn of 1207).

But stifled at one point the revolt burst out at a hundred others; at this moment it was triumphant on all sides; at Ferrara, Verona, Rimini, Florence, Prato, Faenza, Treviso, Piacenza. The clergy were

expelled from this last town, which remained more than three years without a priest.

Viterbo is twenty leagues from Assisi, Orvieto only ten, and disturbances in this town were equally grave. A noble Roman, Pietro Parentio, the deputy of the Holy See in this place, endeavoured to exterminate the Patarini. He was assassinated.

But Francis needed not to go even so far as Orvieto to become acquainted with heretics. In Assisi the same things were going on as in the neighboring cities. In 1203 this town had elected for podestà a heretic named Giraldo di Gilberto, and in spite of warnings from Rome had persisted in keeping him at the head of affairs until the expiration of his term of office (1204). Innocent III, who had not yet been obliged to use vigor with Viterbo, [45] resorted to persuasion and despatched to Umbria the Cardinal Leo di Santa Croce, who will appear more than once in this history. The successor of Giraldo and fifty of the principal citizens made the *amende honorable* and swore fidelity to the Church.

It is easy to perceive in what a state of ferment Italy was during these early years of the thirteenth century. The moral discredit of the clergy must have been deep indeed for souls to have turned toward Manicheism with such ardour.

Italy may well be grateful to St. Francis; it was as much infected with Catharism as Languedoc, and it was he who wrought its purification. He did not pause to demonstrate by syllogisms or theological theses the vanity of the Catharist doctrines; but soaring as on wings to the religious life, he suddenly made a new ideal to shine out before the eyes of his contemporaries, an ideal before which all these fantastic sects vanished as birds of the night take flight at the first rays of the sun.

A great part of St. Francis's power came to him thus through his systematic avoidance of polemics. The latter is always more or less a form of spiritual pride; it only deepens the chasm which it undertakes to fill up. Truth needs not to be proved; it is its own witness.

The only weapon which he would use against the wicked was the holiness of a life so full of love as to enlighten and revive those about him, and compel them [46] to love. The disappearance of Catharism in Italy, without an upheaval, and above all without the Inquisition, is thus an indirect result of the Franciscan movement, and not the least important among them.

At the voice of the Umbrian reformer Italy roused herself, recovered her good sense and fine temper; she cast out those doctrines of pessimism and death, as a robust organism casts out morbid substances.

I have already endeavored to show the strong analogy between the initial efforts of Francis and

those of the Poor Men of Lyons. His thought ripened in an atmosphere thoroughly saturated with their ideas; unconsciously to himself they entered into his being.

The prophecies of the Calabrian abbot exerted upon him an influence quite as difficult to appreciate, but no less profound.

Standing on the confines of Italy and as it were at the threshold of Greece, Gioacchino di Fiore was the last link in a chain of monastic prophets, who during nearly four hundred years succeeded one another in the monasteries and hermitages of Southern Italy. The most famous among them had been St. Nilo, a sort of untamed John the Baptist, living in desert places, but suddenly emerging from them when his duties of maintaining the right called him elsewhere. We see him on one occasion appearing in Rome itself, to announce to pope and emperor the unloosing of the divine wrath.

[47] Scattered in the Alpine solitudes of Basilicata these Calabrian hermits were continually obliged to retreat higher and higher into the mountain fastness to escape the populace, who, pursued by pirates, were taking refuge in these mountains. They thus passed their lives between heaven and earth, with two seas for their horizon. Disquieted by fear of the corsairs, and by the war-cries whose echoes reached even to them, they turned their thoughts toward the future. The ages of great terror are also the ages of great hope; it is to the captivity of Babylon that we owe, with the second part of Isaiah, those pictures of the future which have not yet ceased to charm the soul of man; Nero's persecutions gave us the Apocalypse of St. John, and the paroxysms of the twelfth century the eternal Gospel.

Converted after a life of dissipation, Gioacchino di Fiore travelled extensively in the Holy Land, Greece, and Constantinople. Returning to Italy he began, through a layman, to preach in the outskirts of Rende and Cosenza. Later on he joined the Cistercians of Cortale, near Catanzaro, and there took vows. Shortly after elected abbot of the monastery in spite of his refusal and even flight, he was seized after a few years with the nostalgia of solitude, and sought from Pope Lucius III a discharge from his functions (1181), that he might consecrate all his time to the works which he had in mind. The pope granted his request, and even permitted him to go wherever he might deem best in the interest of his work. Then began for Gioacchino a life of wandering from convent to convent, which carried him even as far as Lombardy, to Verona, where we find him with Pope Urban III.

When he returned to the south, a group of disciples gathered around him to hear his explanations of the most obscure passages of the Bible. Whether he

would or no [48] he was obliged to receive them, to talk with them, to give them a rule, and, finally, to install them in the very heart of the Sila, the Black Forest of Italy, over against the highest peak, in gorges where the silence is interrupted only by the murmurs of the Arvo and the Neto, which have their source not far from there. The new Athos received the name of Fiore (flower), transparent symbol of the hopes of its founder. It was there that he put the finishing touch to writings which, after fifty years of neglect, were to become the starting-point of all heresies, and the ailment of all souls burdened with the salvation of Christendom. The men of the first half of the thirteenth century, too much occupied with other things, did not perceive that the spiritual streams at which they were drinking descended from the snowy mountain-tops of Calabria.

It is always thus with mystical influences. There is in them something vague, tenuous, and penetrating which escapes an exact estimation. Let two choice souls meet, and they will find it a difficult thing to analyze and name the impressions which each has received from the other. It is so with an epoch; it is not always those who speak to her the oftenest and loudest whom she best understands; nor even those at whose feet she sits, a faithful pupil, day after day. Sometimes, while on the way to her accustomed masters, she suddenly meets a stranger; she barely catches a few words of what he says; she knows not whence he comes nor whither he goes; she never sees him again, but those few words of his go on surging in the depths of her soul, agitating and disquieting her.

[49] Thus it was for a long while with Gioacchino di Fiore. His teachings, scattered here and there by enthusiastic disciples, were germinating silently in many hearts. Giving back hope to men, they restored to them strength also. To think is already to act; alone under the shadow of the hoary pines which surrounded his cell, the cenobite of Fiore was labouring for the renovation of the Church with as much vigour as the reformers who came after him.

He was, however, far from attaining the height of the prophets of Israel; instead of soaring like them to the very heavens, he always remained riveted to the text, upon which he commented in the allegorical method, and whence by this method he brought out the most fantastic improbabilities. A few pages of his books would wear out the most patient reader, but in these fields, burnt over by theological arguments more drying than the winds of the desert, fields where one at first perceives only stones and thistles, one comes at last to the charming oasis, with repose and dreams in its shade.

The exegesis of Gioacchino di Fiore in fact led up to a sort of philosophy of history; its grand

lines were calculated to make a striking appeal to the imagination. The life of humanity is divided into three periods; in the first, under the reign of the Father, men lived under the rigor of the law; in the second, reigned over by the Son, [50] men live under the rule of grace; in the third, the Spirit shall reign and men shall live in the plenitude of love. The first is the period of servile obedience; the second, that of filial obedience; the third, that of liberty. In the first, men lived in fear; in the second, they rest in faith; in the third, they shall burn with love. The first saw the shining of the stars; the second sees the whitening of the dawn; the third will behold the glory of the day. The first produced nettles, the second gives roses, the third will be the age of lilies.

If now we consider that in the thought of Gioacchino the third period, the Age of the Spirit, was about to open, we shall understand with what enthusiasm men hailed the words which restored joy to hearts still disturbed with millenarian fears.

It is evident that St. Francis knew these radiant hopes. Who knows even that it was not the Calabrian Seer who awoke his heart to its transports of love? If this be so, Gioacchino was not merely his precursor; he was his true spiritual father. However this may be, St. Francis found in Gioacchino's thought many of the elements which, unconsciously to himself, were to become the foundation of his institute.

The noble disdain which he shows for all men of learning, and which he sought to inculcate upon his Order, was for Gioacchino one of the characteristics of the new era. "The truth which remains hidden to the wise," he says, "is revealed to babes; dialectics closes that which is open, obscures that which is clear; it is the mother of useless talk, or rivalries and blasphemy. Learning does not edify, and it may destroy, as is proved by the scribes of the Church, swollen with pride and arrogance, who by dint of reasoning fall into heresy.

We have seen that the return to evangelical simplicity [51] had become a necessity; all the heretical sects were on this point in accord with pious Catholics, but no one spoke in a manner so Franciscan as Gioacchino di Fiore. Not only did he make voluntary poverty one of the characteristics of the age of lilies, but he speaks of it in his pages with so profound, so living an emotion, that St. Francis could do little more than repeat his words. The ideal monk whom he describes, whose only property is a lyre, is a true Franciscan before the letter, him of whom the *Poverello* of Assisi always dreamed.

The feeling for nature also bursts forth in him with incomparable vigor. One day he was preaching in a chapel which was plunged in almost total darkness, the sky becoming overcast with clouds. Suddenly the clouds broke away, the sun shone, the

church was flooded with light. Gioacchino paused, saluted the sun, intoned the *Veni Creator*, and led his congregation out to gaze upon the landscape.

It would be by no means surprising if toward 1205 Francis should have heard of this prophet, toward whom so many hearts were turning, this anchorite who, gazing up into heaven, spoke with Jesus as a friend talks with his friend, yet knew also how to come down to console men and warm the faces of the dying at his own breast.

At the other end of Europe, in the heart of Germany, the same causes had produced the same effects. From the excess of the people's sufferings and the despair of religious souls was being born a movement of apocalyptic mysticism which seemed to have secret communication with that which was rousing the Peninsula. They had the same views of the future, the same anxious expectation of new cataclysms, joined with a prospect of a reviving of the Church.

[52] "Cry with a loud voice," said her guardian angel to St. Elizabeth of Schonau (+1164), "cry to all nations: Woe! for the whole world has become darkness. The Lord's vine has withered, there is no one to tend it. The Lord has sent labourers, but they have all been found idle. The head of the Church is ill and her members are dead ... Shepherds of my Church, you are sleeping, but I shall awaken you! Kings of the earth, the cry of your iniquity has risen even to me."

"Divine justice," said St. Hildegard (+1178), "shall have its hour; the last of the seven epochs symbolized by the seven days of creation has arrived, the judgments of God are about to be accomplished; the empire and the papacy, sunk into impiety, shall crumble away together ... But upon their ruins shall appear a new nation of God, a nation of prophets illuminated from on high, living in poverty and solitude. Then the divine mysteries shall be revealed, and the saying of Joel shall be fulfilled; the Holy Spirit shall shed abroad upon the people the dew of his prophecies, of his wisdom and holiness; the heathen, the Jews, the worldly and the unbelieving shall be converted together, spring-time and peace shall reign over a regenerated world, and the angels will return with confidence to dwell among men."

These hopes were not wholly confounded. In the evening of his days the prophet of Fiore was able, like a new Simeon, to utter his *Nunc dimittis*, and for a few years Christendom could turn in amazement to Assisi as to a new Bethlehem.

'LET THEM ALL BE CALLED FRIARS MINOR' (3)

(Earlier Rule 6,3)

MINORITY IN THE LIGHT OF THE WRITINGS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Fernando Uribe OFM

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Minority in relation to the universe

In the light of his writings, we can say that Francis was convinced that he was a minor, and therefore entered into a particular relationship with material things, with creation, and with the universe, in a spirit of harmony, solidarity, interdependence and fraternity.

One of the points which best illustrates this relationship is found in his teaching regarding purity of heart. In *Admonition* 16, the Saint establishes an intimate relationship between material things and purity of heart: "The truly clean of heart are those who look down upon earthly things, seek those of heaven, and, with a clean heart and spirit, never cease adoring and seeing the Lord God living and true." The principal aim of this phrase is that of insisting upon adoring and seeing the Lord God. Francis considered as the absolute priority of his spirituality the fact of having "the Spirit of the Lord and His holy activity" (*RegB* 10,8). To despise earthly things does not mean to treat them as without any value, but rather to have a different vision of material realities, which are at the service of heavenly realities, and therefore should not become objects of possession. Expropriation is a key element in order to understand the relationship of Francis with the universe.

Since poverty for Francis has a powerful Christological motivation, and is one of the

conditions in order to follow Christ with greater intensity, it is enough for us to take a look at some of Francis' writings, which present expropriation as the greatest expression of poverty, as seen in relation to material realities.

It is important, first of all, to note that, in all official declarations of the form of life of the brothers, Francis substitutes the term "poverty" with the expression "without anything of one's own" (*RegNB* 1,1; *RegB* 1,1; *RegB* 6,1; *RegNB* 7,13). This emphasises the importance of the most profound dimension of poverty, since it is a condition for any kind of external expression of poverty, which is manifested in the lack of material things. Although it is true that Francis takes the poor as a point of reference, and that he insists upon poverty of places and things for the use of the brothers, it is also true that his principal insistence rests upon the attitude of the heart. That is why he admonishes the brothers not to appropriate any place or to defend it, and to be aware of avarice and preoccupations of this life, since "holy poverty confounds the desires for riches, greed, and the cares of this world" (*SalVirt* 11). What is more important is not to underestimate what is fundamental, namely the kingdom of heaven, which is acquired by following Christ's humility and poverty.

Francis frequently united poverty with humility, as he did in the *Salutation of the Virtues*: "Lady holy Poverty, may the Lord protect you, with your sister, holy Humility." A human person is humble when he or she is aware of being a creature which depends upon God, who has given life and from whom all good things descend. According to the teachings of the Saint, however, his sense of minority not only places him in direct dependence from God, but places him also in a situation of dependence regarding other human persons and all things of the world. He also arrives at proclaiming that he would be "subject and submissive to everyone in the world, not only to people but to every beast and wild animal as well that they may do whatever they want with him insofar as it has been given to them from above by the Lord" (*SalVirt* 14).

This shows a mental attitude which, without denying the dignity of the human person created to the image and similitude of God, sees itself in the fragility of its nature wounded by the sin of disobedience. This is a conviction present in the *Admonitions*: "And all creatures under heaven serve, know, and obey their Creator, each according to its own nature, better than you" (*Adm* 5,2).

Such an awareness of smallness in front of creatures, united with a profound sense of non-appropriation, places Francis in a peculiar relationship of fraternity with the same creatures.

His *Canticle of Creatures* expresses in a privileged way this kind of relationship, since the Poverello associates himself with creatures in order to praise and bless the Creator. This is not the place to make an accurate analysis of this poem, on which, after all, there exists an abundant bibliography. We only want to underline the idea of minority present in the *Canticle*, since Francis places himself within the same reality of creation more as a man of faith than as a poet, and gives a profound sense to creatures, through which he enters into a dialogue with the Creator. The *Canticle* departs from the macrocosmos (the Lord almighty), passes through the fundamental elements of nature (air, water, fire, earth) and arrives at the microcosmos which is the human person, considered in its more difficult situations, as in the case of tribulation, persecution, sickness and death. In these elements there exists a dynamism, which develops under the sign of a grateful admiration, and which is reflected in a situation in which the universe is seen from the angle of theological faith and from a peculiar conviction that the one who is pronouncing such praise is a brother and a minor to all creatures. Francis does not depart by enumerating the benefits which man can receive from creatures, but rather from the fact that creatures are means through which man arrives at receiving the pure rays of the gifts which God communicates to him through creation, namely by receiving Jesus Christ, the pure light of the Father. Seen from this angle, the *Canticle of Creatures* can be considered as a canticle to minority. For Francis every reality has a name and a meaning, a vocation and a mission. Each and every reality proceeds from God the Creator, every thing is His gift for man and everything returns to the point from which it departed under the form of praise and thanksgiving.

Minority in relation to others

In the light of minority, the form of life of going in the world of the brothers and sisters asks for a fundamental attitude in front of other persons, which is characterised by peace, meekness, refusal of any kind of domination, and the principle of solidarity. These are modes of being inspired by the Servant of Yahweh and go down deeply into the spirit of fraternity in all its dimensions. We shall here mention some aspects, which underline in a clear way this aspect of minority, as seen in its particular relationship to obedience.

The spirit of minority with regards to relationships with others finds a concrete expression in obedience. In the way of thinking of Saint Francis, charity has an intimate link to obedience, as we find in the

Salutation of the Virtues: “Lady holy Charity, may the Lord protect you, with your sister, holy Obedience” (*SalVirt* 3). The theme of obedience abounds in the writings of Saint Francis and also shows a certain evolution, at least in those writings of which it is possible to establish the chronology. We shall here refer only to those aspects of obedience, which leave a mark upon the relationship with others within the context of minority.

A first instance of obedience is constituted by the same brothers, through that kind of obedience which Francis calls “mutual obedience,” as we find in the *Earlier Rule*: “Let no brother do or say anything evil to another; on the contrary, *through the charity of the Spirit, let them serve and obey one another* voluntarily. This is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ” (*RegNB* 5,13-15). The verbs “serve” and “obey” are intimately linked with minority. Therefore obedience for Francis does not imply simply the carrying out of an order, but the realisation of mutual respect and obedience to the will of God on the part of the friars themselves. In the *Salutation of the Virtues* Francis describes obedience in these terms: “Holy Obedience confounds every corporal and carnal wish, binds its mortified body to obedience of the Spirit and obedience to one’s brother, so that it is subject and submissive to everyone in the world” (*SalVirt* 14).

Minority is therefore the criterion leading the brother who obeys to his Minister. Thus it appears to be an expression of interior poverty, which places the brother totally in the hands of his minister, even though, at times, that brother might think that he knows better ways for the salvation of his soul. This is true charitable obedience that is pleasing to God and to the others. This is the sense of the radical form of expression which Francis uses in *Admonition* 3, departing from two texts of Luke’s Gospel (14:33; 9:24), both dealing with the theme of the following of Christ:

“That person who offers himself totally to obedience in the hands of his prelate leaves all that he possesses and loses his body. And whatever he does and says which he knows is not contrary to his will is true obedience, provided that what he does is good. And should a subject see that some things might be better and more useful for his soul than what a prelate commands, let him willingly offer such things to God as a sacrifice; instead, let him earnestly strive to fulfil the prelate’s wishes. For this is loving obedience because it pleases God and neighbour” (*Adm* 3,3-6).

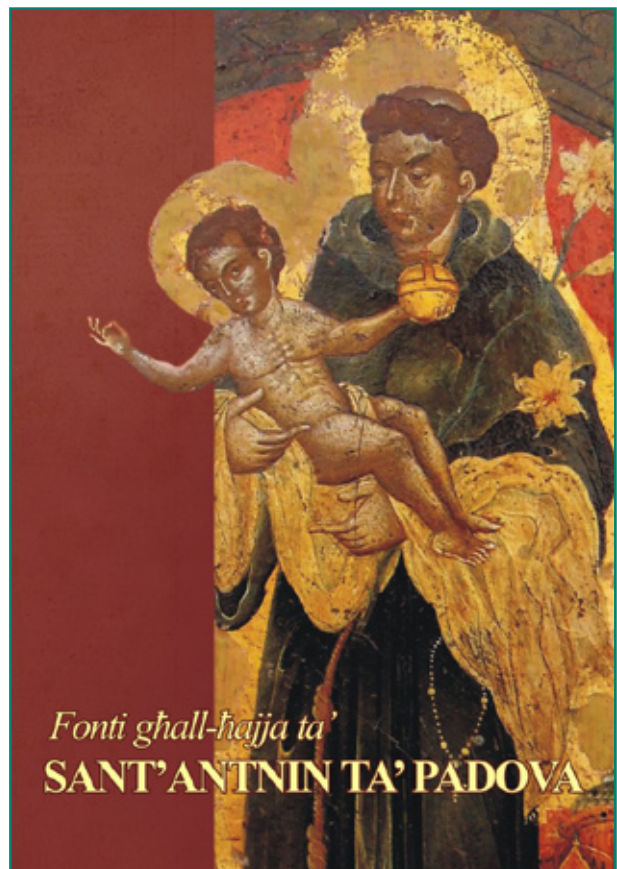
Books

Sources for the Life of Saint Anthony of Padua

Fonti għall-Hajja ta’ Sant’Antnin ta’ Padova, Translation from the original Latin version by NOEL MUSCAT OFM and JOSEPH BENEDICT XUEREB OFM, Introductions, Notes and Indexes by N. MUSCAT, Edizzjoni Tau, Franciscan Friars, Malta 2008, pp. 555, ISBN 978-99932-0-595-1, €25,00.

The Franciscan Friars of the Maltese Province are proudly presenting the volume *Fonti għall-Hajja ta’ Sant’Antnin ta’ Padova*, the third one in the list of publications regarding biographical Sources for the lives of Franciscan Saints in the 13th century.

After the publication of the two-volume Sources for the Life of Saint Francis and the one-volume Sources for the Life of Saint Clare, it is now the turn of the popular Saint Anthony of Padua (1195-1231), the Evangelical Doctor. Although well known as a wonder worker, Saint Anthony was a famous preacher of the Word of God, and the first lecturer of theology in the history of the Franciscan Order. His message is expressed through the writings of the various biographers who wrote his life, from the



very moment of his canonisation on 30th May 1232, less than one year after his death.

The volume presents the medieval biographies on Saint Anthony written from 1232 until the end of the 14th century, and follows the same methodology of the other volumes in the series. It is enriched with indexes of biblical references, names of persons, names of places, and a thematic index. The volume contains a presentation by Fr. Raymond Camilleri OFM, founder of Edizzjoni TAU in 1982, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of this publishing house of the Maltese Franciscans.

Dizionario Bonaventuriano

Dizionario Bonaventuriano. Filosofia – Teologia – Spiritualità, a cura di Ernesto Caroli, Editrici Francescane, Via Orto Botanico, 11 – 35123 Padova, 2008, pp. 910, ISBN 978-88-8135-091-3, €40,00.

On the occasion of the 750 anniversary from the election of Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio as Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor (1257-2007), the *Dizionario Bonaventuriano* is an indispensable tool to understand the philosophy and theology of this great Franciscan doctor.

This dictionary is the work of a group of 48 collaborators coming from various academic institutions within and outside the Franciscan Order. One of the collaborators is Noel Muscat OFM, from the Maltese Franciscan Province, currently residing in the Holy Land Custody, and author of the first entry in the Dictionary, entitled *Actus Hierarchicus*.

The Dictionary starts with presentation by Ernesto Caroli OFM, who has dedicated his long life to the effort of fostering collaboration among the Franciscan families in Italy and beyond. It has a preface by Mgr. Lorenzo Chiarinelli, Bishop of Viterbo. It contains an exhaustive presentation of Bonaventurian bibliography, the work of Pietro Maranesi OFMCap. Professor Leonardo Sileo OFM offers another introduction upon the Cultural context of the 13th Century and Bonaventure, particularly the rediscovery of Aristotle's works. An interesting introduction to the Life and Works of Saint Bonaventure follows, the work of the Capuchin historian Costanzo Cargnoni OFMCap. Johannes Baptist Freyer OFM, Rector Magnificus of the Pontifical University Antonianum in Rome, offers precious notes on the authenticity and contents of the various writings of Bonaventure, contained in the *Opera Omnia* edition of the Quaracchi scholars.

The *Dizionario Bonaventuriano* provides a precious tool for studying Bonaventure and his works, many of which have now been translated

into Italian and English. Bonaventure provides an incredible richness of philosophical and theological works, ranging from the voluminous Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard (4 volumes of the *Opera Omnia*) to the theological synthesis of the *Breviloquium*, to the Biblical Commentaries on Luke and John, to the Disputed Questions on the Trinity, on the knowledge of Christ, and on Evangelical perfection, to the spiritual and mystical works, including the famous *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, to the Collations on the Ten Commandments, on the Holy Spirit, and on the *Hexaëmeron*, to the *Sermones* for the Sundays of the liturgical year and the major feasts, and lastly to the writings about the Franciscan Order, including the famous Narbonne Constitutions and the Major Life of Saint Francis.

The Seraphic Doctor offers us today, besides his intellectual richness, the precious treasure of the richness of the heart, which according to our Franciscan tradition, are both necessary in the search for God. His genius has discovered that the entire human person, in its different expressions, is a *verbum Dei* (a word of God), which can express itself in a convenient manner. That is why intellectual knowledge is not enough without admiration and meditation of the divine. That is why theological speculation cannot remain an arid expression of intellectual dogmas of faith, but according to Bonaventure, has to be expressed from the heart, through art, music, poetry, mystical experience. The entire human person thus becomes a symphony of different languages creating a splendid synthesis of praise to God. Pope Leo XIII has called Bonaventure “a prince of mystical theology”, since Bonaventure realised the synthesis between theological expression and the embrace of the Crucified Word.

Medieval Franciscan Philosophy

IVO TONNA OFM, *Outlines of Franciscan Philosophy*, Tau Edition, Franciscan Friars, Malta 2008, pp. 290, ISBN 978-99909-48-34-9.

Presentation by Norbert Ellul Vincenti OFM (*The Sunday Times*, 1st June 2008, 57):

It is not easy to write about the definitive history of the Medieval Franciscan philosophy because, apart from its vastness, the texts are still being critically gathered, and consequently the field is changing all the time. Philosopher and author Ivo Tonna explains that the call for the publication of his life's researches and lectures in various parts of the world came precisely because there was nothing of the sort for a very long time.

Fr. Tonna is well qualified. He has lectured in Malta, in the Franciscan seminary, and was President at the Franciscan International College of St. Bonaventure at Grottaferrata, Rome, which specialises in research work of medieval Franciscan scholars. He has lectured on ancient and medieval philosophy with particular reference to Franciscan thought at the Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, now raised to the status of Pontifical University Antonianum, from 1980 to 2003.

In 1992 he published his work *Lineamenti di Filosofia Franciscana*, a doctrinal synthesis of philosophical thought in the 13th and 14th centuries. He has participated in various philosophical meetings and congresses organised by Franciscan academic institutes and other universities.

Outlines of Franciscan Philosophy is the translation by the author himself of his original Italian version, also published in Malta by Tau Edition of the Franciscan Province in 1990: "I committed myself to an accurate revision of my lectures and other useful notes, to eventually produce a doctrinal synthesis of Franciscan philosophical thought of the School at Paris and of the School at Oxford in the 13th and 14th centuries, retracing as far as possible the original texts of the individual thinkers." The only other comparable synthesis dates back to 1933 (Zacharias van der Woestyne OFM).

The Franciscan school has its beginnings in the early 13th century with the establishment of the Franciscan School at Paris under Alexander of Hales, and the School at Oxford, under Robert Grosseteste. It continues to this day. The author discovers six periods, from the origins of the classical era and the first epoch, the schools from 1500-1700, the decadence and the revival from 1800.

In Tonna's study, one meets some big names: Alexander of Hales, Jean de la Rochelle (John Rupella), Bonaventure, Matthew of Acquasparta, Peter John Olivi, Robert Grosseteste, Thomas of York, Roger Bacon, John Peckham, Richard of Middleton, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. Each of these names has a chapter dedicated to him, complete with biography, life's work and evaluation.

At the end of the book, there is a further evaluation through a general conclusion. A bibliography follows several pages of full notes and references, and then a general index. Of special interest is the material in the general conclusion, where the author sums up his view of Franciscan philosophy: "Perhaps it would be reasonable to speak of one Franciscan spirit which reveals itself in the particular approach assumed by the thinkers." This spirit, according to Tonna, manifests itself as a critical, scientific, progressive and practical spirit,

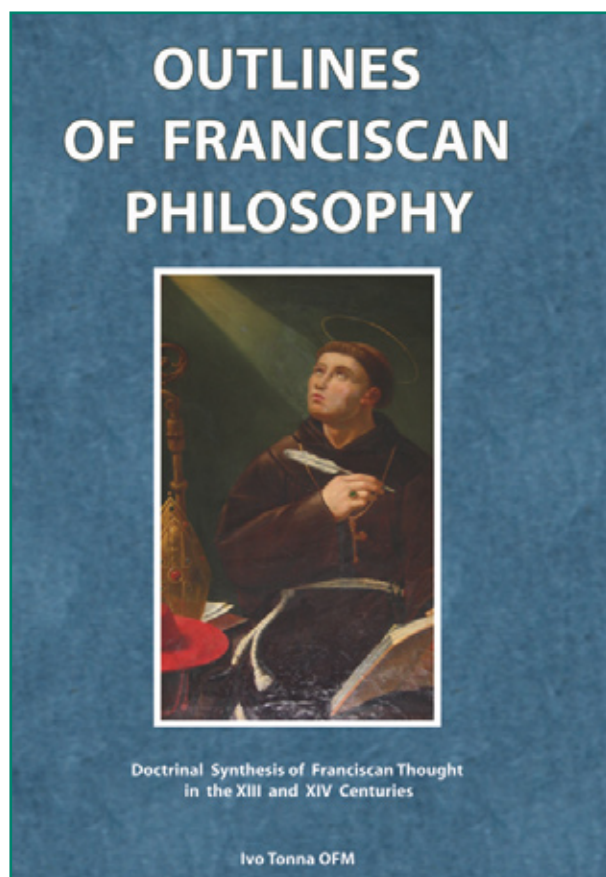
which finds its fundamental roots in the truths of Holy Scripture.

Perhaps, opines Tonna, it would be useful that while the original tradition of the Paris school was predominantly Platonic-Augustinian, the tendency of the Oxford school was rather Aristotelian and scientific. The author notes that one could also include among the Paris philosophers Peter Aureoli, known as *Doctor Facundus*, and Roger Marston among the Oxford school, who defended the theory of a direct and immediate divine illumination of the human intellect, similar to that proposed by Bonaventure and Roger Bacon.

Pride of place goes to the last two classical thinkers, Duns Scotus and Ockham, after whom no other original synthesis has been brought to light. In William of Ockham we discover the initiator of the new method of philosophical approach. A distinct separation is introduced between the field of faith and the field of reason.

The will of God, manifested in His precepts, is the supreme norm of morality. Scotus is remarkable for his interest in the study of the concrete, individual and existing reality; the univocity of being; the *haecceitas* as the principle of individuation and the primacy of the will. He is here remembered for his proof of the existence of God.

Seeking the truth, for Scotus (as for Pope Benedict XVI), signifies all that God wills. Scotistic teaching, concludes Tonna, has love as its foundation.



Mendicants of Meaning

José Rodríguez Carballo OFM, Minister General:

Letter on the Word of God

for the solemnity of Pentecost 2008

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«Many are the Friars and Sisters who are actively contributing to this springtime of the Word. There are more and more among us who are making the Word, together with the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation, the real food of their lives, the viaticum of our progress, the primary stimulus for our conversion, the strength for our mission, the light in our search for meaning, our guide for the correct and wise discernment of the reality we are living and of our future options [...] There are more and more Friars and Sisters who recognise and maintain the primacy of the Word in their lives and in the mission entrusted to them by engaging frequently in prayerful reading of the Word, in the creation and animation of Bible groups among the laity and religious, as well as in preaching, which tastes of the Word and allows the faithful to savour it. They are all of God because they listen to the Word of God [...] I wish to thank the work of the many teachers of Sacred Scripture who share the bread of the Word in classrooms. I know, through experience, their assiduous preparation and, therefore, the hard work which it implies, but also the joy and benefit which each one experiences. The Friars who work tirelessly in our Faculty of Biblical and Archaeological Sciences in Jerusalem deserve a special mention. I express my personal gratitude, as I owe a lot to the Centre, and the thanks of the entire Order to them for their work in favour of the Word. I express gratitude and thanksgiving also the Franciscan Biblical Study Centres of Hong Kong and Tokyo for the monumental work they have done in translating the biblical texts to Chinese and Japanese, respectively, and for the great distribution of the Bible they are making today in China and Japan. Finally, my gratitude goes to all those who make the effort to be fertile ground and receive the seed of the Word into their hearts with docility, and to those who, through preaching or other apostolic or intellectual activity speak, announce and administer the holy words to others.»

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Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones.
CantAudPov	Cantico Audite Poverelle.
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis.
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi.
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data.
EpAnt	Epistola ad sanctum Antonium.
EpCler I	Epistola ad Clericos (Redactio prior).
EpCler II	Epistola ad Clericos (Red. posterior).
EpCust I	Epistola ad Custodes I.
EpCust II	Epistola ad Custodes II.
EpFid I	Epistola ad Fideles I.
EpFid II	Epistola ad Fideles II.
EpLeo	Epostola 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	Legenda 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

BC	Bull of Canonization 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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