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I-TAU, A SERVICE TO FRANCISCANS

On 4th October 2009, feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, a group of Maltese Franciscan Friars Minor have launched a new website with the name i-tau.org with the aim of offering a new way of serving the Franciscan family. In fact, the aim of the new website has been outlined by the same group of friars in their mission statement. The idea of i-tau.org is that of continuing to build upon the effort started by the same friars back in 1997, when the Franciscan Province of Malta was among the first in the Order of Friars Minor to have its own website, as a result of the expertise of John Abela ofm, who has been webmaster at the General Curia of the Order of Friars Minor during these last 12 years. The name i-tau.org reflects the current trend of labelling popular software and hardware with I-. Saint Francis used the Tau as his particular mark and signature. This is therefore a Franciscan adoption of the green technology which aims to reduce the use of paper for its news and publications.

[I-tau](http://i-tau.org) features various sections. The section on Franciscan Studies, which falls under the direct responsibility of Noel Muscat ofm, features papers, notes, and publications linked with Franciscan spirituality, theology and history, with the aim of providing material for teaching and reflection. In this section one can also download this quarterly Review of Franciscan Culture “Spirtu u Hajja”.

Lookout Post is a section by Raymond Camilleri ofm, in which this Franciscan friar presents his personal reflections upon various themes linked with Franciscan life and with Christian living in general. His reflections are the result of his own life experience, which he shares with all those who would like to enter into a lively discussion on the topics presented.

The section on the Commissariat of the Holy Land in Malta is dedicated to the work of the Franciscans in this mission, which is of prime importance to their calling. It is the official website of the Holy Land Commissariat in Malta and falls under the responsibility of Anthony Chircop ofm, Commissary. It includes a mission statement and a short history of the Holy Land Commissariat, sections dealing with pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Biblical courses organized by the Commissariat. Updated news from the Holy Land will be posted every week in order to keep our readers updated with religious, political and social events in the region of Israel and Palestine. The Biblical Review “L-Art Imqaddsa” will now be posted online in this section, and can be downloaded individually as an electronic issue. The Maltese version will be posted as one complete publication. Parts of the same Review will also be available for viewing in English.

The section on Franciscan Publications features a complete list of the publications of “Edizzjoni TAU”, which specialises in publications dealing with the two main spheres of activity of the Franciscan Friars in Malta, namely publications on Holy Scripture and the Holy Land, and publications on Franciscan spirituality and history.

[I-Tau](http://i-tau.org) is being offered as a service to online spreading of the Franciscan message, on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the approval of the first Franciscan Form of Life by Pope Innocent III in 1209.

Noel Muscat ofm

«Septimo iam» and the Order of Friars Minor «of the Leonine Union»

Noel Muscat OFM

One hundred years ago, on 4th October 1909, Pope Saint Pius X¹ published the Apostolic Letter *Septimo iam*, on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the approval of the Franciscan Rule. The Letter, however, does not specifically deal with the historical event it commemorated, namely the approval of the *Forma vitae* of Saint Francis by Innocent III in 1209. Rather, it dwells upon a thorny problem brought about by the turn of events during the last decades of the 19th century, which culminated in the unification of the *Ordo Fratrum Minorum de Regularis Observantia* (Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance) on 4th October 1897, with the publication of Leo XIII's Bulla *Felicitate quadam*, whereby the four autonomous families of the same Order under the obedience of one Minister General, namely the Observants, Riformati, Alcantarines and Recollects, were to unite under one family simply known as *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*, Order of Friars Minor.

A detailed history of these events has already been published in 1994 in the doctoral dissertation of Maurice Carmody.² We shall be basing the historical account of what happened on this scholarly work, but at the same time we shall take into consideration the contents of *Septimo iam*, as well as those of another Apostolic Letter published shortly afterwards by Pius X, entitled *Paucis ante diebus*, on 1st November 1909.

The unification of the Order was not an easy task. Many factors and persons had contributed to make its implementation very difficult both for Pope Leo XIII as well as for the Minister General Luigi da Parma (1889-1897), the architects of the process of unification. There was staunch opposition to unification especially from within the ranks of the Riformati, who feared that their relative independence from the Observant mainstream would be lost. In fact, it was they, the Riformati, who continued to oppose unification, considering it to be a deliberate fusion of provinces and friaries in order to create a homogenous family. The Riformati went even as far as to ally themselves with other Franciscan families, especially the Capuchins, to hinder any peaceful transition to a united family

known simply as Order of Friars Minor, which would naturally become the largest among the families of the First Franciscan Order.

It seems anachronistic on our part to mention divisions and disagreements that have long since been healed, thanks to a spirit of true fraternity and common sense among all the families of the First Franciscan Order. However, out of justice for historical truth, we cannot refrain from mentioning the great difficulties encountered by the administration of the Friars Minor in order to implement the union of what, *de facto*, were four families of Franciscan friars under the obedience of one Minister General and with mutual differences and customs that would today look ridiculous, to say the least. Out of a sense of justice to our own tradition, and with a serene spirit of self-criticism, we are aware of the fact that unification from the top was bound to a partial failure, and that the Order of Friars Minor was never a compact and centralised religious family, and might have seemed to resemble more a confederation of provinces than a strongly-bonded religious Order. These characteristics, however, had their advantages, in the sense that the spirit of democratic freedom and personal initiative present in the Order of Friars Minor was instrumental in the great achievements of provinces and individual friars in the areas of missionary evangelisation, studies, and the establishments of charitable institutions.

The unification of the Order of Friars Minor, without any other distinctive adjective, was bound to create tension with the other two great Franciscan families of the First Order, namely the Friars Minor Conventuals and the Friars Minor Capuchins.

“Unfortunately for Luigi da Parma, yet another controversy broke out at this time. The Capuchins and Conventuals, happy enough with the proposed unification, were nevertheless alarmed that the new entity was to be known simply as the Order of Friars Minor, rather than «Friars Minor of the Regular Observance». The Capuchins were the first to react. Their Minister General, Bernardo d'Andrematt, had written to Antonio Agliardi, Cardinal Protector of their Order, requesting his assistance. The title «Order of Friars Minor», he asserted, belonged to each of the three families which followed the Rule of 1223. No one of them could lay claim to it individually.”³

This assertion was, in fact, an error. When Leo X had united all the reform movements in the Order and placed them under the Observants, giving the latter the seal of the Order and separating them from the unreformed, or Conventual friars, he had given the Order an option, namely to adopt the official name of *Ordo Fratrum Minorum de Regularis*

Observantia, or simply to choose the name *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*. Because of the intense sense of belonging to the Observant movement born in 1368 in Italy, the Order continued to insist in using the adjective *de Regularis Observantia*.

The protests of the Capuchins were soon joined by those on the Conventual part, presented by the Minister General of the Friars Minor Conventuals Lorenzo Caratelli. Cardinal Agliardi presented both protests to the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars, for a closer examination. On their part, the Conventuals and Capuchins were insisting that the newly unified Order should continue to be known as *Ordo Fratrum Minorum de Regularis Observantia*, in order to place it side by side with the *Ordo Fratrum Minorum Conventualium* and the *Ordo Fratrum Minorum Cappuccinorum*. As a proof of the historical truth of what they were requesting, they presented the testimony of the famous Franciscan historian Luke Wadding.⁴

Luigi da Parma, on his part, defended the name *Ordo Fratrum Minorum* without any further specifications. "The title was lawful, most appropriate and necessary, he declared. Lawful, because that was the official name of the Order as approved by Pope Honorius III in the Bull *Solet annuere* in 1223. In 1517, Leo X had united the various reform groups existing at that time. As one family, they were henceforth known exclusively either as the Order of Friars Minor or as Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. Subsequent legislation confirmed this. In particular, Luigi drew attention to the Decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued on March 22 and April 12, 1631. According to this legislation, the seal of the Order with the title «Minister General of the Whole Order of Friars Minor», had been transferred from the Conventuals to the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance.

It was also most appropriate that the title should be retained by those religious who had constantly professed the Rule as confirmed by Honorius III. These were the friars of the Regular Observance. Neither the Capuchins nor the Conventuals had any right to the title. The Capuchins because they had come into existence after 1517, and the Conventuals because they were dispensed from observing key points of the Rule itself. Furthermore, Luigi argued, the Conventuals had not legally existed until 1517."⁵

The end result of this controversy was that the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation assured Luigi da Parma that nothing would change in the plans to unify the Order, with one set of Constitutions, under the official name *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*. For the time being it seemed that the protests of the two other branches of the Franciscan First Order had died down. They would resurface more than

Pope Saint Pius X



ten years later, that is, in 1909, twelve years after the Bull of unification *Felicitate quadam*. We shall first see the contents of the Apostolic Letter *Septimo iam*, which rekindled the whole question, its aftermath in *Paucis ante diebus*, and finally see who were the instigators who convinced Pope Saint Pius X to insist upon inventing the title «Order of Friars Minor of the Leonine Union», that was fortunately never used neither in official Church documents nor in the Order's own official documents.

The contents of *Septimo Iam*

The Apostolic Letter *Septimo Iam* of Pope Saint Pius X was published on 4th October 1909,⁶ on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the beginnings of the Franciscan Order, with the approval of the primitive *Forma Vitae* by Innocent III in 1209.

The longest section of the Letter, which opens the document, speaks about the history of the Franciscan Order as an important institution in the Church. Pius X lists a number of papal documents, which gave honour and privileges to the Friars Minor, ever since the time of Gregory IX. The Letter mentions, in a particular way, the Apostolic Letters *Recolentes qualiter* (29th April 1228) and *Mirificans* (16th May 1230), published on the occasions of the building of the Basilica of Saint Francis and the transfer of the relics of Saint Francis to the new church in Assisi.

The Pope then refers to two important documents in the history of the Franciscan Order, which are considered as papal interpretations of the Rule of 1223, namely *Exiit qui seminat* (14th August 1279) of Pope Nicholas III, and *Exivi de paradiso* (6th May 1312) of Pope Clement V. The Pope underlines the observance the Rule, in a life of humility and poverty, modelled upon that of Saint Francis.

Proceeding along the principal moments of Franciscan history, Pius X then mentions the Bulla *Ite vos* of Pope Leo X (29th May 1517), which marked the union of all the reformed families under the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, separating it from the unreformed group, known as the Order of Friars Minor Conventuals. This document insists upon the fact that the Franciscan form of life is inspired upon the way of life of Christ and the Apostles.

The Pope then mentions the Apostolic Letter *Divinae* (29th August 1587) of Pope Sixtus V, himself a Franciscan Conventual, in which Saint Francis becomes an exemplar of perfection in his stigmata and in the fact that his Order was enriched by the presence of bishops, archbishops, patriarchs, cardinals, kings and popes.

Referring to the Portiuncula as the place where Francis *sui Ordinis fundamenta iecit* (placed the foundation of his Order), Pius X quotes the Apostolic Letter *Neminem* (7th February 1832) of Pope Gregory XVI.

The pontificate of Leo XIII, which preceded immediately that of Pius X, is given great importance. The Pope quotes Leo XIII's Encyclical Letter *Auspicato*, published on 17th September 1882, on the occasion of the 700th anniversary of the birth of Saint Francis. He recalls the famous vision of Saint Francis supporting the Lateran Basilica, which Pope Innocent III saw in his dream. Then the Pope

arrives at the important Apostolic Letter *Felicitate quadam*, published by Leo XIII on 4th October 1897, which marked the unification of all the various reformed families falling under the obedience of the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor of the Regular Observance (Observants, Riformati, Alcantarines, Recollects) under one denomination, namely that of *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*, Order of Friars Minor. The Letter stated that the religious Orders founded by Saint Francis had, by that time, become officially three, namely the Observants, the Conventuals, and the Capuchins. He insisted that all the reformed families in the Franciscan Order were truly sons of Saint Francis, and quotes various Apostolic Letters of the Popes, containing such a declaration, particularly Leo X regarding the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance, Clement VII regarding the Friars Minor Riformati, and Paul V, Urban VIII and Clement XII regarding the Friars Minor Capuchins.⁷

The Pope then affirms: "We would like to affirm, it is our will and our command, that whoever one considers to be first among the three families of the Franciscan Order, all of them are not only brothers, but *twin* Brothers, all of them have been founded by Francis and all of them observe the same pattern of religious life and the same Rule."⁸

After this introduction, Pope Pius X presents his official version of the constitution of the Franciscan Order.

First of all he states: "The First Order of Saint Francis, who is the Father who founded it, is one religious family that observes the same Rule. It is divided into three families, who are governed by their own laws and Constitutions, approved by the Apostolic See. These families are: the *Friars Minor*, who used to be called *of the Regular Observance*, when they had four distinct families within their ranks, namely the Observants, the Riformati, the Alcantarines, and the Recollects. These families have been revoked by Leo XIII and have returned to full unity, under the one family known by the name *Order of Friars Minor*. The other family is that of the *Friars Minor Conventuals*, and the third family is called *Friars Minor Capuchins*."⁹

The Pope then says: "The family, or Order of Friars Minor, whose proper name was that of the Regular Observance, after having been unified from various families by Leo XIII, can now be called *of the Leonine Union*, and it is correct to call it by such a name. As our Predecessor states in his Constitution *Felicitate quadam*: «Out of an act of concession on the part of the Holy See this family has the first honour among the other Franciscan families to be known by the simple name of Friars Minor, a name which it accepted from Leo X».

However this name should not be interpreted in this way, namely, that it would seem that the entire Order of Minors is represented only in this family. Such an interpretation is very far away from the truth, and it is highly insulting to the other Minors. Therefore, in order that the name *Order of Friars Minor* without any other addition to it, would not be the cause of ambiguity, it seems to us opportune that the family of which we are speaking, both on the part of its Moderators and its members, and especially for the sake of public acts, should add a peculiar note to its name, and we hereby establish and command that it should be known as the *Order of Friars Minor of the Leonine Union*, and its Moderators and members should be known as belonging to the *Order of the Friars Minor of the Leonine Union*.¹⁰

This new name dropped like a bombshell upon the Minister General Dionysius Schöler and the Order of Friars Minor. A close look at what the Pope states indicates that he had become aware of discontent among many quarters regarding the official name *Ordo Fratrum Minorum*, and that somebody had convinced him that the Friars Minor wanted to usurp this name as if it belonged only to them, and as if they were the only true sons of Saint Francis in whom the pristine name of the Order had been preserved. What is surprising to the reader is that Pius X bases his arguments not on sound historical truth, but on the supposition that he wanted to put an end to discontent in the entire Franciscan Family by placing the three families of the First Order side by side without any regard for plain and simple facts of history. Then he continues to draw his conclusions from what he states.

The title of *Minister Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum*, enjoyed by the Minister of the Friars Minor of the *Leonine Union* was to be interpreted solely as an honorific title, and implied no jurisdiction over the other Franciscan Orders. Precedence among the three Ministers General was to be maintained, in such a way that the first among them would be the Minister General of the Friars Minor of the *Leonine Union*, followed by the Minister General of the Friars Minor Conventuals and the Minister General of the Friars Minor Capuchins. The Pope insists once again that all three Orders had been founded by Saint Francis and were true sons of Saint Francis.¹¹

The basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi, officiated by the Friars Minor Conventuals, should hold the place of honour of being the most sacred among Franciscan sanctuaries, since it is the burial place of the founder of the Order, and is the *caput et mater* (head and mother) of the Order of Minors, and was constituted Patriarchal Basilica and Papal Chapel by Pope Benedict XIV. The Pope, however, reminds that he himself, in the Apostolic Letter *Omnipotens*

ac misericors Dominus, had elevated the basilica of Saint Mary of the Angels of the Portiuncula, officiated by the Friars Minor of the *Leonine Union*, to the rank of Patriarchal Basilica and Papal Chapel. The celebration of the feasts of Franciscan Saints who had lived before the separation of the Order in 1517 could not be reserved to any one of the families, but they were common patrimony of all the three families of the First Order.¹²

The Pope concludes the Apostolic Letter exhorting all the members of the three Franciscan Orders to observe mutual charity and respect. He quotes the *Later Rule*, chapter 3 (*non litigent*) and chapter 10 (*caveant ab omni superbia, vanagloria, invidia*), as well as the idealistic description of the first fraternity given by Thomas of Celano in his *Life of Saint Francis*, 38.

The Pope finally concedes the same privileges to all the Franciscan families of the First Order, calling upon them to celebrate the feasts of the Dedication of the Basilica of Saint Francis and of the Portiuncula on an equal liturgical rank of double of the second class. He states that in the presence of the Holy Father all three Ministers General present themselves as equals, although respecting the law of precedence explained above. He also gives the three Orders the same faculties regarding indulgences, privileges, celebrations of pious devotions, and pastoral care of pious sodalities entrusted to their jurisdiction. All Apostolic Letters giving privileges and praising one of the Franciscan families were to be considered as being equally applicable to all the other families of the same Franciscan Order.

The aftermath:

the Apostolic Letter Paucis ante diebus

On 1st November 1209 Pope Saint Pius X published another Apostolic Letter, *Paucis ante diebus*, addressed to the three Franciscan Ministers General Dionysius Schöler OFM, Dominic Reuter OFMConv, and Pacifico a Seano OFMCap.¹³

The contents of this Apostolic Letter intended to clarify further what the Pope had expressed in *Septimo iam*, and to put an end once and for all to the controversy regarding the name *Fratres Minores de Unione Lenoniana* given to the Order of Friars Minor.

The Pope begins by stating that Saint Francis founded one Order and called his brothers *Fratres Minores*. This same Order eventually developed and became two families (OFMObs and OFMConv), and shortly afterwards a third family was born (OFMCap).

Secondly, the Pope explicitly states that “the

Minor Conventuals did not exist as a distinct family before 1517. However, on a similar basis, the Minors of the Regular Observance began to exist legitimately as a separate family on that same year and day in which the Conventuals began to exist. Before Leo X had published the Constitution *Ite et vos*, on 29th May 1517, the Order of Minors was not composed only of Conventuals or Observants, but of both families.”¹⁴

The Apostolic Letter then speaks about the dignity of the Conventuals and Capuchins as true Friars Minor. Regarding the Conventuals it states: “It is false to deprive the Conventuals in their name from their being considered as Friars Minor, as if they do not observe the Rule of Saint Francis in its entirety. It is an insult to these religious men, who although having as their highest norm the Seraphic Rule, are nevertheless allowed benevolently by the Holy See to follow a more mitigated form of life, to state that they do not observe the precepts and counsels contained in the same Rule.”¹⁵ Regarding the Capuchins, the Letter states: “Since the Minors Capuchins were born out of the Minors of the Regular Observance, they are not to be considered as being in any way in an inferior condition, and they cannot be deprived of their name of being pure and simple Friars Minor. Indeed they are Franciscan brothers who observe the Seraphic Rule and who were living community life within the Family of the Observants from their very beginnings, and then continued to observe the same Rule in a more strict form of life. They form an integral part of the family of Minors, and have been canonically constituted as such under the authority of the Apostolic See, with the addition of their proper name Capuchins.”¹⁶

The Letter considered an error the affirmation that Saint Francis is the legitimate and authentic founder of the family of the Friars Minor of the Regular Observance. It is an insult to deny the right of the Conventuals and Capuchins to be regarded as members of the First Order.

A close examination at the wording of the document shows that the Letter was intended to be a type of condemnation of the thesis of those who wanted the Order of Friars Minor *simpliciter dicti* to be considered as the only true family dating from the time of Saint Francis and having the Minister General of the entire Order, or to state that the succession of the Ministers General from the time of Saint Francis belonged only to the family of the Regular Observance, since only their Minister was declared to be the *Minister Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum*.¹⁷

These strong statements seem to have been a direct attack against the *Manuale Historiae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, published by Herbert Holzapfel

OFM in 1909.¹⁸ This well-prepared study on the history of the Franciscan Order was considered by the opponents of the Friars Minor as another attempt by the Observant family to present Franciscan history according to a specific interpretation that went against the Conventuals’ thesis that they were the direct descendants of the Friars Minor founded by Saint Francis in 1209, and against the Capuchins’ thesis that their reform was the most successful synthesis of all Franciscan reform movements, including that of the Regular Observance.

The Letter criticizes those who were stating that it was not possible to have two or three Ministers General of the Minors at the same time, one for each Order, since Saint Francis in his Rule speaks of only one Minister General, and states that when these persons based their assertion upon the fact that the Church had only one Pope they were mixing divine law instituted by Christ, regarding the hierarchic nature of the Church, with canon law regarding religious Orders, which fell under the control of the same supreme authority of the Church.

The interpretation of Leo XIII’s *Felicitate quadam* is given great importance, regarding the role of the Minister General of the Friars Minor, the *Minister Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum*. The Letter states that this title does not mean in any way that the Minister General exerts any juridical power over the other Franciscan Ministers General.

The Apostolic Letter *Paucis ante diebus* seems to attack the Order of Friars Minor frontally regarding the fact that they alone did not have any other addition to the official name of the Order. The Letter uses tones, which not only surprise the reader, but which also place a great doubt over whether Pope Saint Pius X really was the brain behind such expressions. We shall see that other distinguished prelates were lobbying hard with Pius X to insist upon calling the Friars Minor with the name «Friars Minor of the Leonine Union», to the point of indicating a dubious historical proof, namely that the two Popes who united all Franciscan reforms into one family in 1517 and 1897 were both called Leo (Leo X and Leo XIII)!¹⁹

As a proof that the Franciscan family has to be regarded as one undivided whole, the Letter mentions the case of Franciscan saints, who are the common patrimony of all the Franciscan families, particularly those who lived before 1517, but even the other saints and blessed in the Franciscan calendar.

The Letter ends with two surprising notes. The Pope insists that the name *Friars Minor of the Leonine Union* has to be maintained, and that it was an insult on the part of the Franciscan Friars Minor to deny this name and choose the ambiguous

name of Friars Minor without any other addition. He nevertheless gives the Friars Minor a choice to revert to their old name of *Friars Minor of the Regular Observance*, if they so wished. Finally the Pope imposed perpetual silence on the matter. *Roma locuta est. Causa finita est!*²⁰

The instigators behind the name «Friars Minor of the Leonine Union»

Fortunately for the Friars Minor, “apart from the Secretariate of State, none of the Sacred Congregations chose to use the new title in their official communications. [Dionysius] Schüler [Minister General 1903-1911] also claimed that neither Vives y Tuto [Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Religious] nor the Pope himself ever used the title *Order of Friars Minor of the Leonine Union*.”²¹

The brains behind *Septimo iam* seem to have been those of Cardinal José de Calasanz Vives y Tuto, who was a Capuchin friar and Prefect for the Congregation of Religious. He was born on 15th February 1854 at San Andrés de Llavaneras in Spain from a humble family. After studying in Barcelona he requested to be received among the Capuchins, and was accepted by Segismundo de Mataró, who was searching for new vocations in Guatemala. He entered the Capuchin Order in 1869 taking the name José Calasanz de Llavaneras. He continued his formation in California and eventually terminated his studies in Toulouse in France. He suffered from a nervous disorder, and in 1875 went to the Capuchin mission in Ecuador, but had to return to Europe the following year because of his illness. He was ordained priest on 26th May at Perpignan in 1877. After the suppression of religious Orders from France, in 1880 he transferred to Barcelona. In 1884 he went to Rome to discuss the problem of the Spanish Capuchins, who had separated from the Order in 1804. The Capuchin Minister General Bernardo de Andrematt nominated him councillor to the cause of the reorganisation of the Order. His career in Rome progressed when Leo XIII nominated him councillor of various Congregations and visitor general to the Spanish Capuchins. He was one of those responsible for the organisation of the Latin American Plenary Council on 18th June 1899, and that same year he was created Cardinal Deacon of San Adriano al Forno. On 26th October 1908 Pope Pius X nominated him first Prefect of the Congregation for Religious. He was also instrumental in the redaction of the new Code of Canon Law. He died on 7th September 1913 when he was still 59 years old, probably because of his nervous disease.



According to Carmody, “Dionysius Schüler was convinced that the Ministers General of the Capuchins and Conventuals, with the added connivance of Cardinal Vives y Tuto, had collaborated in the production of the letter [*Septimo iam*]. He cited a document written by a certain Father Ladislao Bisconti. Bisconti had revealed information from a highly placed source in the Roman Curia to the effect that Vives y Tuto had commanded the Capuchins to compose a statement which had subsequently become the Pope’s apostolic letter, *Septima iam*.”²²

The reaction of Dionysius Schüler and the government of the Order was strong. The historical events that unfolded after the publication of *Septimo iam* led eventually to the great crisis that the Order faced in 1911, when Pope Pius X deposed Schüler and chose Pacifico Monza as Minister General. Monza was a member of the Venetian Province of ex-Riformati, and was staunchly against the unification of the Italian provinces, which followed upon *Felicitate quadam*. He tried to do all he could to convince the Pope to re-divide the Italian Provinces according to the old model of Observant and Riformati Provinces, and he eventually succeeded in doing so, again with the help of Cardinal Vives y Tuto, in such a way that by 1911 nearly all the Italian Provinces had been divided along the old model. This, however, is another story, that merits a separate paper.

Conclusion

We are aware that the historical facts we have

outlined might be of little interest to Franciscan friars nowadays. Unfortunately we have tended to become less interested in our recent history, and do not always learn from our past mistakes. In the name of a vague sense of unity and uniformity, we tend to regard the Order's tensions of a century ago with a sense of naïveté, and to criticise the Order's choices then as anti-evangelical and anti-Franciscan. And yet, as history often shows, there were many intrigues behind the events that led to the unification of the Order of Friars Minor, and that also led to an attempt to bring about a total failure of that same unification. A hundred years have passed and we can now take a more serene approach at the turn of events in 1909. But let us not forget that what we are today is still largely the result of the successes and failures of that time, and that our merits and demerits are still reminiscent of what we came to be when the men at the top judged it expedient to unify four families of venerable historical and spiritual tradition into the one great family that came to be called simply «Order of Friars Minor».

Notes

¹ Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto was born at Riese (Treviso), in the Veneto region of Italy, on 2nd June 1835, in a poor family. He entered the seminary in Padua and was ordained priest on 18th September 1858. He was a good pastor and governed the vacant see of the diocese of Treviso from 1878 to 1880. He also taught dogmatic theology and moral theology at the seminary in Treviso. On 12th June Pope Leo XIII made him Cardinal Priest of San Bernardo alle Terme, and then Patriarch of Venice. On 20th July 1903 Leo XIII died. On 4th August 1903 Cardinal Sarto was elected Pope and took the name Pius X. He chose the motto *Instaurare omnia in Christo* and embarked upon the revision of the liturgy, particularly the Breviary and the practice of frequent Holy Communion to be given even to children, the formation of the Code of Canon Law and the Catechism of the Church. He also took a strong stand against Modernism, by adopting a conservative theology based on Thomistic teachings. Pius X died on 20th August 1914 when he was 79 years old, Pope Pius XII declared him Blessed on 3rd June 1951, and then a Saint on 29th May 1954.

² MAURICE CARMODY, *The Leonine Union of the Order of Friars Minor 1897*, The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, NY 1994. Our topic is discussed especially in the last chapter, entitled «The Implementation of Unification», in pages 197-218.

³ CARMODY, *The Leonine Union of the Order of Friars Minor*, 168.

⁴ LUKE WADDING, *Annales Minorum*, Vol. XVI, n. 209: «Ejusdem sunt parentis filii Observantes, et

Capuccini, ejusdem Regulae professores: fratres sunt, si non gemelli, saltem germani, eadem excisi petra, eodem utero progeniti.» («Observants and Capuchins are sons of the same parent [one could also add Conventuals since they have the title of anteriority over the others], professing the one Rule. If not twins, they are brothers, full brothers at the least, carved from the same rock, children from the same womb»). English translation in CARMODY, 170.

⁵ CARMODY, *The Leonine Union of the Friars Minor*, 171.

⁶ PIUS X, *Littera Apostolica «Septimo iam pleno saeculo»* (Die 4 Octobris 1909), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis. Commentarium Officiale. Acta Pii PP. X*, Annus 1, Vol. 1, Num. 18 (1909), 725-738.

⁷ PIUS X, *Septimo iam*, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 731: «At legitimarum varietatem disciplinarum nihil obstare, quominus qui cuivis earum essent adscripti, omnes se germanam Francisci progeniem esse iure defenderent, pluries est Apostolicae Sedis auctoritate sancitum. Ita Leo X: «Quod ipsi *Fratres de Observantia et Reformati*, veri et indubitati Fratres Ordinis B. Francisci et eius Regulae observatores semper fuerint, ac, divina favente gratia, sint futuri, sine aliqua interruptione seu divisione, a tempore editae Regulae per B. Franciscum usque ad praesens ac sub ipsius B. Francisci Regula militaverint, et etiam ad praesens militent; sicque in omnibus teneri et observari ac decidi debere decernimus ac mandamus» (Ap. Letter *Licet*, 6th December 1517). Et Clemens VIII *Fratres Minores de Strictiori Observantia Reformatos* nuncupatos ab iniuriis quorundam tuetur. «Ipsosque *Reformatos*, declarat, veros filios et indubitatos Fratres Ordinis sancti Francisci» (Ap. Letter *Ex iniuncto*, 7th September 1602). De Capuccinis autem, Paulus V (Ap. Letter *Ecclesiae*, 15th October 1608), Urbanus VIII (Ap. Letter *Salvatoris*, 28th June 1627), Clemens XII (Ap. Letter *Ea quae*, 14th May 1735), eos «esse vere Fratres Minores», et «originem seu principium illorum esse realiter et cum effectu computandum a tempore primaevae et originalis institutionis Regulae Seraphicae, cuius observantiam ipsi Fratres Capuccini semper sine aliqua interruptione continuarunt», eosdemque «fuisse et esse ex vera et numquam interrupta linea, ac veros et indubitatos Fratres Ordinis sancti Francisci, et illius Regulae observatores, subque ipsius B. Francisci Regula militasse et ad praesens quoque militare» statuunt.»

⁸ PIUS X, *Septimo iam*, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 731: «Haec ipsa Nos affirmantes, volumus, iubemus, ut quotquot sunt de ternis disciplinis Franciscalis Ordinis primi, omnes non solum germani sed *gemelli* Fratres, omnes eodem Francisco nati eisdemque religiosae vitae documentis ad unam ipsius Regulam exculiti.»

⁹ PIUS X, *Septimo iam*, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 732: «Ordo primus sancti Francisci, si Patrem legiferum a quo conditus, si Regulam, qua utitur, spectes, una est religiosorum familia: si vero rationem regiminis et

Constitutiones, quibus ex Apostolicae Sedis praescripto gubernatur, in tres familias dividitur: quarum una est *Fratrum Minorum*, quae olim a *Regulari Observantia* dicebatur, quaeque quum in quatuor sodalitia esset distincta, id est in Observantes, Reformatos, Alcantarinos, a Leone XIII fel. rec. ad unitatem revocata est, uno *Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* indito nomine; altera est *Fratrum Minorum* qui *Conventuales* audiunt; tertia *Fratrum Minorum* qui *Capuccini* appellantur.”

¹⁰ PIUS X, *Septimo iam*, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 732-733: “Familia, seu Ordo, Fratrum Minorum, cui quondam a Regulari Observantia nomen fuit, postquam a Leone XIII ex variis sodalitiis in unum redacta est, si ab *Unione Leoniana* appelletur, recte appelletur. Ea quidem «ex concessu Sedis Apostolicae antecedit loco et honore» ceteras Franciscanum familias, eiusque alumni «Fratrum Minorum merum nomen a Leone X acceptum retinent», ut ait in Constitutione *Felicitate quadam* Decessor Noster: sed tamen non sic hoc nomen interpretandum est, quasi in ipsa tantum familia omnis Ordo Minoriticus videatur consistere. Patet interpretationem huiusmodi et longe abesse a vero, et valde reliquis Minoritis non paucis esse iniuriosam. Quoties igitur appellatio *Ordinis Fratrum Minorum* sine ullo apposito ambiguitatem haberet, oportere hanc familiam de qua loquimur, eiusque Moderatores et sodales, praesertim in actis publicis, propria peculiarique adiecta nota designari, vocarique *Ordinem Fratrum Minorum ab Unione Leoniana*, Moderatores et sodales *Ordinis Fratrum Minorum ab Unione Leoniana*, statuimus et sancimus.”

¹¹ PIUS X, *Septimo iam*, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 733-734: “Titulus *Ministri Generalis totius Ordinis Minorum*, quo titulo utitur Minister Generalis familiae eiusdem quam ab Unione Leoniana appellamus, meri honoris est, nec quicquam iurisdictionis aut potestatis in ceteras Franciscanum familias notat. Minister Generalis Fratrum Minorum ab Unione Leoniana, item ex concessu Sedis Apostolicae, in omnibus coetibus sacrisque publicis, ubicumque lex de praesentia loci obtinet, Ministrum Generalem Conventualium, uterque autem Ministrum Generalem Capuccinorum praecedit. Tres Ordinis Minoritici familiae, quasi totidem rami sunt nobilissimae arboris, cuius radix ac truncus Franciscus est. Propterea Fratres Minores tum Unionis Leonianae, tum Conventuales, tum Capuccini pari plenoque iure veri Franciscanae, verique Fratres Minores et sunt et haberi debent. Iidemque non alii aliis antiquiores dicendi sunt, quandoquidem eorum omnium originem verum est repeti ab ipsa instituta Regula Seraphica, cuius omnes observantiam sine ulla intermissione continuarunt.”

¹² PIUS X, *Septimo iam*, in AAS 1,18 (1909) 734-735: “E Franciscanum templis illud habendum esse sacerrimum, in quo ipse Pater legifer beatissimus requiescit, vix attinet dicere: quae aedes propterea mature a Gregorio IX Ordinis Seraphici *Caput et Mater* renuntiata est (Ap. Letter *Is qui*, 22nd April 1230), et

a Benedicto XIV per Litteras *Fidelis* ad dignitatem praeterea Basilicae Patriarchalis et Capellae Papalis est evecta. – Sed insignis etiam dignitas est Aedis Mariae Angelorum de Portiuncula; de qua Benedictus XIII: «Ne quis denique Basilicam beati Francisci civitatis Assisiensis, ubi sacrum eius corpus requiescit, a Romanis Pontificibus, praedecessoribus Nostri, variis privilegiis auctam, ita supra ceteras eiusdem Ordinis ecclesias verbis aut scriptis extollat et efferat, ut debitus honor ac reverentia denegetur Basilicae B. Mariae de Portiuncula extra muros eiusdem urbis, in qua constat, Seraphicum Patrem Institutum suum inchoasse; praecipimus et mandamus, ut ambae Basilicae, diversis licet rationibus, B. Mariae quidem propter Ordinis primordia, Assisiensis vero propter sacrum corpus sanctissimi Institutoris, tamquam Ordinis matrices ab omnibus Fratribus Minoribus agnoscantur et observentur» (Ap. Letter *Qui pacem*, 21st July 1728). Nos vero ipsam quoque Basilicam Mariae Angelorum nuper datis Litteris *Omnipotens ac misericors Dominus* Matrem et Caput Ordinis Minorum diximus, eamque Basilicae Patriarchalis et Capellae Papalis titulo honestavimus. Quare utramque Basilicam, quasi commune patrimonium, tueantur oportet, quotquot filiorum Francisci gloriantur nomine: utramque omnes tamquam paternam domum fidentes laetique celebrent, ibique omnibus fraternae caritatis officiis recreati sentiant. Ministri Generales triplicis Minorum familiae pari sunt potestate in Ordinem Tertium. Sancti beati, venerabiles Viri quibus illustratur, quamquam praecipue illius familiae sunt, tamen iure fraternitatis ad ceteras quoque, ut communia ornamenta, pertinent. Veteres vero Ordinis gloriae, a rebus gestis aut a sanctis viris profectae ante canonicam divisionem a Leone X factam ipsius Ordinis, nullius ex tribus familiis habendae sunt praecipuae, sed omnium promiscuae.”

¹³ PIUS X, *Littera Apostolica «Paucis ante diebus»* (Die 1 Novembris 1909), in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis. Commentarium Officiale. Acta Pii PP. X*, Annus 2, Vol. 2, Num. 18 (1910), 705-713.

¹⁴ PIUS X, *Paucis ante diebus*, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 706: “Minores Conventuales profecto, ut corpus distinctum, ante annum MDXVII non extiterunt: sed pariter Minores a Regulari Observantia, ut corpus distinctum, ipso dumtaxat anno ac die, quo Conventuales, legitime esse coeperunt. Ante editam a Leone X Constitutionem *Ite et vos*, quae quidem prodiit die XXIX maii anno MDCVII, non ex Conventualibus tantum, nec ex solis Observantibus constabat Ordo Minorum; sed ex utrisque.”

¹⁵ PIUS X, *Paucis ante diebus*, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 706: “Nec vero fas est a Conventualibus nomen propriamque rationem abiudicare Fratrum Minorum, quasi Regulam Sancti Francisci in maximis quibusdam rebus non observent. Iniurium hoc est iis religiosis viris, qui, licet in quibusdam Regulae Seraphicae capitibus, ex venia Sedis Apostolicae, mitiorem sequantur disciplinam,

praecepta tamen consiliaque, in quibus ipsius Regulae summa consistit, numquam non observarunt.”

¹⁶ PIUS X, *Paucis ante diebus*, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 707: “Quod autem Minores Capuccini e Minoribus Regularis Observantiae orti sunt, non idcirco inferioris conditionis sunt habendi, multoque minus Fratrum Minorum pura simplicique appellatione privandi. Ipsi enim non alii sunt, quam Franciscani sodales, qui, quum Regulae Seraphicae observantiam in sinu Familiae Observantium communiter usque a principio inivissent, eam ipsam deinde continuare cum severioris disciplinae studio instituerunt, coalescentes seorsum in corpus Minoriticum, canonice constitutum et Apostolicae Sedis auctoritate recognitum, sub Capuccinorum cognomine.”

¹⁷ PIUS X, *Paucis ante diebus*, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 707: “Persuadere autem velle, Familiam Fratrum Minorum Regularis Observantiae esse unicam, cuius perpetuitas vitae legitimae inde a beato Francisco ad hanc diem et historiae monumentis et iuris argumentis ostendi possit, contumeliosum est in duas reliquas Franciscalium Familias, ipsarumque iuri, ab Apostolica Sede sancito, contrarium [...] Item falsa et duabus aliis Minorum Familiis iniuriosa sunt illa: vel successionem non interruptam pristini Minorum Ordinis tantummodo in Familia Fratrum Regularis Observantiae atque in serie Ministrorum eius Generalium inveniri, vel successorem Sancti Francisci legitimum, ob non interruptam decessorem seriem, nullum esse nisi Ministrum Generalem totius Ordinis Fratrum Minorum, seu Regularis Observantiae.”

¹⁸ H. HOLZAPFEL, *Manuale Historiae Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, Fribourg 1909. The Apostolic Letter *Paucis ante diebus*, AAS 2,18 (1909) 710, explicitly mentions Holzapfel’s study and challenges the historian’s thesis that it was a pity that the Friars Minor continued to use the adjective of the *Regular Observance* until 1897, when Leo X himself had given them the faculty to be simply known as *Ordo Fratrum Minorum* already in 1517: “Quin etiam huiusmodi appellatio apud ipsos Fratres in amore semper et in usu fuit: qua de re iniustam hanc querelam habet recens quoddam *Manuale Historiae Fratrum Minorum* (ubi alia non pauca insunt minime probanda): «Dolendum est quod Ordo titulum Regularis Observantiae ita adamavit, ut eum retineret ad annum usque 1897» (It is to be regretted that the Order retained that title of the *Regular Observance* up till 1897, instead of simply accepting the designation which St. Francis had given and the Pope had expressly confirmed).”

¹⁹ PIUS X, *Paucis ante diebus*, in AAS 2,18 (1910), 709-711: “Nomen merum Fratrum Minorum Fratribus Regularis Observantiae certe Leo X dedit, idque, ut datum a Decessore fuerat, Leo XIII confirmavit. Sed utriusque Pontificis non ea mens fuit, ut huiusmodi appellatio nullum umquam appositum admitteret, etiam si ad vitandam ambiguitatem videretur necessarium; eoque minus, ut ipsa in instrumentum verteretur inanis gloriae ad sodales ceterarum Familiarum deprimendos.

Etenim Leo X Fratribus, de quibus loquimur, facultatem quidem fecit, non necessitatem imposuit utendi eo mero nomine: nam, quum eo solemniter nuncupasset *Fratres Minores Sancti Francisci Regularis Observantiae*, nihilominus licitum eis dixit, *vel simul vel disiunctive*, usurpare hunc titulum, id est expresso tacitove cognomine *Regularis Observantiae*. Vix autem attinet dicere, hoc titulo non solum significari disciplinae laudem eorum sodalium propriam, sed etiam peculiarem notam, quae ipsos a ceteris Fratribus Minoribus distingueret. – Id vero, nec aliud quidquam, voluisse Leonem X ex eo apparet, quod ipse paucis diebus post editam Constitutionem *Ite et vos*, in Litteris Apostolicis *Cum in honorem* die VI Iunii MDXVII, ac deinceps in aliis plurimis Fratres Minores quos coniunxerat, eos *Fratres Minores* appellat *Regularis Observantiae*, vel *de Observantia*, vel *Ordinis beati Francisci Regularis Observantiae*. Praeterea, Fratres commemorans duplicis Familiae Minoriticae ab ipso constitutae, sic eos vocat, *Fratres Observantes et Conventuales* [...] Ceterum qui Leonem X subsecuti sunt Pontifices, similiter eosdem Fratres Minores ab ipso coniunctos adiecto *Regularis Observantiae* cognomine designare consueverunt. Ita Hadrianus VI, Clemens VII, Paulus III, Iulius III, Paulus IV, Pius IV, Pius V, Gregorius XIII, Xystus V, Clemens VIII. Neque aliter reliqui factitarunt decessores Nostri usque ad promulgatam Constitutionem *Felicitate quadam*, qui fere, quum de his Minoritis loquerentur, appellationem Regularis Observantiae usurparunt.

Hic igitur titulus sexcentis Apostolicis Litteris, maxime ab anno MDXVII ad annum MDCCCXCVII usitatus, honestissimus fuit semper atque erit Familiae Minoriticae, de qua loquimur. Sed non minus honestus est ille quem Nos eidem attribuimus *Fratrum Minorum ab Unione Leoniana*: quippe recordationem continet duplicis facti, utique memoria dignissimi, unionis scilicet semel a Leone X per Constitutionem *Ite et vos*, iterum a Leone XIII per Constitutionem *Felicitate quadam* peractae. Quod si tamen quis contenderet, oportere semper nomen Fratrum Minorum adhiberi, omni appositione reiecta, ille sane suspicionem moveret, non tam se suae Familiae vindicare titulum, qui numquam tributus est ut proprius et peculiaris, quam velle abui hoc ipso titulo ad ceteras deprimendas Familias, suam extollendam.

Summum Moderatorem Fratrum ab Unione Leoniana saepissime Romani Pontifices non *Ministrum Generalem totius Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, sed *Ministrum Generalem Minorum de Observantia*, vel *Regularis Observantiae*, vel *Ordinis beati Francisci Regularis Observantiae*, vel *Ordinis Sancti Francisci de Observantia* appellare soliti sunt. Ita Leo X post Unionem peractam, eiusque proxime successores in plurimis Litteris; ita ceteri decessores Nostri in non paucis usque ad Leonem XIII factitarunt, quemadmodum Apostolicae Sedis acta testantur. Quare is quidem titulum Ministri Generalis totius Ordinis Fratrum Minorum et ipse

adhibere suo arbitratu poterit, et exigere a suis subditis, ut adhibeant; verumtamen, si sapit, indigne non feret, quod ab iis praesertim, qui suae ditionis non sunt, ambiguitatis praecipue vitandae causa, cum appositione nominetur aut Unionis Leonianae, quae nota est historica, aut Regularis Observantiae, quod est insigne Familiae.”

²⁰ PIUS X, *Paucis ante diebus*, in AAS 2, 18 (1910), 712-713: “Praeterea quid sit causae, cur *titulus historicus Unionis Leonianae nequeat Fratribus Minoribus*, quibus inditus est, *placere*, non videmus; quum utriusque Leonis, X et XIII, magna in eam Familiam promerita indicet. – Item quare *iste titulus Unionis Leonianae unionem ipsam intimam in discrimine adducat, quam Fratres non pauci ideo maxime amplexi sunt, ut simplex Fratrum Minorum nomen obtinerent*, non apparet; nisi quod eos fefellit opinio, tribuentes huic nomini vim cuiusdam primatus supra ceteros Franciscas, quem quidem Apostolica Sedes numquam concessit. – Affirmare autem hoc titulo Unionis Leonianae *magnam ignominiae notam Ordini Minorum inustam esse*, id enimvero iniuriosum est Apostolicae Sedi, et longe alienum a Seraphico spiritu. Titulum in honorem duorum Pontificum et in memoriam duplicis praeclarissimi facti datum, eumque per Litteras amoris benevolentiaeque plenas erga universam Minorum gentem, quibus Litteris honorifica quaedam privilegia Minoriticae a Regulari Observantia Familiae rata sunt, huiusmodi, inquit, titulum nefas est vertere in ignominiam ipsius Familiae, quum eius potius cedat in gloriam. Sed enim iis tantum videri potest minus honestus, quibus obstat, quominus se sodalibus per iniuriam superiores iacent.

Nihilominus tamen, si Fratres Minores Unionis Leonianae malunt, quoties praesertim merum *Fratrum Minorum* nomen videbitur ambiguum, adhibeatur titulus, antea usque ad Constitutionem etiam *Felicitate quadam* usitatus, *Regularis Observantiae*, id Nos quidem eis libenter concessuri sumus.

Postremo universis et singulis Fratribus Minoribus trium Familiarum de quaestionibus huiusmodi perpetuum silentium imponimus; volumusque ut ex omnibus iis, utpote *filiis gemellis* unius Patris sanctissimi, *cor unum* fiat et *anima una*.”

²¹ CARMODY, *The Leonine Union of the Friars Minor*, 210.

²² CARMODY, *The Leonine Union of the Friars Minor*, 208.

SAINT CLARE AND THE FRANCISCAN ORDER (4)

Felice Accrocca

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A partial re-evaluation of the figure of Clare through the hagiographical sources

It was precisely in Assisi, between the 13th and 14th centuries, that the new sources for the life of Saint Francis were composed. These sources re-utilised the hagiographical material that had been gathered as a result of the initiative promoted by Crescentius of Jesi under the mandate of the general Chapter of 1244. In the shadow of the basilica, a friar of the *Sacro Convento* copied the documentary material that we nowadays know by the name *Assisi Compilation*. In the same place, another anonymous brother gave to the *Legend of Three Companions* its actual form. Yet another friar, who was ideologically close to the Spirituals and to the Assisi environment, elaborated the *Mirror of Perfection*. Such a hagiographical re-evaluation, which placed in a new light various texts that had hitherto been left forgotten, led also to a growth in the knowledge of the life of Clare and her relationship with Francis and with the Order of Minors. The *Assisi Compilation*, particularly gave new value to other testimonial fragments regarding Clare, after the decision taken during the 1276 general Chapter. This text was not widely circulated. However, the one who compiled the *Mirror of Perfection* during the second decade of the 14th century, used the same documentary material.¹ In this work he underlined the details that he gathered in those fragments, which he presented in their entirety, and characterised, in a particular way, the importance of Saint Mary of the Angels as the place where Clare received her tonsure, and where the Orders of the friars and the *dominae* were born.² It was then the turn of the *Actus beati Francisci* to develop the train of thought outlined in the *Speculum* between incoherence and the growth

of the miraculous element, in order to re-integrate Clare in the primitive Franciscan group, to the point of presenting her having a spiritual meal together with Saint Francis. This detail says much regarding a re-consideration of the relationship between the two Orders.³ Fabiano d'Ungheria, in the *Speculum vitae*, written in late 1340's, presents to us the composition of the poem that we nowadays know by the name *Audite poverelle*, that is witnessed in both the *Assisi Compilation* and in the *Mirror of Perfection*, as well as the episodes regarding Clare present in the *Actus*, that were rendered later on very popular in the translation in the *volgare* made by the Fioretti.⁴

The *Speculum*, *Actus* and *Speculum vitae* – it is important to remember – have the aim of drawing the attention of the friars to the examples of Francis, «*forma Minorum*», not to those of Clare. In this way of looking at things, therefore, Arnald of Sarrant could not find a special place for her – who was the lesser light – among the companions of Francis in his *De conformitate Beati Francisci ad Christum (De Cognatione)*. The fact was that these conformities had their own internal coherence, since Christ had only males as his disciples. Clare and her sister Agnes are presented only because they are necessary to assimilate the figure of brother Filippo Longo to that of the apostle who bore his name. The two sisters symbolise the two virgin daughters of the disciple Philip. Through these two virgins, as well as through Clare and Agnes, the Lord converted many hearts.⁵ Clare also appears when the hagiographer makes a reference to the institution of the three Orders. Just as Christ founded three states of life (the life of the apostles; of the holy women who followed the same pattern of life, with Mary who *fuit principium et abatissa*; of the men and women who came to the help of Christ and the Apostles by offering them from their own goods), in the same way Francis instituted three Orders in order to restore that triple state of life that, at his time, was *quasi totaliter collapsio*. In this way Arnald draws a comparison between Clare and Mary, since the meaning of the name of Mary, according to him, is *illuminata*, whereas Clare also means “the enlightened one.” After this reference, however, Clare does not appear any more in Arnald's work. It is interesting to note, however, that Arnald makes use of a life of Saint Clare that was hitherto unknown (and that was probably written for liturgical use). In fact, when he speaks about similarities between the apostle of Jesus, Philip, and the companion of Francis, Filippo Longo, he writes: “In a similar way, Brother Philip the Tall was the sweetest preacher of all of Francis's companions, as the Life of Saint Clare describes him: ‘Brother Philip,’ it says, ‘was

present, one who used to pour forth the Lord's fervent and honey-flowing words.’”⁶

The *Chronica XXIV Generalium*

In the *Chronica XXIV Generalium*, Arnald of Sarrant⁷ shows that he knew very well the *Legenda* and the Rule of Saint Clare. Clare and her sister Agnes are reintegrated within the primitive group of companions of Francis. In the first section – which is the longest one of the whole work – dedicated to the ‘generalate’ of Francis, there is a *vita* about Clare and Agnes, on the same level as the lives of Bernard, Rufino, Juniper, Leo, Giles, Masseo, Anthony of Padua, Simon of Assisi, Cristopher. When writing the *vita* of Francis, Arnald affirms that, in 1212, Francis founded the *Ordo pauperum dominarum*; he recalls the prophecy made by Francis while he was still repairing the church of San Damiano (a fact witnessed by the *Legend of the Three Companions*, by the *Memoriale in desiderio animae*, and by the *Testament of Clare*),⁸ the giving of the tonsure to Clare at Saint Mary of the Angels, her successive abode at the monastery of San Paolo and at Sant'Angelo di Panzo, and finally her definite and stable abode in the church of San Damiano together with her sister Agnes.⁹

The text is concise but precise enough to underline the various steps in the process. It demonstrates that Arnald knew very well the *Legenda* of the Saint, as is evident also in his knowledge of the *vita* of Agnes. In fact, when he narrates the beginnings of her conversion, her stay at Sant'Angelo di Panzo, the harsh persecution she had to suffer from her relatives and her final victory, as well as the tonsure she received from Francis, Arnald depends upon the *Legenda*, and he follows it step by step. In his reference to the year 1250, with regards to the death of Frederick II, Arnald also mentions the liberation of Assisi, acquired thanks to the prayers of Saint Clare.

According to my way of seeing things, in the *Chronica XXIV generalium* the author gives us some interesting insights regarding the Rule of Clare, which are not present in the *Legenda*. In various circumstances Arnald declares without any doubt the excellent nature of that Rule over all others. He recalls a fact that occurred in 1343, namely that queen Sancia «*out of fervour for poverty, despised all earthly riches, and chose to serve the Lord in the monastery of the holy Cross in Naples under the first and excellent Rule of San Damiano, while not leaving any material possessions for herself, but binding herself to that family for ever; in fact that monastery lives precisely through the alms that the*

friars beg for the nuns.»¹⁰ Arnald holds on to the witness of Filippo da Perugia, that it was Hugolino and Francis who wrote the Rule of the sisters of San Damiano «according to the pattern of the rule of the friars Minor». However, he corrects the source on one important point: Filippo da Perugia, in fact, had asserted that the two – namely Hugolino and Francis – had written «the rule of the sisters of the Order of San Damiano, that is now called the Order of Saint Clare». Arnald, on the other hand, distances himself from this affirmation and simply states that the two «ordered and wrote the rule of the sisters of San Damiano.»¹¹

When he narrates the facts relating to the generalate of John of Parma, Arnald refers to the Rule of Innocent IV, composed according to him «by changing the first rule of Saint Clare» and ending up to be «a more relaxed rule». The Rule was given by the Pope to the sisters of the Order of San Damiano (it nearly seems that Arnald is conscious of the fact that the monastery of San Damiano and the *Ordo sancti Damiani* were two different realities). He also states: «The first rule of Saint Clare had not yet received papal confirmation through a bulla». Further on, Arnald refers both to the approval given by Rainaldo (he dates it with precision on 16th September 1252) as well as to the definitive approval by Innocent IV. In this latter case he states that the pontiff «confirmed it under his own Bulla and sent it to Saint Clare and her sisters». Therefore the bulla was not destined to the entire Order, but only to Clare and her community. When Arnald mentions the solemn funeral of Clare, for which he uses once more the *Legenda*, he also adds a reference to the miracle of the blessing of the bread that had already been narrated in the *vita* dedicated to the Saint in the first part of the *Chronica*. In that first instance, however, Arnald had kept silent regarding the identity of the pontiff, whereas now he specifies that the fact occurred in front of Innocent IV during the last days of the life of Clare.¹² If we consider that the *Legenda* does not speak at all about the papal approval of the Rule, nor about the approval given by cardinal Rainaldo, and that the Rule by then – except for the explicit request formulated by queen Sancia – had been generally forgotten, the value of the historical details offered by the chronicler is even more appreciated.

The two letters published by Arnald are very precious: he refers to a letter written by Hugolino to Clare in 1220 and to another letter addressed to Clare by her sister Agnes, and which is normally dated 1230.¹³ The *Chronica*, within the *Vita fratris Aegidii*, refers to the humility of a master of theology who, while preaching in San Damiano in front of Clare and brother Giles, was interrupted

by Giles and yet remained calm, and thus aroused the admiration of Clare, who in this way saw realised the wish of Francis regarding the humility of his friars who were doctors of theology.¹⁴ We still have to decipher, however, an explicit choice of the chronicler: why is it that, although knowing very well the *Legenda* and other sources, his *vita* of Clare results so mediocre and insignificant? In fact, the *vita* is not only the shortest among the lives that are found in the first part of the work, but it does not say anything, and limits itself to the miracle of the blessing of the loaves of bread and to reproduce the letter written by Hugolino to Clare.¹⁵ Maybe a proper *vita*, with all the facts relating to the approval of the Rule of Clare, would have conferred more importance to the anomaly of an Order that had taken the name of the Saint, who however, towards the end of her life, had opted for another Rule, different from the one followed in nearly all the monasteries, and had therefore placed herself outside the limits of her own *religio*.¹⁶

The *De Conformitate* by Bartholomew of Pisa: new evaluation of the *legendae*

In the *De Conformitate*, Bartholomew of Pisa does not say anything regarding the Rule of Clare. One even gets the impression that he deliberately avoids to enter this argument. In more than one occasion, when he speaks about the conversion of the Saint, he seems to utilise the text of the Rule,¹⁷ but he instead prefers to make us believe that the Rule given by Francis to Clare has to be identified with the Rule of Urban IV (1263). At the beginning of the second part of the ninth conformity, entitled *Franciscus regulator*, he affirms that Francis «wrote diverse rules and ways of life: he wrote a rule for the higher and stricter life of the friars Minor, upon the apostolic model; he also wrote a rule for nuns, or members of the weaker sex, which he somewhat mitigated; and he also wrote a rule for those living in penance in the world, and who are occupied in secular affairs, in order to give them a useful and fitting rule for their salvation. We shall speak about these rules, but principally about the first rule, that is the rule given to the friars Minor, and then about the others.»¹⁸ In fact, in this long section (that extends to nearly 90 pages of text) he does not dedicate one single line to the other two Rules, but prefers to dwell only upon the *Regula bullata* of the friars Minor. Again, when Bartholomew again mentions the Rules at the end of the second part of the ninth conformity, he once more induces us to an equivocal meaning through his cunning style, because he confuses the Rule

given by Francis to that given by Urban IV. During the time of the composition of the *De Conformitate* (1399) the Rule of Urban IV was observed in practically all the monasteries of the Order of Saint Clare, and in this way it was being identified with the primitive Rule.

Bartholomew opposes Clare to Elias. He places Clare together with the companions of the Saint and Anthony of Padua, defending the Franciscan Rule, whereas he places Elias as the head of those who wanted to change the Rule according to their whims.¹⁹ The love of Clare for the companions of Francis is also evident in the wish that she manifested before she died, namely to listen to the words of brother Juniper (Bartholomew insists upon the fact that it was Clare who wanted Juniper to come close to her).²⁰ In the *vita* written in the second part of the eighth conformity, Bartholomew of Pisa underlines the wish of the Saint to listen to the Word of God – that was the reason why she often called the friars to come close to her – to the point that he forces the affirmations of the *Legenda*, when he affirms that, after the resistance shown by Clare in front of some decisions taken by Pope Gregory IX in the *Quo elongati*, «the lord Pope conceded her the permission to convoke the brothers in order to listen to them preaching the word of God, every time she so wished.»²¹

This *vita*, written by Bartholomew of Pisa, is largely based upon the *Legenda sanctae Clarae virginis*, but also upon other sources, especially the *Actus*.²² Bartholomew of Pisa, in certain cases, manifests the same uncertainties of Ubertino,²³ whereas in others he ends up falling into contradictions.²⁴ The narration, however, comes to the forefront for other unedited details, which manifest in its author “a preference [...] for legendary re-elaborations that were alive on the lips of his contemporaries.”²⁵ These were re-elaborations and traditions that, through the author of *De Conformitate*, would pass on to later generations and find other ways of spreading out further.²⁶

The great works of the 14th century,²⁷ and especially the *Chronica XXIV generalium*, favoured that sense of pride that characterised the rediscovery of the memory of Clare and of her Rule within the context of the Observant family. This sense of pride, however, did not interest the entire body of the Order. Other centuries had to pass by so that the Rule of Clare would return to give form to the life of the Clares and so that the figure of the Saint would draw the general attention, and would re-acquire a more real historical consistency. It is that consistency that we, nowadays, strive to determine, drawn as we are by our will to comprehend Clare and her memory in the Franciscan Order.

Notes

¹ Cfr. D. SOLVI, *Lo «Speculum Perfectionis» e le sue fonti*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 88 (1995) 377-471.

² 2MP 84,7-8 (FAED III, 331): “The bride of God, Clare, / here first shed her hair, / the world’s pomp refused, / and her Christ pursued. / Thus a sacred mother / to ladies and to brothers / gives forth a brilliant birth / for whom she brings Christ on earth.” In the same poem of praise to the Portiuncula, unique in the Franciscan Sources, the author of the *Speculum Perfectionis* calls the Portiuncula the *Sancta sanctorum* of the Order. It seems that he was inspired by an inscription placed on the door lintel of the chapel of San Lorenzo, in the Lateran Palace. Cfr. M. SENSI, *Gli Osservanti alla Verna*, in *Itinerarium montis Alvernae*. Atti del Convegno di Studi Storici. La Verna, 5-8 maggio 1999, a cura di A. Cacciotti, Firenze 2000, 166-167.

³ Cfr. F. URIBE, *Introduzione alle agiografie di san Francesco e santa Chiara d’Assisi (secc. XIII-XIV)* (“Medioevo Franciscano, Saggi”, 7) Santa Maria degli Angeli – Assisi 2002, 523-525.

⁴ Cf. P. SABATIER, *Le Speculum vitae*, in *Opusculs de Critique Historique*, I, Paris 1903, 299-357; J. GOYENS, *Les éditions du «Speculum vitae B. Francisci» parue en 1620 et 1623*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 20 (1927) 116-131; Fioretti, chapters 15, 16, 19, 33, 35.

⁵ ARNALD OF SARRANT, *The Kinship of St. Francis*, 6 (FAED III, 689-690): “Philip is said to have had two virgin daughters through whom the Lord converted many persons to God. Likewise brother Philip in some way had two virgin daughters, that is Saint Clare and her sister Agnes, through whom innumerable virgins of the Order of Saint Clare and other persons were converted to God.”

⁶ FAED III, 689.

⁷ Maria Teresa Dolso has prudently judged this attribution as not being too secure. In her study *Antonio di Padova nella «Chronica XXIV generalium Ordinis Minorum»*, in *Cultura, arte e committenza nella basilica di S. Antonio di Padova nel Trecento*. Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi. Padova, 24-26 maggio 2001, a cura di L. Baggio – M. Benetazzo (“Centro studi antoniani”, 36) Padova 2003, 227, she speaks of Arnald as a «probable author of the *Chronica*». In her reference to the life of brother Christopher, included in the same work, she states that this friar was inserted in the *Chronica* «because he was traditionally considered as the first minister provincial of Aquitaine, the region from where Arnald, who is normally considered author of the work, came.» She also states: «In substance, we still lack enough proof to show that Arnald of Sarrant is linked to the composition of the *Chronica*, and therefore such an attribution still lacks sufficient confirmation.» Since there

are no arguments against Arnald of Sarrant as the author of the *Chronica XXIV Generalium*, it is safe to continue to consider him as the one who composed it.

⁸ Cf. *L3C* 24,5-6; *2C* 13,5-6; *TestCl* 9-14.

⁹ Cf. *Chronica XXIV generalium*, in *Analecta Franciscana* [AF] III, 8-9.

¹⁰ Cf. *Chronica XXIV generalium*, in AF III, 539.

¹¹ Cf. *Chronica XXIV generalium*, in AF III, 228, with the section on Filippo in AF III, 709.

¹² Cf. *Chronica XXIV generalium*, in AF III, 274-275. For the miracle of the multiplication of loaves, cf. 182.

¹³ Cf. *Chronica XXIV generalium*, in AF III, 183 and 175-177 respectively. Cf. K. ESSER, *Die Briefe Gregors IX an die heiligen Klara von Assisi*, in *Franziskanische Studien* 35 (1953) 74-95; M.P. ALBERZONI, *Chiara e il papato*, 43-44, 69-71.

¹⁴ Cf. *Chronica XXIV generalium*, in AF III, 81. The same episode is also found in *De conformitate*, AF IV, 208.

¹⁵ Cf. *Chronica XXIV generalium*, in AF III, 182-183.

¹⁶ M.T. DOLSO, *La «Chronica XXIV generalium»*, 369.

¹⁷ AF IV, 59: "The blessed Francis convinced the blessed Clare, who had listened to his words of admonition and to his preaching, to abandon all her earthly belongings, and to bind herself to the eternal spouse; she did not only accomplish this, but she was confirmed in the words of Francis who preached to her about Jesus, in such a way that no tribulation or strictness of life were difficult for her to bear up with." AF IV, 483: "The blessed Clare was converted to the Lord through the preaching of Saint Francis. Once, when she heard the blessed Francis preaching and mentioning the Lord Jesus, she felt so much power in the Lord in her heart, that from that moment onwards no tribulation or adversity was difficult for her." The English translation of the Latin original texts is a free translation, since there does not yet exist an official English translation of the voluminous *De Conformitate* by Bartholomew of Pisa.

¹⁸ AF IV, 370.

¹⁹ AF IV, 270: "Blessed Anthony, after the death of Saint Francis, strongly opposed brother Elias and his followers, and defended the rule together with the companions of blessed Francis and Saint Clare."

²⁰ AF IV, 248 and 515. Clare "wanted to have brother Juniper close to her" and "Saint Clare wanted to listen" to brother Juniper.

²¹ AF IV, 355.

²² Cf. AF IV, 354-355, where the author narrates the miraculous blessing of bread done by Clare in the presence of the Pope, the mystical banquet of Clare with Francis at the Portiuncola and the answer given by Clare and brother Sylvester regarding the Saint's doubts on his vocation. These episodes are all present in the *Actus*

(chapters 42, 15, 16) and Bartholomew refers to them on various occasions (AF IV, 196; 466-467; AF V, 81).

²³ AF IV, 353: "When the Lord Alexander IV wanted to dispense Clare from this form of poverty, she answered him that he would better absolve her from her sins, but not from observing the counsels of Jesus Christ."

²⁴ According to Bartholomew of Pisa, in fact, it was Alexander IV who wanted to canonize Clare at the moment of her death, but he was counseled against doing such a thing by the cardinal of Ostia (!), who invited him to celebrate the Mass of the dead.

²⁵ M. SORIANI INNOCENTI, *L'immagine di santa Chiara d'Assisi nel «De conformitate» di Bartolomeo Pisano*, 96. We can add the detail that Bartholomew presents in the *Vita* of Agnes, abbess of Prague: Clare would have sent to the noble Bohemian princess some relics of Saint Francis: «Pater noster, velum, scutellam, in qua sancta Clara comedebat, et cyphum et nonnulla alia, quae cum summa devotione ab ipsa sancta Agnete sunt suscepta; per quae Deus multa signa fecit meritis beatae Clarae; quae omnia auro et gemmis ornata, in dicto monasterio reservantur» (AF IV, 358).

²⁶ For example, the episode in which Francis tries to put to test the sincerity of the conversion of Clare, by sending her dressed up in sack-cloth to beg bread in the town (cf. *De conformitate*, in AF IV, Quaracchi 1906, 352) is taken up by MARIANO DA FIRENZE (*Libro delle dignità et excellentie del Ordine della seraphica madre delle Povere Donne sancta Chiara da Asisi*. Introduzione note e indici di G. Boccali ["Biblioteca di Studi Francescani", 18] Perugia-Santa Maria degli Angeli 1986, 45-46, n. 20).

²⁷ Cf. E. MENESTÒ, *Dagli «Actus» al «De conformitate»: la compilazione come segno della coscienza del francescanesimo trecentesco*, in *I francescani nel Trecento*. Atti del XIV Convegno internazionale. Assisi, 16-18 ottobre 1986, Assisi 1988, 41-68.

«LA REGOLA DEI FRATI MINORI»

37th Congress of the International Society of Franciscan Studies

The 37th Congress of the International Society of Franciscan Studies was celebrated in Assisi on 8th – 10th October 2009. The title chosen for this year's Congress is a tribute to the 800th anniversary celebrations of the approval of the Franciscan *Forma Vitae* in 1209, by Pope Innocent III.

The various themes of the lectures given during the Congress touched upon the intricate question of the Franciscan Rule, that had a complicated genesis starting from 1209, the date of approval of the *Propositum* or *Forma Vitae*, and progressed with the growth of the Order and the changed circumstances, particularly the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) and the Order's missionary calling, to arrive at the approval of the *Regula non bullata* or Earlier Rule in 1221, and eventually to the confirmation of the *Regula bullata* or Later Rule on 29th November 1223, by Pope Honorius III. This point of arrival, however, signalled another point of departure, namely that of the papal interpretations on the Franciscan Rule, notably that of Gregory IX, *Quo elongati* (28th September 1230), which marks but the first one of a series of papal interpretations. The other major papal decrees on the Rule during the early period of Franciscan history are: *Ordinem vestrum* by Innocent IV (14th November 1245), *Exiit qui seminat* by Nicholas III (14th August 1279), and *Exivi de paradiso* by Clement V (6th May 1312). Other commentaries on the Rule were also written by Franciscan theologians in the University of Paris, and by Spiritual writers of the 13th and 14th centuries, notably Hugh of Digne and Pierre John Olivi.

Gert Melville, from the Katholische Universität of Eichstätt, delivered the first talk entitled: *Vita religiosa e Regole al tempo di Francesco*. Jean François Godet-Calogeras, from St. Bonaventure University, New York, presented a historical excursus on the Franciscan Rule, entitled: *Dalla «Forma Vitae» alla «Regula bullata» e il Testamento di frate Francesco*.

After this historical analysis of the Franciscan Rule, it was the turn of the textual analysis, forming the theme of three talks delivered respectively by Carlo Paolazzi, from the Collegio S. Bonaventura, Rome: *Le Regole: aspetti di novità redazionali, testuali e interpretative*; Luigi Pellegrini, from the Università di Chieti: *La tradizione manoscritta delle Regole*; and Daniele Solvi, *La «Regula et vita» dei Frati Minori nell'agiografia*.

A third aspect regarding the Franciscan Rule, as we have already stated, concerns the papal interpretations and commentaries on the same Rule, which form part and parcel of the historical events unfolding in the Order of friars Minor during the 13th and 14th centuries. This theme was analysed by Andrea Tabarrono, from the Università di Udine: *Le dichiarazioni pontificie sulla Regola: dalla «Quo elongati» alla «Exivi de paradiso»*; David Flood, from the Resurrection friary in Montreal: *I primi commenti sulla Regola*; and David Burr, from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Blacksburg, Virginia: *Olivi, Clareno e la questione di un commento alla regola «tipicamente spirituale»*.

The last aspect of the study of the Franciscan Rule concerns its practical dimension, namely the observance of its precepts and counsels, as well as its concrete application in the General Constitutions of the Order. This aspect was the theme of the lectures by Jacques Dalarun, from IRHT, Paris: *La Regola e le costituzioni fino a Bonaventura*; Pietro Maranesi, from the Istituto Teologico of Assisi: *La Regola e le costituzioni da Bonaventura a Perpignan*; and Grado G. Merlo, from the Università di Milano: *A mo' di conclusione: la Regola tra consigli evangelici e precetti*.

The theme regarding the Franciscan Rule is of utmost importance in the study of the first two centuries of the Franciscan Order, and notably in the analysis of the various attempts at reform and division within the same Order. The evangelical ideal expressed by Francis in such a way as to be taken *sine glossa*, without comment, according to his Testament, became indeed a reason for intense discussion and interpretation according to the various trends of living the ideal proposed by the same Francis. The history of the Franciscan Rule is intertwined with the history of the internal dissensions between the Community of the Order and the Spirituals, with the conflict between the mendicants and the secular clergy in the University of Paris, with the recurring recourse to the Holy See for further clarifications on the part of the government of the Order.

A Congress centred upon the theme of the Franciscan Rule is not only important in recalling the 800th anniversary of the formation of the first document of Franciscan legislation, but more so in underlining the intimate link between the *Regula* and *Vita* of the friars Minor, between “the letter and the spirit”, and concerns the same survival of the Order in the midst of the struggle centred upon the balance between Francis' ideal and the Order's position as a religious institution in the mediaeval Church.

PAUL SABATIER

«LIFE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI»

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

Chapter VIII PORZIUNCULA

[120] It was doubtless toward the spring of 1211 that the Brothers quitted Rivo-Torto. They were engaged in prayer one day, when a peasant appeared with an ass, which he noisily drove before him into the poor shelter.

“Go in, go in!” he cried to his beast; “we shall be most comfortable here.” It appeared that he was afraid that if the Brothers remained there much longer they would begin to think this deserted place was their own. Such rudeness was very displeasing to Francis, who immediately arose and departed, followed by his companions.

Now that they were so numerous the Brothers could no longer continue their wandering life in all respects as in the past; they had need of a permanent shelter and above all of a little chapel. They addressed themselves in vain first to the bishop and then to the canons of San Rufino for the loan of what they needed, but were more fortunate with the abbot of the Benedictines of Mount Subasio, who ceded to them in perpetuity the use of a chapel already very dear to their hearts, Santa Maria degli Angeli or the Portiuncula.

Francis was enchanted; he saw a mysterious harmo-[121]ny, ordained by God himself, between the name of the humble sanctuary and that of his Order. The brethren quickly built for themselves a few huts; a quickset hedge served as enclosing wall, and thus in three or four days was organized the first Franciscan convent.

For ten years they were satisfied with this. These ten years are the heroic period of the Order. St. Francis, in full possession of his ideal, will seek to inculcate it upon his disciples and will succeed sometimes; but already the too rapid multiplication of the brotherhood will provoke some symptoms of relaxation.

The remembrance of the beginning of this period has drawn from the lips of Thomas of Celano a sort

of canticle in honor of the monastic life. It is the burning and untranslatable commentary of the Psalmist’s cry: “*Behold how sweet and pleasant it is to be brethren and to dwell together.*”

Their cloister was the forest which then extended on all sides of the Portiuncula, occupying a large part of the plain. There they gathered around their master to receive his spiritual counsels, and thither they retired to meditate and pray. It would be a gross mistake, however, to suppose that contemplation absorbed them completely during the days which were not consecrated to missionary tours: a part of their time was spent in manual labor.

The intentions of St. Francis have been more misapprehended on this point than on any other, but it may be said that nowhere is he more clear than when he ordains that his friars shall gain their livelihood by the work of their hands. He never dreamed of creating a *mendicant* order, he created a *laboring* order. It is true we shall often see him begging and urging his disciples to do as much, but these incidents ought not to mislead us; they [122] are meant to teach that when a friar arrived in any locality and there spent his strength for long days in dispensing spiritual bread to famished souls, he ought not to blush to receive material bread in exchange. To work was the rule, to beg the exception; but this exception was in nowise dishonorable. Did not Jesus, the Virgin, the disciples live on bread bestowed? Was it not rendering a great service to those to whom they resorted to teach them charity?

Francis in his poetic language gave the name of *mensa Domini*, the table of the Lord, to this table of love around which gathered the *little poor ones*. The bread of charity is the bread of angels; and it is also that of the birds, which reap not nor gather into barns.

We are far enough, in this case, from that mendicity which is understood as a means of existence and the essential condition of a life of idleness. It is the opposite extreme, and we are true and just to St. Francis and to the origin of the mendicant orders only when we do not separate the obligation of labor from the praise of mendicity.

No doubt this zeal did not last long, and Thomas of Celano already entitles his chapters, “*Lament before God over the idleness and gluttony of the friars;*” but we must not permit this speedy and inevitable decadence to veil from our sight the holy and manly beauty of the origin.

With all his gentleness Francis knew how to show an inflexible severity toward the idle; he even went so far as to dismiss a friar who refused to work. Nothing in [123] this matter better shows the intentions of the Poverello than the life of Brother Egidio, one of his dearest companions, him of whom

he said with a smile: "He is one of the paladins of my Round Table."

Brother Egidio had a taste for great adventures, and is a living example of a Franciscan of the earliest days; he survived his master twenty-five years, and never ceased to obey the letter and spirit of the Rule with freedom and simplicity.

We find him one day setting out on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Arrived at Brindisi, he borrowed a water-jug that he might carry water while he was awaiting the departure of the ship, and passed a part of every day in crying through the streets of the city: "*Alla fresca! Alla fresca!*" like other water-carriers. But he would change his trade according to the country and the circumstances; on his way back, at Ancona, he procured willow for making baskets, which he afterward sold, not for money but for his food. It even happened to him to be employed in burying the dead.

Sent to Rome, every morning after finishing his religious duties, he would take a walk of several leagues, to a certain forest, whence he brought a load of wood. Coming back one day he met a lady who wanted to buy it; they agreed on a price, and Egidio carried it to her house. But when he arrived at the house she perceived him to be a friar, and would have given him more than the price agreed upon. "My good lady," he replied, "I will not permit myself to be overcome by avarice," and he departed without accepting anything at all.

In the olive season he helped in the gathering; in grape season he offered himself as vintager. One day on the Piazza di Roma, where men are hired for day's work, he saw a *padrone* who could not find a man to thrash his walnut tree; it was so high that no one dared to risk him-[124]self in it. "If you will give me part of the nuts," said Egidio, "I will do it willingly." The bargain struck and the tree thrashed, there proved to be so many nuts that he did not know where to put his share. Gathering up his tunic he made a bag of it and full of joy returned to Rome, where he distributed them among all the poor whom he met.

Is not this a charming incident? Does it not by itself alone reveal the freshness, the youth, the kindness of heart of the first Franciscans? There is no end to the stories of the ingenuousness of Brother Egidio. All kinds of work seemed good to him provided he had time enough in the morning for his religious duties. Now he is in the service of the Cellarer of the Four Crowns at Rome, sifting flour and carrying water to the convent from the well of San Sisto. Now he is at Rieti, where he consents to remain with Cardinal Nicholas, bringing to every meal the bread which he had earned, notwithstanding the entreaties of the master of the house, who would

gladly have provided for his wants. One day it rained so hard that Brother Egidio could not think of going out; the cardinal was already making merry over the thought that he would be forced to accept bread that he had not earned. But Egidio went to the kitchen, and finding that it needed cleaning he persuaded the cook to let him sweep it, and returned triumphant with the bread he had earned, which he ate at the cardinal's table.

From the very beginning Egidio's life commanded respect; it was once so original, so gay, so spiritual, [125] and so mystical, that even in the least exact and most expanded accounts his legend has remained almost free from all addition. He is, after St. Francis, the finest incarnation of the Franciscan spirit.

The incidents which are here cited are all, so to speak, illustrations of the Rule; in fact there is nothing more explicit than its commands with respect to work.

The Brothers, after entering upon the Order, were to continue to exercise the calling which they had when in the world, and if they had none they were to learn one. For payment they were to accept only the food that was necessary for them, but in case that was insufficient they might beg. In addition they were naturally permitted to own the instruments of their calling. Brother Ginepro, whose acquaintance we shall make further on, had an awl, and gained his bread wherever he went by mending shoes, and we see St. Clara working even on her death-bed.

This obligation to work with the hands merits all the more to be brought into the light, because it was destined hardly to survive St. Francis, and because to it is due in part the original character of the first generation of the Order. Yet this was not the real reason for the being of the Brothers Minor. Their mission consisted above all in being the spouses of Poverty.

Terrified by the ecclesiastical disorders of the time, haunted by painful memories of his past life, Francis saw in money the special instrument of the devil; in moments of excitement he went so far as to execrate it, [126] as if there had been in the metal itself a sort of magical power and secret curse. Money was truly for him the sacrament of evil.

This is not the place for asking if he was wrong; grave authors have demonstrated at length the economic troubles which would have been let loose upon the world if men had followed him. Alas! his madness, if madness it were, is a kind of which one need not fear the contagion.

He felt that in this respect the Rule could not be too absolute, and that if unfortunately the door was opened to various interpretations of it, there would be no stopping-point. The course of events and the

periodical convulsions which shook his Order show clearly enough how rightly he judged.

I do not know nor desire to know if theologians have yet come to a scientific conclusion with regard to the poverty of Jesus, but it seems evident to me that poverty with the labor of the hands is the ideal held up by the Galilean to the efforts of his disciples.

Still it is easy to see that Franciscan poverty is neither to be confounded with the unfeeling pride of the stoic, nor with the stupid horror of all joy felt by certain devotees; St. Francis renounced everything only that he might the better possess everything. The lives of the immense majority of our contemporaries are ruled by the fatal error that the more one possesses the more one enjoys. Our exterior, civil liberties continually increase, but at the same time our inward freedom is taking flight; how many are there among us who are literally possessed by what they possess?

Poverty not only permitted the Brothers to mingle with the poor and speak to them with authority, but, removing from them all material anxiety, it left them free to [127] enjoy without hindrance those hidden treasures which nature reserves for pure idealists.

The ever-thickening barriers which modern life, with its sickly search for useless comfort, has set up between us and nature did not exist for these men, so full of youth and life, eager for wide spaces and the outer air. This is what gave St. Francis and his companions that quick susceptibility to Nature which made them thrill in mysterious harmony with her. Their communion with Nature was so intimate, so ardent, that Umbria, with the harmonious poetry of its skies, the joyful outburst of its spring-time, is still the best document from which to study them. The tie between the two is so indissoluble, that after having lived a certain time in company with St. Francis, one can hardly, on reading certain passages of his biographers, help *seeing* the spot where the incident took place, hearing the vague sounds of creatures and things, precisely as, when reading certain pages of a beloved author, one hears the sound of his voice.

The worship of Poverty of the early Franciscans had in it, then, nothing ascetic or barbarous, nothing which recalls the Stylites or the Nazirs. She was their bride, and like true lovers they felt no fatigues which they might endure to find and remain near her.

To draw the portrait of an ideal knight at the beginning of the thirteenth century is to draw Francis's very portrait, with this difference, that what the knight did for [128] his lady, he did for Poverty. This comparison is not a mere caprice; he himself profoundly felt it and expressed it with perfect clearness, and it is only by keeping it clearly

present in the mind that we can see into the very depth of his heart.

To find any other souls of the same nature one must come down to Giovanni di Parma and Jacopone di Todi. The life of St. Francis as troubadour has been written; it would have been better to write it as a knight, for this is the explanation of his whole life, and as it were the heart of his heart. From the day when, forgetting the songs of his friends and suddenly stopped in the public place of Assisi, he met Poverty, his bride, and swore to her faith and love, down to that evening when, naked upon the naked earth of Portiuncula, he breathed out his life, it may be said that all his thoughts went out to this lady of his chaste loves. For twenty years he served her without faltering, sometimes with an artlessness which would appear infantine, if something infinitely sincere and sublime did not arrest the smile upon the most sceptical lips.

Poverty agreed marvellously with that need which men had at that time, and which perhaps they have lost less than they suppose, the need of an ideal very high, very pure, mysterious, inaccessible, which yet they may picture to themselves in concrete form. Sometimes a few privileged disciples saw the lovely and pure Lady descend from heaven to salute her spouse, but, whether visible or not, she always kept close behind her Umbrian lover, as she kept close beside the Galilean; in the stable of the nativity, upon the cross at Golgotha, and even in the borrowed tomb where his body lay.

During several years this ideal was not alone that of St. Francis, but also of all the Brothers. In poverty the *gente poverelle* had found safety, love, liberty, and all the efforts of the new apostles are directed to the keeping of this precious treasure.

Their worship sometimes might seem excessive. They showed their spouse those delicate attentions, those refinements of courtesy so frequent in the morning light of a betrothal, but which one gradually forgets till they become incomprehensible.

The number of disciples continually increased; almost every week brought new recruits; the year 1211 was without doubt devoted by Francis to a tour in Umbria and the neighboring provinces. His sermons were short appeals to conscience; his heart went out to his hearers in ineffable tones, so that when men tried to repeat what they had heard they found themselves incapable. The Rule of 1221 has preserved for us a summary of these appeals:

"Here is an exhortation which all the Brothers may make when they think best: Fear and honor God, praise and bless him. Give thanks unto him. Adore the Lord, Almighty God, in Trinity and unity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Repent and make fruits meet for repentance, for you know

that we shall soon die. Give, and it shall be given unto you. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven; for if you forgive not, God will not forgive you. Blessed are they who die repenting, for they shall be in the kingdom of heaven ... Abstain carefully from all evil, and persevere in the good until the end."

We see how simple and purely ethical was the early Franciscan preaching. The complications of dogma and scholasticism are entirely absent from it. To understand how new this was and how refreshing to the soul we must study the disciples that came after him.

[130] With St. Anthony of Padua (†June 13, 1231; canonized in 1233), the most illustrious of them all, the descent is immense. The distance between these two men is as great as that which separates Jesus from St. Paul.

I do not judge the disciple; he was of his time in not knowing how to say simply what he thought, in always desiring to subtilize it, to extract it from passages in the Bible turned from their natural meaning by efforts at once laborious and puerile; what the alchemists did in their continual making of strange mixtures from which they fancied that they should bring out gold, the preachers did to the texts, in order to bring out the truth.

The originality of St. Francis is only the more brilliant and meritorious; with him gospel simplicity reappeared upon the earth. Like the lark with which he so much loved to compare himself, he was at his ease only in the open sky. He remained thus until his death. The epistle to all Christians which he dictated in the last weeks of his life repeats the same ideas in the same terms, perhaps with a little more feeling and a shade of sadness. The evening breeze which breathed upon his face and bore away his words was their symbolic accompaniment.

[131] "I, Brother Francis, the least of your servants, pray and conjure you by that Love which is God himself, willing to throw myself at your feet and kiss them, to receive with humility and love these words and all others of our Lord Jesus Christ, to put them to profit and carry them out."

This was not a more or less oratorical formula. Hence conversions multiplied with an incredible rapidity. Often, as formerly with Jesus, a look, a word sufficed Francis to attach to himself men who would follow him until their death. It is impossible, alas! to analyze the best of this eloquence, all made of love, intimate apprehension, and fire. The written word can no more give an idea of it than it can give us an idea of a sonata of Beethoven or a painting by Rembrandt. We are often amazed, on reading the memoirs of those who have been great conquerors of souls, to find ourselves remaining cold, finding in them all no trace of animation or originality. It is

because we have only a lifeless relic in the hand; the soul is gone. It is the white wafer of the sacrament, but how shall that rouse in us the emotions of the beloved disciple lying on the Lord's breast on the night of the Last Supper?

The class from which Francis recruited his disciples was still about the same; they were nearly all young men of Assisi and its environs, some the sons of agriculturalists, and others nobles; the School and the Church was very little represented among them.

[132] Everything still went on with an unheard-of simplicity. In theory, obedience to the superior was absolute, in practice, we can see Francis continually giving his companions complete liberty of action. Men entered the Order without a novitiate of any sort; it sufficed to say to Francis that they wanted to lead with him a life of evangelical perfection, and to prove it by giving all that they possessed to the poor. The more unpretending were the neophytes, the more tenderness he had for them. Like his Master, he had a partiality for those who were lost, for men whom regular society casts out of its limits, but who with all their crimes and scandals are nearer to sainthood than mediocrities and hypocrites.

One day St. Francis, passing by the desert of Borgo San Sepolcro came to a place called Monte-Casale, and behold a noble and refined young man came to him. "Father," he said, "I would gladly be one of your disciples."

"My son," said St. Francis, "you are young, refined, and noble; you will not be able to follow poverty and live wretched like us."

"But my father, are not you men like me? What you do I can do with the grace of Jesus." The reply was well-pleasing to St. Francis, who, giving him his blessing, incontinently received him into the Order under the name of Brother Angelo.

He conducted himself so well that a little while after he was made [133] guardian of Monte-Casale. Now, in those times there were three famous robbers who did much evil in the country. They came to the hermitage one day to beg Brother Angelo to give them something to eat; but he replied to them with severe reproaches: "What! robbers, evil-doers, assassins, have you not only no shame for stealing the goods of others, but you would farther devour the alms of the servants of God, you who are not worthy to live, and who have respect neither for men nor for God your Creator. Depart, and let me never see you here again!"

They went away full of rage. But behold, the Saint returned, bringing a wallet of bread and a bottle of wine which had been given him, and the guardian told him how he had sent away the robbers; then St. Francis reproached him severely

for showing himself so cruel... “I command thee by divine obedience,” said he, “to take at once this loaf and this wine and go seek the robbers by hill and dell until you have found them, to offer them this as from me, and to kneel there before them and humbly ask their pardon and pray them in my name no longer to do wrong but to fear God; and if they do it, I promise to provide for all their wants, to see that they always have enough to eat and drink. After that you may humbly return hither.”

Brother Angelo did all that had been commanded him, while St. Francis on his part prayed God to convert the robbers. They returned with the brother, and when St. Francis gave them the assurance of the pardon of God, they changed their lives and entered the Order, in which they lived and died most holily (*Fior.*, 26; *Conform.*, 119b, 1).

What has sometimes been said of the voice of the blood is still more true of the voice of the soul. When a man truly awakens another to moral life, he gains for himself an unspeakable gratitude. The word *master* is often [134] profaned, but it can express the noblest and purest of earthly ties.

Who are those among us, who in the hours of manly innocence when they examine their own consciences, do not see rising up before them from out of the past the ever beloved and loving face of one who, perhaps without knowing it, initiated them into spiritual things? At such a time we would throw ourselves at the feet of this father, would tell him in burning words of our admiration and gratitude. We cannot do it, for the soul has its own bashfulness; but who knows that our disquietude and embarrassment do not betray us, and unveil, better than words could do, the depths of our heart? The air they breathed at Portiuncula was all impregnated with joy and gratitude like this.

To many of the Brothers, St. Francis was truly a saviour; he had delivered them from chains heavier than those of prisons. And therefore their greatest desire was in their turn to call others to this same liberty.

We have already seen Brother Bernardo on a mission to Florence a few months after his entrance into the Order. Arrived at maturity when he put on the habit, he appears in some degree the senior of this apostolic college. He knew how to obey St. Francis and remain faithful to the very end to the ideal of the early days; but he had no longer that privilege of the young – of Brother Leo, for example – of being able to transform himself almost entirely into the image of him whom he admired. His physiognomy has not that touch of juvenile originality, of poetic fancy, which is so great a charm of the others.

Toward this epoch two Brothers entered the Order, men such as the successors of St. Francis never



received, whose history throws a bright light on the simplicity of the early days. It will be remembered with what [135] zeal Francis had repaired several churches; his solicitude went further; he saw a sort of profanation in the negligence with which most of them were kept; the want of cleanliness of the sacred objects, ill-concealed by tinsel, gave him a sort of pain, and it often happened that when he was going to preach somewhere he secretly called together the priests of the locality and implored them to look after the decency of the service. But even in these cases he was not content to preach only in words; binding together some stalks of heather he would make them into brooms for sweeping out the churches.

One day in the suburbs of Assisi he was performing this task when a peasant appeared, who had left his oxen and cart out in the fields while he came to gaze at him.

"Brother," said he on entering, "give me the broom. I will help you," and he swept out the rest of the church.

When he had finished, "Brother," he said to Francis, "for a long time I have decided to serve God, especially when I heard men speak of you. But I never knew how to find you. Now it has pleased God that we should meet, and henceforth I shall do whatever you may please to command me."

Francis seeing his fervor felt a great joy; it seemed to him that with his simplicity and honesty he would become a good friar.

It appears indeed that he had only too much simplicity, for after his reception he felt himself bound to imitate every motion of the master, and when the latter coughed, spat, or sighed, he did the same. At last Francis noticed it and gently reproved him. Later he became so perfect that the other friars admired him greatly, and after his death, which took place not long after, St. Francis loved to relate his conversion, calling him not Brother John, but Brother St. John.

Ginepro is still more celebrated for his holy follies. [136] One day he went to see a sick Brother and offered him his services. The patient confessed that he had a great longing to eat a pig's foot; the visitor immediately rushed out, and armed with a knife ran to the neighboring forest, where, espying a troop of pigs, he cut off a foot of one of them, returning to the monastery full of pride over his trophy.

The owner of the pigs shortly followed, howling like mad, but Ginepro went straight to him and pointed out with so much volubility that he had done him a great service, that the man, after overwhelming him with reproaches, suddenly begged pardon, killed the pig and invited all the Brothers to feast upon it.

Ginepro was probably less mad than the story would lead us to suppose; Franciscan humility never had a more sincere disciple; he could not endure the tokens of admiration which the populace very early lavished on the growing Order, and which by their extravagance contributed so much to its decadence.

One day, as he was entering Rome, the report of his arrival spread abroad, and a great crowd came out to meet him. To escape was impossible, but he suddenly had an inspiration; near the gate of the city some children were playing at see-saw; to the great amazement of the Romans Ginepro joined them, and, without heeding the salutations addressed to him, remained so absorbed in his play that at last his indignant admirers departed.

It is clear that the life at Portiuncula must have been very different from that of an ordinary convent. So much youth, simplicity, love, quickly drew the eyes of men toward it. From all sides they were turned to those thatched huts, where dwelt a spiritual family [137] whose members loved one another more than men love on earth, leading a life of labor, mirth, and devotion. The humble chapel seemed a new Zion destined to enlighten the world, and many in their dreams beheld blind humanity coming to kneel there and recover sight.

Among the first disciples who joined themselves to St. Francis we must mention Brother Silvestro, the first priest who entered the Order, the very same whom we have already seen the day that Bernardo di Quintavalle distributed his goods among the poor. Since then he had not had a moment's peace, bitterly reproaching himself for his avarice; night and day he thought only of that, and in his dreams he saw Francis exorcising a horrid monster which infested all the region.

By his age and the nature of the memory he has left behind him Silvestro resembles Brother Bernardo. He was what is usually understood by a holy priest, but nothing denotes that he had the truly Franciscan love of great enterprises, distant journeys, perilous missions. Withdrawn into one of the grottos of the Carceri, absorbed in the contemplative life, he gave spiritual counsels to his brethren as occasion served.

The typical Franciscan priest is Brother Leo. The date of his entrance into the Order is not exactly known, but we are probably not far from the truth in placing it about 1214. Of a charming simplicity, tender, affectionate, refined, he is, with Brother Elias, the one who plays the noblest part during the obscure years in which the new reform was being elaborated. Becoming Francis's confessor and secretary, treated by him as his [138] favorite son, he excited much opposition, and was to the end of his long life the head of the strict observance.

One winter day, St. Francis was going with Brother Leo from Perugia to Santa Maria degli Angeli, and the cold, being intense, made them shiver; he called Brother Leo, who was walking a little in advance, and said: "O Brother Leo, may it please God that the Brothers Minor all over the world may give a great example of holiness and edification; write, however, and note with care, that not in this is the perfect joy."

St. Francis, going on a little farther, called him a second time: "O Brother Leo, if the Brothers Minor gave sight to the blind, healed the infirm, cast out demons, gave hearing to the deaf, or even what is much more, if they raised the four days dead, write that not in this is the perfect joy."

Going on a little farther he cried: "O Brother Leo, if the Brother Minor knew all languages, all science, and all scriptures, if he could prophesy and reveal not only future things but even the secrets of consciences and of souls, write that not in this consists the perfect joy."

Going on a little farther St. Francis called to him again: "O Brother Leo, little sheep of God, if the Brother Minor could speak the language of angels, if he knew the courses of the stars and the virtues of plants, if all the treasures of earth were revealed to him, and he knew the qualities of birds, fishes, and all animals, of men, trees, rocks, roots, and waters, write that not in these is the perfect joy."

And advancing still a little farther St. Francis called loudly to him: "O Brother Leo, if the Brother Minor could preach so well as to convert all infidels to the faith of Christ, write that not in this is the perfect joy."

While speaking thus they had already gone more than two miles, and Brother Leo, full of surprise, said to him: "Father, I pray you in God's name tell me in what consists the perfect joy."

And St. Francis replied: "When we arrive at Santa Maria degli Angeli, soaked with rain, frozen with cold, covered with mud, dying of hunger, and we knock and the porter comes in a rage, saying, 'Who are you?' and we answer, 'We are two of your brethren,' and he says, 'You lie, you are two lewd fellows who go up and down corrupting the world and stealing the alms of the poor. Go away from here!'" and he does not open to us, but leaves us outside shivering in the snow and rain, frozen, starved, till night; then, if thus maltreated and turned away, we patiently endure all without murmuring against him, if we [139] think with humility and charity that this porter really knows us truly and that God makes him speak thus to us, then, O Brother Leo, write that in this is the perfect joy ... Above all the graces and all the gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to his friends is the grace to conquer oneself,

and willingly to suffer pain, outrages, disgrace, and evil treatment, for the love of Christ!" (*Fior.*, 8; *Spec.*, 89b ff.; *Conform.*, 30b, 2, and 140a, 2).

Although by its slight and somewhat playful character this story recalls the insipid statues of the fourteenth century, it has justly become celebrated, its spirit is thoroughly Franciscan; that transcendent idealism, which sees in perfection and joy two equivalent terms, and places perfect joy in the pure and serene region of the perfecting of oneself; that sublime simplicity which so easily puts in their true place the miracle-worker and the scholar, these are perhaps not entirely new; but St. Francis must have had singular moral strength to impose upon his contemporaries ideas in such absolute contradiction to their habits and their hopes; for the intellectual aristocracy of the thirteenth century with one accord found the perfect joy in knowledge, while the people found it in miracles.

Doubtless we must not forget those great mystical families, which, all through the Middle Ages, were the refuge of the noblest souls; but they never had this fine simplicity. The School is always more or less the gateway to mysticism; it is possible only to an elect of subtle minds; a pious peasant seldom understands the Imitation.

It may be said that all St. Francis's philosophy is contained in this chapter of the Fioretti. From it we foresee what will be his attitude toward learning, and are helped [140] to understand how it happens that this famous saint was so poor a miracle-worker.

Twelve centuries before, Jesus had said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they who suffer." The words of St. Francis are only a commentary, but this commentary is worthy of the text.

It remains to say a word concerning two disciples who were always closely united with Brother Leo in the Franciscan memorials – Rufino and Masseo.

Born of a noble family connected with that of St. Clara, the former was soon distinguished in the Order for his visions and ecstasies, but his great timidity checked him as soon as he tried to preach: for this reason he is always to be found in the most isolated hermitages – Carceri, Verna, Greccio.

Masseo, of Marignano, a small village in the environs of Assisi, was his very opposite; handsome, well made, witty, he attracted attention by his fine presence and his great facility of speech; he occupies a special place in popular Franciscan tradition. He deserves it. St. Francis, to test his humility, made him the porter and cook of the hermitage, but in these functions Masseo showed himself to be so perfectly a *Minor* that from that time the master particularly loved to have him for companion in his missionary journeys.

One day they were travelling together, when they

arrived at the intersection of the roads to Sienna, Arezzo, and Florence.

“Which one shall we take?” asked Masseo.

“Whichever one God wills.”

[141] “But how shall we know which one God wills?”

“You shall see. Go and stand at the crossing of the roads, turn round and round as children do, and do not stop until I bid you.”

Brother Masseo began to turn; seized with a vertigo, he was nearly falling, but caught himself up at once. Finally Francis called out, “Stop! which way are you facing?”

“Toward Sienna.”

“Very well; God wills that we go to Sienna.”

Such a method of making up one’s mind is doubtless not for the daily needs of life, but Francis employed still others, like it, if not in form at least in fact.

Up to this time we have seen the brethren living together in their hermitages or roving the highways, preaching repentance. It would, however, be a mistake to think that their whole lives were passed thus. To understand the first Franciscans we must absolutely forget what they may have been since that time, and what monks are in general; if Portiuncula was a monastery it was also a workshop, where each brother practised the trade which had been his before entering the Order; but what is stranger still to our ideas, the Brothers often went out as servants.

Brother Egidio’s case was not an exception, it was the rule. This did not last long, for very soon the friars who entered a house as domestics came to be treated as distinguished guests; but in the beginning they were literally servants, and took upon themselves the most menial labors. Among the works which they might under-[142]take Francis recommended above all the care of lepers. We have already seen the important part which these unfortunates played in his conversion; he always retained for them a peculiar pity, which he sought to make his disciples share.

For several years the Brothers Minor may be said to have gone from lazaretto to lazaretto, preaching by day in the towns and villages, and retiring at night to these refuges, where they rendered to these *patients of God* the most repugnant services.

The Crucigeri, who took charge of the greater number of leper-houses, always welcomed these kindly disposed aides, who, far from asking any sort of recompense, were willing to eat whatever the patients might have left. In fact, although created solely for the care of lepers, the Brothers of this Order sometimes lost patience when the sufferers were too exacting, and instead of being grateful had only murmurs or even reproaches for their benefactors.

In these desperate cases the intervention of Francis and his disciples was especially precious. It often happened that a Brother was put in special charge of a single leper, whose companion and servant he continued to be, sometimes for a long period.

The following narrative shows Francis’s love for these unfortunates, and his method with them.

It happened one time that the Brothers were serving the lepers and the sick in a hospital, near to the place where St. Francis was. Among them was a leper who was so impatient, so cross-grained, so unendurable, that everyone believed him to be possessed by the devil, and [143] rightly enough, for he heaped insults and blows upon those who waited upon him, and what was worse, he continually insulted and blasphemed the blessed Christ and his most holy Mother the Virgin Mary, so that there was no longer anyone who could or would wait upon him. The Brothers would willingly have endured the insults and abuse which he lavished upon them, in order to augment the merit of their patience, but their souls could not consent to hear those which he uttered against Christ and his Mother. They therefore resolved to abandon this leper, but not without having told the whole story exactly to St. Francis, who at that time was dwelling not far away.

When they told him, St. Francis betook himself to the wicked leper: “May God give thee peace, my most dear brother,” he said to him as he drew near.

“And what peace,” asked the leper, “can I receive from God, who has taken away my peace and every good thing, and has made my body a mass of stinking and corruption?”

St. Francis said to him: “My brother, be patient, for God gives us diseases in this world for the salvation of our souls, and when he endure them patiently they are the fountain of great merit to us.”

“How can I endure patiently continual pains which torture me day and night? And it is not only my diseases that I suffer from, but the friars that you give me to wait upon me are unendurable, and do not take care of me as they ought.”

Then St. Francis perceived that this leper was possessed by the Spirit of evil, and he betook himself to his knees in order to pray for him. Then returning he said to him: “My son, since you are not satisfied with the others, I will wait upon you.”

“That is all very well, but what can you do for me more than they?”

“I will do whatever you wish.”

“Very well; I wish you to wash me from head to foot, for I smell so badly that I disgust myself.”

Then St. Francis made haste to heat some water with many sweet-smelling herbs; next he took off the leper’s clothes and began to bathe him, while a Brother poured out the water. And behold, by a

divine miracle, wherever St. Francis touched him with his holy hands the leprosy disappeared and the flesh became perfectly sound. And in proportion as the flesh was healed the soul of the wretched man was also healed, and he began to feel a lively sorrow for his sins, and to weep bitterly ... And being completely healed both in body and soul, he cried with all his might: "Woe unto me, for I have deserved hell for the abuses and outrages which I have said and done to the Brothers, for my impatience and my blasphemies."

[144] One day, Brother John, whose simplicity we have already seen, and who had been especially put in charge of a certain leper, took him for a walk to Portiuncula, as if he had not been the victim of a contagious malady. Reproaches were not spared him; the leper heard them and could not hide his sadness and distress; it seemed to him like being a second time banished from the world. Francis was quick to remark all this and to feel sharp remorse for it; the thought of having saddened one of *God's patients* was unendurable; he not only begged his pardon, but he caused food to be served, and sitting down beside him he shared his repast, eating from the same porringer. We see with what perseverance he pursued by every means the realization of his ideal.

The details just given show the Umbrian movement, as it appears to me, to be one of the most humble and at the same time the most sincere and practical attempts to realize the kingdom of God on earth. How far removed we are here from the superstitious vulgarity of the mechanical devotion, the deceitful miracle-working of certain Catholics; how far also from the commonplace, complacent, quibbling, theorizing Christianity of certain Protestants!

Francis is of the race of mystics, for no intermediary comes between God and his soul; but his mysticism is that of Jesus leading his disciples to the Tabor of contemplation; but when, overflowed with joy, they long to build tabernacles that they may remain on the heights and satiate themselves with the raptures of ecstasy, "Fools," he says to them, "ye know not what ye ask," and directing their gaze to the crowds wandering like sheep having no shepherd, he leads them back to the [145] plain, to the midst of those who moan, who suffer, who blaspheme.

The higher the moral stature of Francis the more he was exposed to the danger of being understood only by the very few, and disappointed by those who were nearest to him. Reading the Franciscan authors, one feels every moment how the radiant beauty of the model is marred by the awkwardness of the disciple. It could not have been otherwise,

and this difference between the master and the companions is evident from the very beginnings of the Order. The greater number of the biographers have drawn the veil of oblivion over the difficulties created by certain Brothers as well as those which came from the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but we must not allow ourselves to be deceived by this almost universal silence.

Here and there we find indications all the more precious for being, so to say, involuntary. Brother Rufino, for example, the same who was destined to become one of the intimates of Francis's later days, assumed an attitude of revolt shortly after his entrance into the Order. He thought it foolish in Francis when, instead of leaving the friars to give themselves unceasingly to prayer, he sent them out in all directions to wait upon lepers. His own ideal was the life of the hermits of the Thebaide, as it is related in the then popular legends of St. Anthony, St. Paul, St. Pacomius, and twenty others. He once passed Lent in one of the grottos of the Carceri. Holy Thursday having arrived, Francis, who was also there, summoned all the brethren who were dispersed about the neighborhood, whether in grottos or huts, to observe with him the memories to which this day was consecrated. Rufino refused to come: "For that matter," he added, "I have decided to follow him no longer; [146] I mean to remain here and live solitary, for in this way I shall be more surely saved than by submitting myself to this man and his nonsense."

Young and enthusiastic for the most part, it was not always without difficulty that the Brothers formed the habit of keeping their work in the background. Agreeing with their master as to fundamentals, they would have liked to make more of a stir, attract public attention by more obvious devotion; there were some among them whom it did not satisfy to be saints, but who also wished to appear such.

Who is responsible for the Order?

Pope John Paul II

Message to the Min. Gen. Giacomo Bini ofm
10th May 2003

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«The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few! (Mt 9:37). These words of Christ come to mind as we face the vast field of action and the scarcity of available workers. To speak of missionary dynamism seems hardly realistic even for your Order; given the reduced number of its members and the increase in their average age in recent years. However, instead of making you feel disheartened, it must challenge you on the one hand to intensify your prayer to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest (Mt 9: 38), and on the other, to devise new pastoral and vocational policies. Why lose faith, if Jesus himself assured Francis that it was he who was principally responsible for the Order? Did he not promise Francis: “I have called, I will preserve and I will tend, and I will raise up others to make up for the loss of some, so that, even if they have not been born, I will have them born” (Bonaventure, *Legenda Maior*, VIII, 3). Knowing this, encourage and accompany vocations with prayer and with the witness of your lives, trusting in that God who can raise Children of Abraham even from stone... and make sterile wombs fruitful. The Order has done well to put much energy into the pastoral care of vocations and the formation of aspirants to the consecrated life, in collaboration with other Institutes of Franciscan inspiration and with the dioceses. Francis and Clare of Assisi have a great fascination for young people, and this should be used to propose to the generations of the third millennium a more attentive reflection on life's essential values. These reach their fulfillment in the response which each person is invited to give to God's call, particularly when the call implies the total giving of self and of one's energies to the cause of the Kingdom.»

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Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

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

Sources for the Life of St. Francis

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

Sources for the Life of St. Clare

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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