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Editorial

THE RELEVANCE OF OUR IDENTITY AS FRANCISCANS

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Contents

- Editorial
- The *Memoriale Propositi* of the Order of Penitents
- The Virtuous Life lived in Fraternity
- St. Bonaventure's Theology of History
- Dante, Francis and the Friars Minor
- The Chronicle of Nicholas Glassberger

The final document of the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor, celebrated in July 2021, entitled *Responding to the Invitation of the Holy Spirit as Friars Minor in the Church and World*, focused upon the identity of us Franciscans as *fratres* and *minores*. Paragraph 11 of the document states:

“We recognize that our name as *fratres minor* contains the core of our identity and what some members of the chapter described as ‘the two lungs that give life to all our actions’ as Franciscans. These ‘two lungs,’ which allow the breath of the Holy Spirit to animate our whole way of being in the world, are *fraternitas* and *minoritas*. We are brothers first, and the mode of our fraternal life is one of voluntary minority in society and in the church. Social pressures like the prevalent culture of individualism and ecclesial pressures like clericalism have no place in the authentic embrace of Franciscan life” (www.ofm.org)

We live in a world where relevance is at the forefront of human success and achievement. To be relevant in a purely human dimension implies an effort at being professionally prepared and efficient in your career or business. It means being at the avant-garde in the use of social media, in the knowledge of the rules of the market, in acquiring fame and popularity, and in becoming wealthy overnight. Relevance is also a sign that you feel part and parcel of an inclusive social fabric, where everyone matters not because of the values he or she believes in, but because of his or her

personal choice of being and acting, even irrespective of ethical norms.

The Franciscan way of being relevant is very different. The novelty brought about by Saint Francis consisted in a re-proposing of the Gospel and of its values. Its relevance has a perennial dimension. We, as Franciscans, need to examine some of the salient aspects of the relevance of the Franciscan spirit, and to try to propose them as a guideline for today's world, in their universal appeal for Christians, but also for all people of good will.

The relevance of the Franciscan spirit with regard to fraternity concerns the ability to translate the values of fraternity in expressions of witness that are valid in today's world. Living in a globalised world, where people often travel and ideas circulate rapidly, and where social media are so powerful as to trigger change overnight, it is important to continue promoting the Franciscan vision of fraternity. It is not a vision of globalisation that annihilates the value of the human person. It is rather a vision of the uniqueness of each and every human person within the framework of the family, of society, of nations. Indeed, Franciscan fraternity goes beyond this human vision to encompass also a vision of a fraternal bond with creation, in such a way that creation is seen as an indispensable partner for genuine integral well-being. In his Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 10, Pope Francis expresses this ideal of universal brotherhood in a very clear way when he says: "I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically."

Minority is a value which is rooted in the Christian message of love towards all persons, but indeed it has been practiced by Christians and non-Christians alike. The prophetic voices of those who dedicated their lives in favour of the poor and the least among men and women are a living witness of what minority means. I here quote two

illustrious prophets of recent times, namely Mahatma Gandhi, who said: "A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members", and Saint (Mother) Theresa of Calcutta, who said: "At the end of life we will not be judged by how many diplomas we have received, how much money we have made, how many great things we have done. We will be judged by *I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was naked and you clothed me. I was homeless, and you took me in* (Mt 25,35-36)."

Living their vocation as brothers and minors Franciscans today can be a beacon of hope for a better future. The values they cherish and embrace as a way of life include poverty, humility, love and respect towards creation, an effort to work in favour of justice and peace, participation in inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, just to mention a few areas in which the Franciscan commitment and spirit is present. These positive attitudes towards human life, however, are animated by the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. While recognising the validity of these values in any culture and religion, and cherishing the sincere efforts of so many people of good will to make this world a better place to live in, the Franciscans remain faithful to their calling to be followers of Jesus Christ and members of his Church, and propose the Gospel as a lofty ideal in order to fill the world with hope and joy for a better future.

Noel Muscat ofm

THE *MEMORIALE PROPOSITI* OF THE ORDER OF PENITENTS (1221)

Noel Muscat OFM

The celebration of the 800 years since the *Memoriale Propositi* of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance is an occasion to reflect upon the great movement of Penance in the Church that became synonymous with the great mendicant Orders of the 13th century, particularly with the friars Preachers and friars Minor.

The theme of the Order of Penitents in its Franciscan setting has already been an object of deep analysis, and we can only summarise what has already been stated with expertise by eminent scholars and historians.¹

Historical Context

As a document relating to the Order of Penitents the *Memoriale Propositi* was the result of a long process by which lay persons became more aware of their role as penitents in the Church. Meersseman was the first to document the origins of the Penitential movement in detail, and he is of the opinion that the movement already existed in the Church long before Francis or

Dominic became known as ‘founders’ of the *Ordo Pœnitentium* of their respective Orders. The case of the Humiliati of Lombardy is a case in point. In 1201 Innocent III approved the *Propositum* of the Humiliati, which shows remarkable resemblances with the *Memoriale* that the Franciscan penitents adopted in 1221. This goes to show that the vocation to a penitential way of life was very popular in the Church before the birth of St. Francis. Indeed the same Crusade preached by Urban IV in 1095 and later on by St. Bernard of Clairvaux was, in itself, a penitential movement. Pilgrims were penitents. Other examples included the birth of heterodox penitential lay movements, like that of the Waldensians in 1175. This is an important factor to keep in mind when dealing with the issue of the Franciscan *Ordo Pœnitentium*.

The early Sources

The fact that the Order of Penance ended up being so closely linked with Francis of

¹ These are just a few fundamental studies: G. MEERSSEMAN, *Dossier de l'Ordre e la Pénitence au XIII^e Siècle*, Fribourg 1961; O. SCHMUCKI (ed.), *L'Ordine della penitenza di san Francesco d'Assisi nel secolo XIII*. Atti del 1^o Convegno di Studi Francescani (Assisi, 3-5 luglio 1972); M. D'ALATRI (ed.), *I Frati Penitenti di san Francesco nella società del Due e Trecento*. Atti del 2^o Convegno di Studi Francescani (Roma, 12-14 ottobre 1976); *Francescanesimo e vita religiosa dei laici nel '200*. Atti del VIII Convegno della Società Internazionale di Studi Francescani (Assisi, 16-18 ottobre 1980); L. BÉDRUNE, *Ordine francescano secolare*, in *Dizionario Francescano*, Padova 1983, 1541-1556;

R. PAZZELLI, *St. Francis and the Third Order: The Franciscan and pre-Franciscan Penitential Movement*, Chicago 1989; R. STEWART, “*De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam*”. *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation*, Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, Roma 1991; M. D'ALATRI, *Ætas Pœnitentialis. L'antico Ordine francescano della Penitenza*, Istituto Storico dei Cappuccini, Roma 1993; G. CASAGRANDE, *Un Ordine per i laici. Penitenza e Penitenti nel Duecento*, in *Francesco d'Assisi e il primo secolo di storia francescana*, Torino 1997, 237-255.

Assisi and his Order is the result of the early Sources for the life of the Saint. The oldest one is that by Thomas of Celano in the *Vita beati Francisci* (1229), 37:

“Many people, well-born and lowly, cleric and lay, driven by divine inspiration, began to come to Saint Francis, for they desired to serve under his constant training and leadership. All of these the holy one of God, like a fertile stream of heavenly grace, watered with showers of gifts and he adorned the field of their hearts with the flowers of perfection. He is without question an outstanding craftsman, for through his spreading message, the Church of Christ is being renewed in both sexes according to his form, rule and teaching, and there is victory for the triple army of those being saved. Furthermore, to all he gave a norm of life.”²

Maybe the best known early Source that speaks clearly about Francis founding “three” Orders, one for the brothers, one for the Poor Ladies and one for Penitents, is the *Vita Sancti Francisci* by Julian of Speyer (c.1235):

“He provided a plan of salvation to persons of every state and condition, age and sex, giving them all a rule of life. Today, the church rejoices that his felicitous leadership of both sexes has brought about a threefold army of those who are to be saved.

“He founded three Orders, the first of which he prized above all others by profession and habit, and which, as he had written in its Rule, he called the Order of friars Minor. The Second Order, the Order of the Poor Ladies and virgins of the Lord, likewise took its fruitful origin from him. The Third, also an order of considerable perfection, is called the Order of Penitents, which profitably brings together clerics and

laity, virgins, unmarried, and married persons of both sexes.”³

In the *Officium Rhythmicum Sancti Francisci*, also by Julian of Speyer (c.1232), we find a poetic expression of the same account:

“Three were the Orders he arrayed:
The Friars Minor he called the first;
And the Poor Ladies were next,
Becoming the middle order;
Then thirdly came the Penitents,
Comprising men and women.”⁴

The *Anonymous of Perugia*, or better still, *De Inceptione vel fundamento Ordinis*, by John of Perugia (1241) states:

“Married men said: ‘We have wives who will not permit us to send them away. Teach us, therefore, the way that we can take more securely.’ The brothers founded an order for them, called the Order of Penitents, and has it approved by the Supreme Pontiff.”⁵

The *Legend of Three Companions* (1246) has a similar description of the existence of the Order of Penance within the early Franciscan family:

“Similarly, both married men and women given in marriage, committed themselves to more severe penance in their own homes on the wholesome advice of the brothers. And thus, through blessed Francis, a perfect worshipper of the Holy Trinity, the Church of God was renewed in three orders, just as the earlier repair of the three churches foreshadowed. Each one of these orders was in its time approved by the Supreme Pontiff.”⁶

The other Sources that speak about Francis having founded an Order of Penitents include the *Assisi Compilation* 74, which speaks about the good inhabitants of Greccio, where Francis spent some time in the brothers’ hermitage (maybe in 1223 when he celebrated

² IC 37 (FAED I, 216-217).

³ LJS 23 (FAED I, 385).

⁴ *Officium Rhythmicum S. Francisci*, 3 Ant. of Lauds of feast of St. Francis (FAED I, 338).

⁵ AP 41 (FAED II, 54-55). The footnote in this volume of the Sources indicates two English translations of excellent studies: R. MANSELLI,

Francis of Assisi and Lay People Living in the World: Beginning of the Third Order, in *Greyfriars Review* 11 (1997) 41-48 and O. SCHMUCKI, *The Third Order in the Biographies of St. Francis*, in *Greyfriars Review* 6 (1992) 81-107.

⁶ L3C 60 (FAED II, 103).

Christmas there). The text gives us some words of praise that Francis uttered: “Even in a large city not as many people have been converted to penance as in Greccio.”⁷ The reference to penance indicates that, in this castle, as in other villages and towns, there were lay persons who decided to enter the Order of Penitents.

St. Bonaventure depends upon earlier Sources, particularly Celano and Julian of Speyer, in his description of the founding of three Orders, and also places it within the context of the restoration of three churches by Francis.⁸

An interesting non-Franciscan Source that speaks about the Order of Penitents is the *Legenda Monacensis* (c. 1275) by an anonymous monk of a German monastery. Regarding the Penitents the author writes:

“The third [Order] is called that of Penitents which comprises both sexes, and is known to have been very fittingly set up both for the married and single, for clerics and lay people, who do not yet presume to renounce their property. Under the symbol of these three Orders, according to the will of God, he repaired the three churches.”⁹

Another interesting reference to the *Ordo Pœnitentium* comes from Bernard of Besse, *Liber de Laudibus Beati Francisci* (1277-1283):

“The Third Order is of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, shared by clerics, laity, virgins, widows, and married couples. Their purpose is to live uprightly in their own homes, to devote their attention to works of piety, and to flee the world’s allurements. Therefore, you might see among them nobles, and even knights, and other people great in the world’s estimation, dressed in proper cloaks of black fur, humble in both their clothing and mounts, so modestly associating with the indigent, that you would not doubt they are truly God-fearing. From the beginning a

brother was assigned to them as minister, but now, in each region, they are released to their ministers, but who, as confreres begotten by the same father, are still encouraged by the brothers with counsel and assistance.

“In composing the rules or forms of living for their Order, Lord Pope Gregory of holy memory, at the time in a lesser capacity, united with blessed Francis through an intimate closeness, devoutly supplied what the holy man lacked in knowledgeable judgment.”¹⁰

This last description of the Order of Penitents is the most detailed for a simple reason. Bernard of Besse was writing at a moment when the Franciscan Penitents were organising themselves as an Order to be approved by Pope Nicholas IV, the first Franciscan Pope, with the Rule *Supra montem* of 18 August 1289. Indeed, it was at this point that one can speak of a Franciscan family of Penitents and the Pope declared that it was Saint Francis himself who was its founder. Historically we know that things developed very gradually. We shall now return to the very beginnings of the penitential movement alongside the friars Minor, by examining the text of the *Memoriale Propositi* given to the Penitents in 1221 by Cardinal Ugo of Ostia.

The *Memoriale Propositi* of 1221

The *Memoriale Propositi* is considered as the first rule given to the Penitents who were in a certain way related to the emerging mendicant Orders of the friars Preachers and friars Minor. The fact that from 1289 the Franciscan Penitents had a Rule of their own, the *Supra Montem*, relegated the *Memoriale* nearly to oblivion. In fact only four manuscripts exist of this document. The manuscripts are: (1) the Florence codex (1221); (2) the Capistrano

⁷ AC 74 (FAED II, 177).

⁸ LMj II,8 (FAED II, 541). The three churches that Francis repaired at the beginning of his conversion to the Gospel way of life were San Damiano, San Pietro della Spina, and the Portiuncula.

⁹ *Legenda Monacensis* 5 (FAED III, 845).

¹⁰ BERNARD OF BESSE, *Liber de Laudibus B. Francisci*, VII, 144-147 (FAED III, 64-65).

codex (1228); (3) the “Regiomontano” codex (1350); (4) the Aquila codex. Many modern translations of the *Memoriale* follow the Florence codex.

One of the earliest modern translations of the *Memoriale* is that given in the *English Omnibus of Sources*.¹¹ The text was certainly composed by the expert pen of Cardinal Ugo di Ostia, and it was probably intended as a legislation for all penitential movements linked to the mendicant Orders, even though its popularity remained strong particularly within the Franciscan family.

The fact that Francis “founded” an Order of Penitents has been defended by various scholars, particularly by Kajetan Esser, who considered the first version of the *Epistola ad Fideles* as a kind of rule for penitents and who gave it the subtitle *Exhortatio ad fratres et sorores de Pœnitentia*.¹²

The link between Francis and the Order of Penitents is also underlined by a later source, namely the *Chronicle of the XXIV Ministers General*: “In the year of the Lord 1221 blessed Francis instituted the Third Order, which is known by the name of Order of Penitents, in which those who are joined in matrimony begin to do acts of penance and bodily chastisement. The first among them was Saint Lucius.”¹³

The Florence codex is also known by the name of Venice rule because it was originally catalogued in a Dominican library in Venice. The document of 1221 is no longer in existence, and the present codex comes from 1228, when the

definitive text of the *Memoriale* seems to have been established.

The *Memoriale Propositi* can be regarded as the first Rule for Penitents because it contains juridical norms regulating the life of the same members of the *Ordo Pœnitentium*. The Volterra codex 25,¹⁴ which contains the first version of the *Epistola ad fideles*, proposed by Esser as the primitive way of life of the Penitents, can be considered as the forerunner of the *Memoriale*, just as the primitive *Forma vitæ* presented by Francis to Pope Innocent III in 1209 was the forerunner of the *Regula non bullata* of 1221.

The authorship of the *Memoriale* betrays the expert work of a jurist, most probably Cardinal Ugo of Ostia. According to Stewart, “the authorship remains uncertain; the only certain fact is that the *Memoriale Propositi* became firmly established as a Rule for the Penitents during the early years of the pontificate of Gregory IX.”¹⁵

Indeed, Pope Gregory often intervened in favour of the members of the *Ordo Pœnitentium*, as he did in 1227 when he issued the Bulla *Detestandi*, by which he exempted penitents from the obligation of military service.

Historically speaking, we can affirm that the years 1221-1228 saw a marked development in ecclesiastical legislation in favour of the *Ordo Pœnitentium*, particularly through the interventions of Cardinal Ugo, later on Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241). In the case of the friars Minor Ugo, who was their cardinal protector, intervened not only in the juridical

¹¹ The Rule of the Third Order (1221), in *St. Francis of Assisi. Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*. Edited by Marion A. HABIG, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1983, 165-173.

¹² K. ESSER, *Die Opuscula des heiligen Franziskus von Assisi*. Neue textkritischen Edition, Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventuræ ad Claras Aquas, Grottaferrata (Romæ) 1976, 176-178.

¹³ ARNALD OF SARRANT, *Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis fratrum Minorum*, 27, in *Analecta Franciscana* III, 27. English translation by

N. MUSCAT, *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals of the Order of friars Minor*, TAU Franciscan Communications, Malta 2010, 38. The reference to “Saint Lucius” is that to Blessed Lucchesio of Poggibonsi (†1242), who is traditionally considered to be the first Franciscan “Tertiary” in the Order of Penitents.

¹⁴ R. PAZZELLI, *The title of the “Recensio Prior” of the Letter to the Faithful: Clarifications concerning Codex 225 of Volterra (cod. Vo)*, in *Analecta TOR* 19 (1987) 233-248.

¹⁵ R.M. STEWART, “*De illis qui faciunt pœnitentiam*”, 184.

framework of the Order with the *Regula bullata* of 1223, and in that of the Poor Ladies with the legislation on the founding of monasteries of *mulieres religiosæ* in Tuscany and the Valley of Spoleto, but also in offering a juridical framework to the Order of Penitents and in leading the Franciscan branch to adopt an official Rule which was aimed at Penitents in general, and in particular at those belonging to the mendicant Orders, and thus placing at the sidelines the primitive *forma vitæ* or *Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*.

The contents of the *Memoriale*

The style of the *Memoriale Propositi* is rather juridical, and betrays the pen of an expert jurist such as Cardinal Ugo of Ostia. It is addressed to “the Brothers and Sisters of Penance living in their own homes.”¹⁶

As we have already stated, the *Memoriale* is not addressed to any particular group of Penitents belonging to a mendicant Order. This fluid situation remained evident for many decades during the 13th century, when the *Ordo Pœnitentium* only gradually became incorporated within the framework and responsibility of the two great mendicant families of the Preachers and Minors. In the case of the Franciscan Order, it is only in 1289 that one can speak of a fully autonomous family of Penitents who professed a way of life aimed precisely at the Franciscan groups, with the *Supra montem* of Nicholas IV.

The first chapter of the *Memoriale* is dedicated to practical norms regarding the dress code of the penitents and their austere way of life. Penitents were to be recognised by their poor clothing material and by the fact that they were to avoid public venues of entertainment.

Chapters two and three deal with the rules for abstinence and fasting. These rules are not very different from the obligations imposed upon Christians during the 13th century regarding penance. Indeed, the style of these norms resembles, in a certain way, the same practice as laid down in the *Regula bullata* of the friars Minor and in the *Rule of St. Clare*, particularly the evangelical permission “to eat everything served to them” when they are staying in the houses of religious or working outside their own homes. The penitential seasons for the penitents are the same ones prescribed for the friars Minor and Poor Ladies, namely Lent and the period from the feast of Saint Martin (11 November) until Christmas.

The obligation to recite the canonical hours is the theme of chapter four. Again, we find a similar practice to that of the friars, with the permission to pray the office of the *Our Fathers* in the case of illiterate penitents who could not read the psalms. The *Memoriale* also includes the obligation to attend Matins during the penitential seasons.

The sacramental practice of the penitents is the theme of chapter five. As is to be expected, it is a direct result of the reform brought about in sacramental practice by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. The chapter obliges the penitents to receive the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist on the three great feasts of the liturgical calendar, namely Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Within the framework of the same chapter we find a reference to the prohibition to carry arms and to pronounce formal oaths.

Chapter six speaks about the obligation to attend Mass as a fraternity of penitents once a month, and also to go to the monthly meeting of the fraternity. These meetings have the aim of expressing the duty of the penitents to pray together in a church and according to the liturgical form of the

¹⁶ All English texts of the *Memoriale* are quoted from *St. Francis of Assisi. Omnibus of Sources*, 168-175.

Church, and to take care of their charitable duties towards their brethren, by contributing to the common fund of the fraternity and also by calling a religious to instruct them in matters of faith and to preach the Word of God to them.

Chapter seven touches upon some fundamental themes regarding the duties of the penitents, namely those of visiting the sick brethren, accompanying the death for burial, the obligation to make a last will, to be at peace with all before entering the fraternity, being aware not to admit heretics in the fraternity, and the permission that women needed from their husbands in order to join the Order of Penitents. Although many of these provisions are a faithful picture of the social way of life of the Middle Ages, nevertheless they do contain the nucleus of what it takes to live a penitential way of life, particularly regarding the commandment of love towards the brethren who are weak and sick. Along many centuries of existence the *Ordo Pœnitentium* offered refuge for all those who could not afford proper medical care or a decent burial, and the choice of non-violence and the rejection of military service brought about a new social order in which a section of the population was not involved in the bitter feuds among communes in Italy and among families or towns, or even between the parties of the Guelphs and Ghibellines that mark the history of much of the 13th and 14th centuries.

The last chapter of the *Memoriale* is dedicated to the theme of fraternal correction, dispensation and the officers of the fraternity. Of particular relevance is the figure of the Visitor, who is called to correct the faults of the brethren and to see to it that no heretical tendencies creep into the fraternity. At this stage the figure of the Visitor was not necessarily linked with the mendicant Order to which the penitents, in

a certain way, belonged. Visitors could be randomly chosen from different religious families. Although Meersseman's *Dossier de l'Ordre de la Penitence* has been corrected in many points, we know from it that a certain fra Caro, who was Visitor to the Florentine penitents, had jurisdiction over both the Franciscan and Dominican branches of the Order of Penitents in that city.¹⁷ This goes to show that the development of the *Ordo Pœnitentium* into distinct fraternities belonging especially to the two great mendicant Orders of the Minors and Preachers took some time to develop.

Celebrating the 800 years since the first draft of the *Memoriale*, which is only available in the version of 1228, the Secular Franciscan Order has a golden opportunity to go back to its roots as envisaged by Francis of Assisi, not necessarily as a movement explicitly founded by him, but as a way to propose the life of penance among laity. The subsequent care of the Penitents by the Franciscan Order, with its ups and downs, led to its definitive link with the Franciscan movement in the development of the Third Order of Penitents, particularly through the efforts of Pope Nicholas IV who offered the Penitents their first true Rule as Franciscan Penitents, namely the *Supra montem*.

“The view of Francis as founder, as the charismatic or spiritual inspiration of the Order rather than its juridical legislator, does not diminish the achievement of Francis [...] Francis thus rightly remains the ‘founder’ of this Order of Penance, the Secular Franciscan Order, since he remains the inspiration to a life of penance, to a response to God’s love lived as a radical *metanoia*.”¹⁸

¹⁷ G. CASAGRANDE, *Il movimento penitenziale francescano nel dibattito storiografico degli ultimi 25 anni*, in *Santi e santità nel movimento penitenziale francescano dal Duecento al*

Cinquecento, a cura di L. TEMPERINI, Roma 1998, 351-389.

¹⁸ STEWART, *De illis qui faciunt pœnitentiam*, 216.

THE VIRTUOUS LIFE LIVED IN FRATERNITY

Anthony M. Carrozzo OFM

Among Francis's relationship with his brothers, his relationship with Brother Leo was unique. Obviously, Francis trusted Leo. He took Leo with him to those places of contemplation, certainly to pray the Office with him, but even more to have him there if and when necessary. Francis also knew that Leo needed him. We do not know what Leo's issues were but we know that he confided in Francis. Francis listened to him, prayed with him, advised him, always treating him tenderly. Recall the letter that Francis wrote to Leo "as a mother would," adding: "And if you want to come to me for the sake of your soul for some consolation, Leo, come." What a caring letter. This was not enough for Leo, however. He feared he would need Francis when he was traveling, so to console him during those times, Francis composed a prayer for Leo to pray in order to calm his spirit. We can only imagine how pleased Leo was to receive this parchment. He must have rushed off to pray it only to be disappointed. The prayer was addressed to God. It has come to be known as *The Praises of God*. Leo's problems, it seems, were not with God but with himself. But he obeyed and prayed the prayer given him. Gradually he came to understand that if God is Good, and love and wisdom and endurance and rest, so too must he be because the presence of God lives in him. Francis proved to be the perfect psychologist moving the center of Leo's thinking from himself to God. Leo discovered the virtues to live by in his daily life by internalizing this prayer.

These were not Francis's final words on the virtues. We also have his *Salutation of the Virtues* which has become foundational for our understanding of a Franciscan approach to virtue. Virtues are not vague

theories. They are personal and relational. First there is Queen Wisdom and her sister Simplicity. How insightful. The wise are not complicated like some Franciscans can easily become because wisdom is simple. We must remember this when we hear the erudite among us babbling, thinking they are passing on wisdom. Wisdom is simple.

Lady Poverty is united to her sister Humility. Proud beggars are a contradiction in terms. Some of us are proud of our poverty. Humility is not in vogue today but Francis points out that it is an essential aspect of our poor lifestyle. Bonaventure goes so far as to say it is the foundational Franciscan virtue.

Lady Charity resides with her sister Obedience. Sometimes we think of love and obedience as opposite. Not so. If we truly love someone it is easy to listen to them and follow their desires over our own out of love.

Francis explains each one of these as he further salutes the virtues.

There is an often misunderstood thought then: "There is surely no one in the whole world who can possess any one of You without dying first." Francis is not speaking of Sister Death but rather of the death of the false self in order to resurrect the true self. There is much written today about the true self from the psychological perspective or even a purely secular point of view. However, Francis is presenting this movement from the false self to the true self from the perspective of living a virtuous life. A virtuous life is a life alive with the presence of God.

This is further delineated by Francis in his *Letter to the Entire Order*. In this letter Francis writes to his brothers in a growing fraternity. He addresses his brothers as "a

worthless and weak brother” nearing death. Francis did not see himself as worthless because of a poor self-image. Rather he viewed himself as worthless apart from God. He was well aware of his worth as an adopted son of God. The prayer he wrote for Leo was his own prayer: his worth was tied in with the very identity of God. Addressing his priest brothers particularly but not exclusively, he remarks: “See your dignity and be holy because He is holy.” And so, unable to contain himself Francis breaks into prayer “Oh sublime humility, oh humble sublimity, the Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbled Himself that, for our salvation, he hides himself under ordinary pieces of bread. Brothers, look at the humility of God and pour out your hearts before Him. Humble yourselves that you may be exalted by him.” Striving after a virtuous life is tied into our relationship with the identity of God. So he concludes: “Inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footsteps of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ and by your grace alone, may we make our way to You Who lives and rules in perfect Trinity and simple unity.”

Today we rarely speak of a Franciscan virtuous life and frequently speak of fraternity. Yet the two are intrinsically united.

In many Franciscan Provinces, including my own, when we speak of fraternity, we speak of numbers. So, where there were two friars living and ministering together, there are now five and six, but numbers do not create fraternities. Virtues do.

Recall that wonderful story of the friars who asked Francis to identify the perfect friar. With breathes held, the brothers must have listened as Francis spoke, hoping it would be himself who is named. But Francis was not just avoiding an answer. He was describing what a fraternity must look like. The perfect friar, he said, possesses the poverty of Bernard, the simplicity and purity

of Leo, the courage of Angelo, the good sense of Masseo, the prayerful mind of Giles, the constancy in prayer of Rufino, the patience of Juniper, the courage of John, the charity of Roger, and the caution of Lucidus, meaning no one friar possesses all the virtues but when gathered together in fraternity, one will experience all the virtues. Imagine if we lived in fraternities where instead of judging one another, we became aware of the virtues of those with whom we live. Then we would grasp Francis’s words in the *Salutation of the Virtues*: “whoever possesses one and does not offend the others, possesses all,” in a fraternal life lived well.

This may seem to be an overwhelming task but it is only the beginning because it must spill out into the world in which we live. There is no arguing that our world is in trouble. It is filled with violence, disease often caused by our own carelessness, and a hatred of those who think differently than we do. Francis is clear about our mission. He tells us “We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way.” A hefty task that can only be accomplished if we show by example and preaching that it is a virtuous life lived by seeing one another as brothers and sisters that is the way out of this negativity. Francis offered the medieval world a new way of relating less by power and hierarchy, more by humility and solidarity. Can we meet the same challenge in our own time?

Such a challenge culminates in *The Canticle of Creation*, where Francis sees the beauty of God’s creation in his brothers and sisters in the created world. So, our ministry extends even to concern for creation. Notice it is creation we are speaking of, not nature. Some of us think “nature” and so excuse ourselves from this responsibility, but it is God’s creation that we are destroying. A sense of brotherhood and sisterhood would keep us on the right track.

Thinking of a virtuous life lived in fraternity is the challenge of our times. It affects every aspect of Franciscan life and mission. We may be few but the world needs us.

SAINT BONAVENTURE'S THEOLOGY OF HISTORY

Kevin Tortorelli OFM

Bonaventure expresses his theology of history chiefly in the *Collations on the Hexaëmeron*.¹ It is not easy reading, but it does make an important contribution to the tradition of reflection on the category history. I have structured the following around three headings.²

Brief introduction to Bonaventure's Theology of History

The *Hexaëmeron* parallels the six days of creation with the six ages of the world.³ In particular the mystical body of Christ has a life that extends over the six ages of history from Adam to the end of time. The seventh age, the repose of the souls sleeping in Christ, runs concurrently with the sixth age. The eighth age signals eternity. Uniquely, Bonaventure compares the bond between the Old Testament and the New as a unity based on many varied numerical patterns, often minute and richly detailed, that are common to each Testament. Perhaps the best example lies in the parallel between the 6 days of creation and the 6 ages of salvation history. The bond between the Testaments was thus an intimate correlation between them, a clear mirroring of one in the other:

“... the New Testament is compared to the Old, as a tree to a tree, a letter to a letter, as a seed to a seed... So too a Testament from Testament.”⁴

This methodology of a one-to-one correspondence between the History of Israel and the History of the Church represents a shift away from an earlier view that saw the relationship as letter-to-spirit or figure-to-truth. It is in fact a shift in the direction of the theology of history in Joachim of Fiore.

This historical correlation between the testaments embraces how the ages succeed each other and how they correspond to each other. It is a welcome alternative to letter-to-spirit understandings of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New. Letter-to-spirit can lose the historical connection between the testaments. This intimate connection is represented for Bonaventure in the two cherubim on either side of the ark of the covenant. If the historical connection is lost and the New Testament is seen as fulfilling and surpassing the Old Testament, then the Old Testament no longer has value. The appeal to allegory in particular always offers an ahistorical conclusion in the form of timeless truths. By contrast, Bonaventure's historical correspondence respects both

¹ See Jay M. HAMMOND, *Collations on the Hexaëmeron*, St. Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute Publications, NY 2018. I have found a helpful *vademecum* in Douglas DALES, *Truth and Reality. The Wisdom of St. Bonaventure*, Cambridge 2021. The classic text in the discussion remains Joseph RATZINGER, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, Trans. Zachary HAYES, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago 1971.

² Bernard McGINN, *The Significance of Bonaventure's Theology of History*, in *Journal of Religion* 58 Supplement (1978), S64-S81.

³ The tradition of the four kingdoms or empires is another structure of a theology of history. After the fourth kingdom God will raise up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Cfr. Dn 2:39-44; Dn 7:17-27; Dn 8: esp. 19-26.

⁴ *Hex* 15,22, and see the excellent discussion of the 15th and 16th Collations in DALES, *Truth and Reality*, 151-159.

Testaments. Each testament enriches the other and together exhibit their explanatory power.

Bonaventure believed he lived in the sixth age of the Church, an age of unique and intense crisis, a prelude to the seventh age with its vision of peace, the *parousia*, the New Jerusalem descending from heaven as God's final dwelling among us (Rev 21:10). But the sixth age of tribulation is embroiled in a mortal struggle between good and evil. In that sixth age, Bonaventure recognized two evils. The first had to do with the tensions between Popes and Emperor as can be seen, for example, in the Gregorian Reform (1073-1085), or the sacking of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade (1204) or, later, the Avignon Papacy (1309-1376). This evil expressed itself in the resistance to reform of the Church on the part of clergy and religious, a resistance to which Dante gave vivid expression (*Purgatorio*, Canto 32).⁵ As General Minister of the Order, Bonaventure would know this resistance first hand. A second evil attached to the wrongful use of philosophy and especially Aristotle in the schools, the mixing of philosophical water with the wine of Revelation.⁶

But amid these evils there are signs of the seventh age of peace in the vision of the angel "ascending from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called out: 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads'" (Rev 7:2-3).

Bonaventure believed this angel had already come in the person of St. Francis who practiced the form of contemplation that characterizes the Seraphic Order. Francis belonged to this Seraphic Order of the seventh age, but who else does? The Stigmata event indicates that the (future)

Seraphic Order corresponds to Francis but would only arrive after many tribulations:

"Saint Francis then appears as the initiator of a coming order of contemplatives that will flourish in the final age of the Church, but this coming Order is to be distinguished from the actual historical Franciscan Order of which Bonaventure was the (General) Minister."⁷

Bonaventure, Augustine and Joachim of Fiore

In his *Confessions*, Augustine was more interested in time as an interior dimension of our consciousness - *In te, anime meus, tempora mea metior*.⁸ Time is measured by the soul as past, present and future even though time is not present in the soul. The soul perceives time as memory, hope and faith. With this meditation Augustine points the way to the relationship between time and history, viz., time that holds *meaning and is fulfilled* is called history. "When the fullness of time came, God sent forth his Son" (Gal 4:4) into history. Augustine understood this fullness of time to be the onset of the end of time. At the end of history, of time as meaningful, stands Christ. There is a subtle difference in that Bonaventure speaks of Christ standing in the middle of time rather than at the end of time and in general Bonaventure showed more interest in the unfolding of the historical process in Christ as this is worked out in Scripture.⁹

Earlier we saw that Bonaventure's use of historical correspondence was influenced by Joachim of Fiore. They both shared a hope that the future would be one of contemplation, a time when the full understanding of Scripture would usher in an age of authentic and widespread prayer.

⁵ K. TORTORELLI, *The Church in the tradition of the «casa meretrix»*, in *The Pastoral Review*, 8,2 (March/April 2012), 64-66.

⁶ See DALES, *Truth and Reality. The Use and Abuse of Aristotle*, 73-86.

⁷ MCGINN, S71; and see *Hex* 22.22-23

⁸ S. AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, Liber XI, in *Loeb Classical Library*, Vol. II, Books 9-13, Harvard University Press, 2021, 207ss.

⁹ I have concentrated on Book XI of the *Confessions*. For a wider view of the place of Augustine in the *Hexameron* see DALES, *Truth and Reality*, 32-40.

That new age would also embrace a new religious Order of contemplatives. But for Joachim the Holy Spirit is revealed only on the basis of this historical comparison between the Testaments. As a consequence, Christ is only a type of the Spirit. The water of Christ must be changed into the wine of the Spirit. Joachim laid open a fraught choice in favor of a Church of the Spirit to replace the Church of Christ. Bonaventure strongly repudiated the specifics of Joachim's prophecy that entailed the abolition of the Gospel in the coming Third Age of the Holy Spirit. This was a view however that a fellow Franciscan, Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, shared with Joachim.¹⁰

Bonaventure, for whom Christ always remains the center of history and the source of all knowledge, recoiled at Joachim's conclusion that Christ's cross and resurrection had no lasting role in salvation history.

What does Bonaventure's theology of history bequeath us?

Bonaventure emphasizes the Incarnation, the fullness of time, as central to Scripture and History and uniting them. His appreciation of Scripture lays emphasis more on context than on ahistorical proof texts.¹¹ His theology of history challenges the Scholastic turn to philosophy as the privileged source of questions and of the ordering of those questions. Bonaventure is concerned with the theological meaning of the historical process. History as a tutor points a moral lesson. In the memorable words of Edward Gibbon, history does not plead the cause of tyrants nor justify the

maxims of persecution.¹² Bonaventure's understanding of history will of course differ markedly from our own. Doing history tells us what is going forward in a particular period in the past.¹³ Bonaventure, perhaps unconsciously, was concerned about what was going forward in the past in order to understand the six ages of history and to anticipate the dawn of the final age - "Then comes the end" (1Cor 15:24).

Bonaventure and the modern historian draw near each other in the awareness that history is a form of self-knowledge. History asks me 'who am I?' I discover transcendence in history and bemoan decline and bias in history. Bonaventure encourages us to sift the signs of the times and bring to it a wide historical framework. Hope is nourished by the prospect of the seventh age with its blessing of peace and a contemplative spirit. And that hope does not deceive or disappoint (cfr. Rom 5:5).

Human existence is uniquely historical because we ask questions, search for meaning and thus head toward transcendence within history. God and human existence are the real subjects of history. On his own initiative God has entered time and this truth gives human life its vocation of self-determination and reveals human freedom that creates and transforms both the world and ourselves and thus fulfills history.

With his emphasis on the Incarnation, Bonaventure recognizes that providence¹⁴ expresses itself in history. It treats with human freedom as a provident God exercises His power over and in all things and leads them to their appointed End. A provident God respects human freedom.

¹⁰ See Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, *Theologic II: Truth of God*, Translation by A. WALKER, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2004, 205-209. Balthasar had a longstanding interest in the theology of history. See his *A Theology of History*, Sheed and Ward, New York 1963; and DALES, *Truth and Reality*, Joachim of Fiore, 65-72.

¹¹ On the place of context in Bonaventure, see eg., *Hex* 19,8, and DALES, *Truth and Reality*, 171.

¹² Edward GIBBON, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London 1997, XVI, Part II.

¹³ See Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, Herder & Herder, New York 1972, 175-234.

¹⁴ I should note that Bonaventure does not use the word Providence in the *Hex*, but I believe it functions there in terms of hope and optimism and in the triumph of justice and love.

Indeed, He pleads with it.¹⁵ The ultimate expression of God's providence lies in a love so great that God gave us His only begotten Son (Jn 3:16). Through His Son, God leads the creation into His Kingdom, into the seventh and final age.

In addition to freedom, Providence also brings to history a very strong notion of human activity and its purpose in the designs of providence - "My Father is working still and I am working" (Jn 5:17), an activity that sets the stage for our best and most intense collaboration: "Who believes in me will also do the works I do; and greater works than these" (Jn 14:13).

History is messy and presses sin close to its bosom. Bonaventure knew this in terms of the two kinds of evil he saw in his day, the sixth age. The contest between Pope and Emperor was inedifying. The ignorance and mediocrity (and worse) of the clergy and religious life were repugnant and invidious. The prospect of the seventh age, however, gave reformers in the sixth age a light to see these evils and courage to undertake to heal and reform them. There is an optimism on offer that sets aside despair. In short, the way forward is a return to Christ at the center of time, in the midst of all ages.

Conclusion

We do theology and history differently from Bonaventure. Still he rewards a careful reading. His theology of history is

entirely drawn from the Scripture of the Old and New Testaments which he dearly loved. Its key lies in the tradition of the seven ages of the world. So this theology of history locates hope now as a response to the vision of peace and contemplation that characterizes the seventh age. This hope is given concrete and personal expression in St. Francis who, though living in the sixth age, is an authentic man of the seventh age. Bonaventure distinguishes history as time achieving meaning from time that ticks away.¹⁶ Christ remains the center of history round whom everything turns. The Incarnate Christ 'opens' history to God and in that opening we 'appear' as free. History teaches moral lessons as it discloses evil¹⁷ and salutes the good. It enjoins a dynamism toward the goal of the seventh age by chronicling changes in human consciousness. So, history reconstructs the past in terms of its departures from previous ways of thinking and acting. In this activity history welcomes me to ask 'who am I in Christ?'

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¹⁵ E. LAMPERT, *The Apocalypse of History: Problems of Providence and Human Destiny*, Faber & Faber Ltd., London 1968, 97-116.

¹⁶ There is something to be said for ticking time as the time kept by clocks. See David ROONEY, *About Time: A History of Civilization in Twelve Clocks*, Norton, New York 2021.

¹⁷ In a premodern world, history was a part of moral philosophy. Things stand differently today. On

history as value-free see the helpful discussion in LONERGAN, *Method*, 224-233. And see BALTHASAR's reservations about the value of dividing history into seven ages in *Theodrama Theological Dramatic Theory IV: The Action*, Graham Harrison (transl.), Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1994, 428.

DANTE, FRANCIS AND THE FRIARS MINOR

49th Congress of the International Society of Franciscan Society
(Assisi, 14-16 October 2021)

The celebration of the 700 years of the death of Dante Alighieri (1321-2021) was the occasion for the theme chosen by the International Society of Franciscan Studies during this year's Congress held in Palazzo Bernabei in Assisi, with the theme "Dante, Francis and the Friars Minor." For the second year running, the proceedings could be followed live through on-line streaming, since the physical presence to the Congress was limited due to Covid-19 restrictions on social gatherings.

The full programme of talks included the following topics and speakers: (1) Manuscripts and texts at Santa Croce in the time of Dante (Anna Pegoretti, Università Tre, Rome); (2) Bonaventure of Bagnoregio in front of the *Commedia* (Teodoro Forcellini, Università degli Studi of the Republic of San Marino); (3) Dante, Peter John Olivi and minoritic spiritualism (Paolo Vian, Vatican Apostolic Library); (4) Saint Francis and Saint Dominic in the *Canti del Sole (Paradiso XI-XII)* (Giuseppe Ledda, University of Bologna); (5) Before Dante: "Iacomin da Verona de l'Orden de minori" (Franco Suitner, Università Roma Tre); (6) Guglielmo Centueri da Cremona and the minoritic reception of the *Monarchia* of Dante (Riccardo Saccenti, University of Bergamo); (7) Franciscan and minoritic themes in the *Commedia*: poverty, landscape, papacy (Nicholas Havelly, University of York); (8) Dante and the contemplation of Clare (Silvia Chessa, University of Perugia); (9) The minorite Giovanni da Serravalle in the context of the commentaries on the *Commedia* (Andrea Mazzucchi, Università Federico II,

Naples); (10) The *Commedia* in the preaching of the friars Minor (XIV-XV) (Pietro del Corno, University of Bologna); (11) The codification of the image of Dante in the case of the cycle of San Francesco in Montefalco (Alessio Monciatti, Università del Molise); (12) Dante and the moral treatises of the friars Minor (Nicolò Maldina, University of Bologna).

Short biography of Dante Alighieri

Dante Alighieri was born in Florence in May/June 1263. His name is the abbreviated form of Durante. He came from a family of wealthy business people, but which did not have noble ancestors. As a young man Dante studied grammar and philosophy at the Franciscan *conventus* and *studium* of Santa Croce in Florence. Subsequently he studied rhetoric in Bologna around 1287.

When Dante was 18 years old he composed his first poem, a sonnet dedicated to the figure of Beatrice, who is considered to have existed historically, but whose exact identification remains unknown. In 1292-93 Dante composed the *Vita nuova* in which Beatrice guides Dante to God and to all gentle souls.

Inspired by Guido Guinizelli (c.1225 - c.1276), a poet and father of the "Dolce stil nuovo", Dante founded a new type of poetry. Being a philosopher he also made ample use of philosophy in his poetry.

In 1285c. Dante married Gemma di Manetto Donati. He became father to three siblings, namely Iacopo, Pietro and

Antonia, who later on became a nun in Ravenna and took the name of Beatrice.

Dante also took part in the political events of Florence at the end of the 13th century. In 1301 he was sent as ambassador to Pope Boniface VIII, but because of the civil strife in Florence he was condemned to exile on 10 March 1302.

In 1304-07 Dante composed the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Convivio*. Around this time he might already have nurtured the idea of composing the *Commedia*. Living in exile in the Casentino region of Tuscany, but also in other places, Dante continued his literary compositions, particularly the *Monarchia*, before 1314.

In 1318 Dante went to Ravenna where he lectured in the chair of poetry and rhetoric. Dante died on 13/14 September 1321 and was buried in the church of San Pier Maggiore, which later on became known as the church of San Francesco. He was buried in this Franciscan church, which is officiated by the Conventual Friars Minor. His tomb was embellished in 1483 and restored to its present state in 1936.

The *Commedia* and the *Canto XI del Paradiso*

The *Commedia* or *Divine Comedy* is composed of triple verses with eleven syllables each. It is divided into 3 sections, the *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. Each section contains 33 canticles. Thus, the whole work, with the canticle that serves as a *præmium*, is made up of 100 canticles. The numbers 3 and 10 are considered special sacred numbers by Dante, since 3 is the symbol of the Trinity and 10 of perfection.

The *Commedia* contains elements of profound allegorical significance. It describes a journey by Dante accomplished

between 8 and 14 April 1300 in the three kingdoms of the other world, namely Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. Dante was inspired by Virgil's *Æneid*. After finding himself lost in a forest, Dante is first accompanied by Virgil to visit Hell and Purgatory, and then by Beatrice to the visions of the blessed souls and God in Paradise.

The other world is described by Dante in a kind of architectonic structure. The underworld is a kind of infernal vortex or cone departing from the centre of Jerusalem down into the bowels of the earth. From there it prolongs itself to the other hemisphere through Purgatory, until it becomes a mountain leading up into Paradise. At the centre of the rose Dante meets the blessed souls in the *Empireo*.

The *Canti del sole* form part of the fourth level of the *Paradiso*, which begins in the *Canto X*. Immediately after this we find two *Canti*, one dedicated to Saint Francis (*Canto XI*) and one to Saint Dominic (*Canto XII*) recited respectively by Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure. The sharing of the praises between the two doctors, one Dominican the other Franciscan, is an expression of the close contact between the two mendicant Orders, which Dante had experienced in Florence, since the preaching on the feast of Saint Francis in Santa Croce was offered to the Dominicans whereas that of Saint Dominic in Santa Maria Novella to the Franciscans.

Here we shall not discuss the contents of the *Canto XI*, which are also translated into English.¹ However, we mention Dante's presentation of Francis as a Seraph and of Dominic as a Cherub, two images which were to become emblems of the two Orders.²

We shall now present some summary reflections that were made by speakers during the Congress in their presentations on Dante's *Commedia*.

¹ DANTE ALIGHIERI, *Canto XI: Paradiso* (FAED III, 880-886).

² DANTE, *Canto XI* (FAED III, 883): One prince was all seraphic in his ardor; / the other, for his

wisdom, had possessed / the splendor of cherubic light on earth.

The original reads: *L'un fu tutto serafico in ardore; / l'altro per sapienza in terra fue / di cherubica luce uno splendore* (Fonti Francescane, 2016).

Dante, Francis and the friars Minor

Dante cultivated a profound friendship with the Franciscans, especially in Florence and Ravenna. Ever since he was an adolescent Dante knew the Franciscans in Florence. In the *studium* of Santa Croce Dante came to know Peter John Olivi, and maybe also listened to sermons by Ubertino da Casale. He was acquainted with the library of the famous conventual establishment. Some scholars came out with the conjecture that Dante himself might have entered the novitiate in the Order of friars Minor, but that he soon returned to the world, although he certainly remained in contact with the Franciscans as a member of the Order of Penitents.

The library of Santa Croce during the time of Dante was home to many precious illuminated manuscripts. The library has 632 codexes which are catalogued, and which Dante could have been familiar with. The 1311 *declaratio* by Ubertino da Casale shows that Santa Croce was an important Franciscan house of studies.

Among the sources of the *Commedia* which Dante consulted we find the *Sacrum Commercium* and also other writings by Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, including the *Lgeenda Maior*, the *Itinerarium* and the *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*. The *Canto XI* is certainly a defence of the Franciscan politics of poverty which was so evident during Dante's life, particularly in the tensions between the Spirituals and the *Communitas* of the Order, and later on between the Spirituals *de familia* and Pope John XXII. Other themes such as that of the *vir hierarchicus*, the *excessus mentis*, and the angel bearing the sixth seal, which are

so important in Bonaventure's writings, are also evident in the *Canto XI*.

Dante's *Canto XI* also shows some influence by Ubertino's *Arbor Vitæ*, Book V, and is certainly a result of Dante's closeness to Franciscan spiritualism.³ Francis becomes the prophet of the age of the Spirit and of conversion, as presented by Joachim of Fiore and as seen in the short-lived papacy of Celestine V. One can underline the resemblance between Joachim, the Spirituals and Dante. Indeed, Joachim could be seen as a prophet, Francis as a missionary, Dante as a cantor. The link between the three was provided by Peter John Olivi's apocalyptic vision.

Raoul Manselli has impressed by some expressions of Dante. He was convinced that the poet was in line with the idea of the *ecclesia spiritualis*, but was rather sceptical about a possible direct relationship between Joachim's vision and Dante, although he defended a common ground between Dante and Franciscan spiritualism.

The unfolding of ecclesiastical history also enters into the picture of Dante's vision of Saint Francis and the Franciscans.⁴ It is certainly an apocalyptic vision which blends perfectly with the style of the *Commedia* and with the historical unfolding that provides the background for its composition.⁵

One last note about the relationship between the *Canto XI* on Francis and the *Canto XII* on Dominic. Bonaventure presents Dominic inflamed with love, while Thomas presents Francis as a prophetic preacher. The roles are inverted, but go to show the great influence of the two mendicant Orders upon Dante's view of the *serafico in ardore* and the *cherubica luce uno splendore*.

³ Davide BOLOGNESI, *Dante and the Friars Minor: Aesthetics of the Apocalypse*. Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctore of Philosophy in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University 2012 <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu> [31/10/21]

⁴ Nick HAVELY, *Dante and the Franciscans. Poverty and the Papacy in the 'Commedia'*, Cambridge University Press 2004.

⁵ Marjorie REEVES, *Dante and the Prophetic View of History*, and *The Third Age: Dante's Debt to Gioacchino da Fiore*, in REEVES, *The Prophetic Sense of History in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, Aldershot: Ashgate 1999.

THE CHRONICLE OF NICHOLAS GLASSBERGER

Noel Muscat OFM

This is a continuation of a partial translation of texts taken from the Chronicle of Nicholas Glassberger, with some explanatory notes, which can be found in the critical Latin edition: *Chronica Fratris Nicolai Glassberger Ordinis Minorum Observantium, in Analecta Franciscana sive Chronica aliaque varia documenta ad Historiam Fratrum Minorum spectantia*, edita a Patribus Collegii S. Bonaventuræ, Tomus II, Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi) prope Florentiam, ex typographia Collegii S. Bonaventuræ 1887.

Page numbers are indicated in square brackets.

The confirmation of the Rule by Pope Honorius

[30] In the year of the Lord, when the Order had grown far and wide, the lord Hugolino, Cardinal and protector of the Order, wanted that the form of life that had been approved by the lord Innocent the third, would be perpetually strengthened and confirmed by his successor, namely Pope Honorius the third. Blessed Francis, after having beheld a heavenly vision in which he saw many tiny crumbs of bread forming one loaf, having been advised by God, went up to mount Raynerius¹ together with brother Leo of Assisi and brother Bonizio of Bologna. There he was content

¹ Mount Raynerius refers to the hermitage of Fonte Colombo, on the hills outside Rieti, where Francis composed the *Regula bullata* in 1223, with the help of his personal assistant brother Leo and of the expert in canon and civil law, brother Bonizo of Bologna.

to eat only bread and drink only water, while fasting and praying like another Moses, and he diligently asked his collaborators to write down the rule which he received with God's assistance. When he came down from the mountain, he entrusted the rule to brother Elias his vicar for safekeeping. But after a few days had passed [Elias] told him that he had lost it because of a lack of attention. So the holy Man went up once again on the mountain, and with the help of the revelation of the Holy Spirit he composed it anew exactly as he had done the first time. While the Saint was staying on the mountain, he heard many Ministers who came to him telling him that he was writing a rule which they feared would be very strict. They had gathered there with brother Elias, the vicar, and they came to protest that unless [Francis] would write the rule with their counsel, they were not ready to observe it. At that moment the voice of Christ was heard in the air stating that all the friars were bound to observe that rule to the letter, since all that was written down in it came from his own will.²

That same year, on the third day of the calends of December,³ that same rule was confirmed by the lord Pope Honorius III, during the eighth year of his pontificate, and during the fifteenth year since the beginning of the Order, when Francis began to receive brothers. He fervently told the friars and convinced them that there was

² The episode of the writing of the *Regula bullata* and the reaction of Elias and the ministers is taken from the LMj IV,11 (FAED II, 557-558) and the SPMaj 1 (FAED III, 253-254).

³ 29 December 1223.

nothing in the rule that came from his own initiative, but that he had received it through a divine revelation. In order to be more certain of this God himself became his witness, since after two years had elapsed, the stigmata of the Lord Jesus were impressed upon him by the finger of the living God as the Bulla of the Supreme Pontiff [31] Christ, in order to confirm in all ways the rule and as a commendation of its author, as will be stated later on.⁴

In the year of the Lord 1224, during the provincial chapter presided by brother Albert of Pisa on the feast of the Assumption of the blessed Virgin in Würzburg, where the Custodians, Guardians and preachers were gathered, brother John of Pian del Carpine, Custodian of Saxony was sent to Cologne, and brother James of Treviso, who had been Custodian of Alsace, and who was a graceful, humble, modest and pious man, was elected second Custodian of Saxony, and with him were sent some of the senior brothers of the Order both clerics and lay, who did much good among clergy and people and he gave an example of humility during his short life.

The sacred stigmata

In that same year 1224, when hardly a year had elapsed since the confirmation and plenary indulgence of the rule, around the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, while saint Francis was praying on the side of mount La Verna, he saw in a divine revelation Jesus Christ who appeared to him in the figure of a Seraph, and who impressed the most holy stigmata of the passion on his body, as if they were the Bulla of the most high King with which [Francis] was endowed two years before his spirit returned to heaven.

⁴ LMj IV,11 (FAED II, 558-559): To confirm this with greater certainty by God's own testimony, when only a few days had passed, the stigmata of our Lord Jesus were imprinted upon him by the finger of the living God, as the seal of the Supreme

In that same year brother Alberto, Minister of Germany, when he saw the increase [of the brothers] in Saxony, and how from Saxony they had crossed over to Thuringia and to the Rhine, he sent brother Jordan, Guardian of Mainz, with seven brothers, so that they would accept houses in Thuringia and place the brothers in convenient places. Brother Jordan, together with his brothers, left Mainz for Thuringia on the sixth day of the calends of November, and arrived at Erfurt on the day of Saint Martin. Since winter was approaching, and there was no time to build, he accepted the advice of the town people and of some clerics, and the brothers were housed in the building of the leper priests outside the walls, until the citizens would provide for the residence of the friars.

The brothers who were sent with brother Jordan were: brother Hermann of Weissensee, a priest and preacher, the novice brother Henry of Würzburg, a subdeacon [32] and novice, brother Arnold who was a cleric and novice; and among the lay brothers: brother Henry of Cologne, brother Gernotus of Worms, brother Conrad of Swabia. These were followed by brother John of Coridua (?) and brother Henry of Hildesheim.

How Saint Francis resigned from the office of General

When blessed Francis was General, he began to continually be afflicted from illness and other sufferings because of his fragile health. During a certain chapter, as soon as he could, he gave up his office of general, and in his place he instituted brother Peter Cattani in order to govern the Order, and he immediately promised him firm obedience.⁵ When the brothers saw

Pontiff, Christ, for the complete confirmation of the rule.

⁵ After Francis returned from the East he gathered the brothers for the Chapter of St. Michael at the Portiuncula on 29 September 1220. On that occasion

this they were tearful, since they considered themselves to have become like orphans without a father. So blessed Francis lifted up his eyes to heaven and devoutly joined his hands and said: "Lord, I commend to you my family, as up till now you have commended it to my care. And since because of my infirmities, which you, most sweet Jesus, know very well, I cannot take care of them any longer, I now commend this family to the Ministers, who on the day of judgment will have to render account of their deeds to you, if because of their negligence or bad example or harsh corrections, one of the brothers is lost." And thus he remained subject until the day of his death and he lived more humbly than all the other friars, although no General Minister was elected until after his death. Indeed, brother Peter Cattani governed the Order for some time as vicar, and he departed from the light of this life before saint Francis. While saint Francis was absent [at his death] he was buried in the church of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula.⁶ He shone with many miracles, and their occasion was the reason why crowds of people arrived with their offerings to his tomb. So when the Saint returned and saw how the brothers were receiving those offerings and the multitude of people who visited the place, he began to worry a lot in his holy manner of seeing things, and so he went to the tomb and said: "Brother Peter, as long as you were alive, you were always obedient to me; now because of your many wonderful miracles we are invaded by secular persons, so you must now obey me even though you are dead. Therefore, I command you through obedience to cease performing miracles, because these are the reason why we are disturbed by secular persons." From that moment onwards he did not work any other miracle. I do not know what to admire most in this event,

namely the merits of Francis or the virtue of obedience to which the Saints in heaven show themselves to be subjected.

After the death of brother Peter mentioned above, blessed Francis left the care of the Order to brother Elias of Assisi, who was a famous man and shone with the prudence of seculars. This same Elias, although he was called Minister by the Saint and by many others, was not considered to be so while saint Francis was alive, and indeed no other brother, but he was later elected or accepted by the Order as Minister General.

[33] Around that same time brother Elias commanded that no one among the brothers should eat meat, in spite of the fact that saint Francis had scolded the two aforementioned vicars,⁷ because of these laws and of their presumption for novelties, and the same Elias knew about this. One day an Angel knocked on the door of the friary under the appearance of a handsome young man, and he asked to see brother Elias,⁸ and when Elias came to the door he asked him whether those who observe the holy Gospel had permission to eat of every kind of food that was presented to them, as Christ had taught, and whether it was a valid thing among those who observe the Gospel to impose laws which went against the freedom of the Gospel. Elias answered the Angel with haughty and harsh words. Saint Francis, who at the time was praying in the woods, and came to know about all that was happening through a divine revelation, went to scold Elias harshly for having treated the Angel so badly and because he had rejected the will of the Lord and his law.

At that same time in the castle of Nuenburg in Thuringia lived the lord landgrave Louis and his wife saint Elizabeth, daughter of the king of Hungary, as well as the lady Sophia born in Bavaria,

he resigned from the office of general and appointed Peter Cattani as vicar of the Order.

⁶ Peter Cattani died on 10 March 1221.

⁷ Brother Stephen of Narni and brother Gregory of Naples.

⁸ This episode is taken from *The Acts of Blessed Francis and His Companions* III (FAED III, 440-444) and *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis* c. 4 (FAED III, 571-574).

who was the mother of that prince. Since Elizabeth, who was a lover of humility and practiced mercy with care, and she would take care of a certain leper and wash him and lay him down in the bed of the prince, her mother-in-law, when she discovered this, took her son by the hand and led him to the bed and said: "See the way in which Elizabeth is infecting your bed." At that moment God opened the eyes of the devout prince, and he saw on the couch the figure of the Crucifix. He was lifted up in contemplation, and the pious prince asked his holy wife, whether she often laid down that person on the couch. He therefore understood that in the sick members one takes care and welcomes Christ. When this happened, and the holy man and devout prince looked at that person with a loving gaze, the ruthless woman, namely the prince's mother looked on with horror. This holy and devout matron therefore was present for that event in order to merit to be consoled by our Holy Father Francis before she died, and she became the mother of all the poor people, especially the Friars Minor.

During the same time blessed Anthony, after having received permission from the blessed Francis, became the first scholar of theology, and with him also brother Adam of Marsh, Englishman, both of whom were approved by the general chapter. They frequented the school of theology of the Abbot of Saint Andrew of Vercelli, who was the most excellent among all theologians, and who translated the books of blessed Dionysius from Greek to Latin and composed [34] an excellent treatise. The general *studium* was then transferred from Milan to Vercelli. That same Abbot kindly accepted them during those five years - understanding that it was after saint Anthony came to the friars - so that they studied the books of blessed Dionysius⁹ together with the lord Abbot, and they arrived at such lofty heights of intellectual

reflection and at serenity of the light of wisdom, that it seemed that they were not studying, but practicing the same [book of] Hierarchies. The same Abbot, when he would see them in such intellectual and spiritual heights would consider himself as an unlettered man being taught by experts, and he would say that the text of the Hierarchies was depicted in their own souls. The same venerable Abbot in the same commentary, in chapter 3, in the section *Sublimiter enim*, had these words to say regarding blessed Anthony: "He would frequently penetrate love, where the knowledge of physics remains outside. We read that some among the holy Bishops were imbued less with physics, and they penetrated the heavens when their minds were captured by mystical theology, and they transcended all kinds of most subtle knowledge of physics in order to arrive at the most holy Trinity. I have personally experienced such a reality in the holy brother Anthony of the Order of Friars Minor. Since he was less versed in the knowledge of the seculars, he was inflamed with a pure soul and a spiritual ardour, and he often and fervently desired mystical theology and ecstasy of the spirit, in such a way as to apply to him what has been written regarding John the Baptist: *He was a lamp that burned and gave light* (Jn 5:35). He burned inwardly with ardour and love, and outwardly shone with them." One can search for these words in the commentary just quoted.

Even if saint Anthony had such a profound knowledge of God, he did not presume to teach, even though the brothers begged him, until he obtained permission from saint Francis, which in a writing addressed to him gave him the following response: "My most dear brother Anthony, brother Francis wishes you health in Christ. I am please that you teach sacred theology [35] to the brothers, as long as this study does not extinguish in you the spirit of holy

⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, author of *De Cælesti Hierarchia*, *De Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, and *De Mystica Theologica*.

prayer and devotion, as is written down in the rule.”¹⁰

Some state that the same blessed Anthony was a companion of saint Dominic, when he was still among the regular Canons.¹¹

When a certain Benedictine Abbot once came to Padua and heard saint Anthony preach to the monks, and also listened to his commentary on the words of the Apostles and Dionysius, he became totally changed because of the sweetness of God’s words, and remained in ecstasy for a long period of time.

The same Saint, when he was teaching theology to the brothers at Montpellier, it happened that a certain novice left the Order and secretly stole and took with him a glossed psalter of great value, which the servant of the Lord used in order to teach. When the man of God heard this he was greatly saddened and he merited to find help in the solace of prayer. That same novice met a terrible demon on a bridge, who told him: “Go back to the servant of God Anthony and to your Order, and take back with you the Psalter, since God has commanded me to attack you and kill you instantly by throwing you down into the river.” The terrified and astonished novice did not want to return, but he was compelled to go back to the man of God out of fear, and he admitted his guilt and offered him the Psalter with many tears, and then he came back to the Order devoutly and after a short period of time died in peace. [...]

[38] Saint Francis, after the impression of the sacred stigmata, since he with great diligence tried to hide from others the treasure that he discovered in the field, nevertheless he could not hide it completely, since the stigmata appeared in

his hands and feet, and he always had to bandage his hands and feet and to keep his feet well covered. While he was still living many brothers saw them, because of the special holiness of the man, and they are to be truthfully believed. In order to remove all doubts as to their having seen them, they also decreed by an oath that they had touched the sacred signs. Others also, who were familiar with the holy Man, saw them, and some of them were also Cardinals. Since the same Saint was by now fastened to the cross both in body and spirit, he not only burned with seraphic love in God, but also thirsted with Christ crucified for the salvation of all. It happened therefore, that since he could not walk because of the points the the nails protruding in his feet, the had his half-dead body carried through cities and castles, in order to inflame all others to carry the cross of Christ. He would also tell the brothers: “My brothers, let us begin to serve the Lord, our God, since we have accomplished little up till now.” [...]

[39] In that year 1225 the lord Pope Honorius gave a privilege to the Order, namely that the Priors or Custodians could and should excommunicate the apostates from the Order, and he also sent letters to the Prelates of the Church informing them not to accept those who were excommunicated. He also have the privilege to the brothers so that during times of general interdiction they could recite the office and celebrate the divine liturgy in their own oratories, but behind closed doors and excluding all those who were under interdiction or excommunicated. He also wrote that in their oratories the brothers could have a portable altar on which to celebrate the divine liturgy.¹² From this it is clear that it was not in the intention of blessed Francis

¹⁰ This is a rendering of the text of Saint Francis’ Letter to Saint Anthony (FAED I, 107).

¹¹ This is obviously an error, since Saint Anthony was an Augustinian Canon before becoming a friar Minor, and Saint Dominic was Canon in the Cathedral of Osma before founding the Order of friars Preachers. Dominic died on 6 August 1221 in

Bologna, while Anthony arrived in Bologna not earlier than 1222. So they could not have met personally.

¹² This is a reference to the Bulla *Quia populares tumultus* of Pope Honorius III (3 December 1224), which gave the friars Minor a certain autonomy from churches of secular clergy (FAED I, 561-563).

to obtain for the brothers any privileges from the Church that were necessary for the Order. Some wanted to receive privileges only because of pride or in order to make the rule more lax for observance. While he was still alive it is understood that only necessary privileges were given.

Latin Abbreviations

Writings of St. Francis

Adm	Admonitiones
CantAudPov	Canticum Audite Poverelle
CantSol	Canticum fratris Solis
LaudDei	Laudes Dei Altissimi
BenLeo	Benedictio fratri Leoni data
EpAnt	Epistola ad S. Antonium
EpClerI	Epistola ad Clericos
EpCust	Epistola ad Custodes
EpFid	Epistola ad Fideles
EpLeo	Epistola ad fratrem Leonem
EpMin	Epistola ad Ministrum
EpOrd	Epistola toti Ordini missa
EpRect	Epistola ad rectores
ExhLD	Exhortatio ad Laudem Dei
ExpPat	Expositio in Pater noster
FormViv	Forma vivendi S. Claræ
Fragm	Fragmenta alterius Regulæ
LaudHor	Laudes ad omnes horas
OffPass	Officium Passionis Domini
OrCruc	Oratio ante Crucifixum
RegB	Regula bullata
RegNB	Regula non bullata
RegEr	Regula pro eremotoriis
SalBVM	Salutatio Beatæ Mariæ Virg
SalVirt	Salutatio Virtutum
Test	Testamentum
UltVol	Ultima voluntas S. Claræ

Sources for the Life of St. Francis

FAED I	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Saint</i>
FAED II	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Founder</i>
FAED III	<i>Francis of Assisi. Early Documents. Prophet</i>
1C	Celano, <i>Vita beati Francisci</i>
LCh	Celano, <i>Legenda ad usum chori</i>
VB	Celano, <i>Vita brevior S. Francisci</i>
2C	Celano, <i>Memoriale in desiderio animæ</i>
3C	Celano, <i>Tractatus miraculorum</i>
LJS	Julian of Speyer, <i>Vita S. Francisci</i>
OR	<i>Officium Rhythmicum</i>
AP	<i>Anonymus Perusinus (De Inceptione)</i>
L3C	<i>Legenda trium sociorum</i>
CA	<i>Compilatio Assisiensis</i>
LMj	S. Bonaventura, <i>Legenda Maior</i>
LMn	S. Bonaventura, <i>Legenda Minor</i>
SPMaj	<i>Speculum Perfectionis (Sabatier)</i>
SPMin	<i>Speculum Perfectionis (Lemmens)</i>
ABF	<i>Actus beati Francisci et sociorum eius</i>
Fior	<i>Fioretti di San Francesco</i>



Cover page: *Francis prays before Jerusalem. Basrelief: pulpit of St. Francis Church, Hamrun*