

# The Franciscan Times



*Lord, Make Me An Instrument Of Thy Peace*

A quarterly newsletter, whose purpose is helping members of The Third Order of the Society of St. Francis share their common journey through news from fellowships and individuals, reviews of books and tapes, poetry, stories, essays, reflections, meditations, graphics,

Spring 1998

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## What Is True Joy: A TSSF Conversation

The following conversation about true joy was a gift from the Holy Spirit that wove itself in and out of the online dialogs on AngFran-L early this January. My thanks to all who contributed.

### Not a nostalgic recollection

The Joy of which Francis spoke is not a nostalgic recollection or a fleeting moment of happiness. I like to think of Franciscan joy as that "biblical wellspring of living water" that starts in the deepest parts of our soul and bubbles up and overflows every part of life. It is the joy of knowing Christ, it is the joy of being known by Christ. It is the joy of thanksgiving for all of God's blessings. This joy is not hindered by earthly adversity, because it springs up from God's presence in us. I think that it is not so much a feeling, but a mystical condition.

Rick Simpson

### Serenity?

I get the feeling that the word serenity would sum up Francis' unending joy. Not a kind of continuous elation or spiritual drug to get out of the rain—though perhaps out of forces of mother nature like typhoons, etc. Those who have joy are also concerned with where to get the next drink, or the next drug. This is a different kind of poverty, but poverty all the same. My feeling is if the institutional church is so preoccupied with orthodox belief that it affects their ability to live, love, and give, seeing ALL people as our brothers and sisters, as Christ did, then it is the institutional church who suffers from

the greatest poverty. I've often thought that perhaps the reason why we have so many denominations is so that we may freely come to God and learn to love and give in a variety of ways, as opposed to only one way where someone might be left out. We could use some prayers so that we may be better "light bearers," and stop arguing over beliefs we hold in our heads. I think Jesus said it best, "Love God, and Love Your Neighbor As Yourself."

Eunice Dunlap

### Joy and Depression

Recently I had a long conversation with my brother who is one of the most devoted Christians I know. He is always cheerful and friendly and faithful in church attendance and prayer and in service to the "disenfranchised" in a very Franciscan manner (although he is not formally a Franciscan). I asked him if he ever tired from serving so much and he answered no, because he knew his efforts helped so many. He felt one of his gifts was the gift of encouragement. This started us on the "gifts of the spirit" and we looked up what the Bible says on that subject. Then he stated to me "I have never had the gift of joy." Briefly his look of cheerfulness faded, then quickly reappeared.

In my family there are many who suffer from mild to moderate to severe depression. As all enlightened people now know, this condition is often biochemical and hereditary—not a weakness of character. And after working in a shelter for abused children, I have learned that severe trauma can also effect the brain chemistry and the way one responds to the world—all the way to the cellular level.

My question is: How does this relate to the spiritual concept of joy? Are there Christians who can serve

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## True Joy (cont.)

mightily except that this lack of "joy" is just their "thorn in the flesh?" Also if the TSSF requires joy would that preclude someone who has the misfortune of suffering from a depressive illness from formally being a Franciscan? Or are their moments of joy just less frequent? Or are perhaps their moments of joy, when they do experience them, even more meaningful because of the background they are set against?

Louann O'Bannon

### Despite Depression

I don't know that I have any answers to your question, Louann, but I can give you and the group some reflections from my experience. I was diagnosed with clinical depression several years ago. It is a hereditary chemical imbalance in the brain, but it can be treated with medication. However, the medications often lose their punch and have to be changed. Sometimes the need to change is all too frequent. Right now I have to take two different anti-depressants every day, but they seem to be working well.

Depression has robbed my life of much joy. No, that's not quite right. Depression has prevented my realizing a lot of the joy that I have experienced in my life. However, after the period of deeper depression has passed, I am able to look back and see many of the wonderful things that have happened and I just get to appreciate the joy a bit later.

I also like to serve others. One of my ways of service is to share "my story" with others who suffer from depression and let them know that there is hope for this illness. I also work with other Adult Children of Alcoholics and try to encourage them to work the 12 steps and do what is necessary to live a better life in recovery. But most of all, I love them—unconditionally. I know they hurt, but I know they can find healing. Doing this brings great joy to me. Maybe that's why I do it.

When one is received as a postulant, noviced, and eventually professed in the Third Order, Society of St. Francis, the person receiving their vows prays that God will help them persevere in their efforts. I suppose that is the key to serving; not only helping someone meet their needs, but it is in giving them hope for the future to encourage them to persevere in life. It is giving them love as the substance of that hope. It is giving them love to help strengthen their faith.

The feelings I get from that cannot be called anything but joy. Maybe sometimes we don't see it or recognize

it, but if one gets any good feelings from the service they perform, those feelings are expressions of joy.

Maybe we are looking for joy to be something else. Maybe we just don't recognize it sometimes. But Francis said that it is in loving that we are loved, and being loved always gives me great joy. Just the fact that God first loved me brings me great joy.

Let me tarry a bit more. We have read how Francis described joy. That description is anything but what most of us think of as joy: To be cast out, rejected. Can that be joy? To Francis it was. Maybe, just maybe, joy comes from our service to others, never minding our own plight. It comes because we have spent ourselves for others, even to the extent that we deny ourselves and our own problems, illnesses, or shortcomings.

In spite of my own depression, I am compelled to serve. And I do have joy. I have joy because of the mere satisfaction that I have tried to do something to comfort a fellow human being, or any other creature in God's Holy Creation. Caring for Mother Earth is also a service for many of us.

Ah! Maybe we are now broaching the true source of joy. Joy comes from the realization that we have heard the call (vocation) that God gives to us and we have striven to answer it. Joy, then, may be the results of our positive answer to God's call to us. And Joy is NOT happiness. Happiness may or may not be a symptom of our joy. And I may suffer in serving and not really be happy with the conditions around what I am doing. I may be down in the gutter with a street person or in a hospital trying to comfort someone with AIDS. It may be somewhere dirty, a place that stinks. I might rather be somewhere else. But because I have tried to help someone, I still have some feeling inside myself that makes me feel more whole, more complete. Jesus has called me to serve and because I have, I have joy.

I might even go so far out on a limb as to say that Jesus experienced joy as he was nailed to the cross. He was following his Father's Will. He was obedient. He knew he was doing what he was meant to do. He saved the world. Now, there's got to be some joy in there somewhere!

Pardon my ramblings, but maybe this will help shed some light. At least it helps me live with my infirmities, even depression, and yet find that as bad as it may get and as bad as I may feel, I am God's child trying to do the will of my Father. I have joy!!

John Tolbert

## NEWS FROM FAR AND WIDE

**Christ and True Joy**

Willie wrote:

*[...] I feel that if ye be depressed or not depressed, because we are children of God's, made in his Image that we all have been given the capacity to experience Love and Joy. It is a gift from God, just as the depression is, for it is said that those who have experienced great pain "are able to know equally great joy." (Madeleine L'Engle) Perhaps as we grow in greater Love of ourselves, our neighbors and God we open ourselves up to greater Joy in life. I have seen this take place in my own journey, and that of the patients I treat.*

Willie, this is right on, in my experience. Well said.

Christ knew the greatest love and joy that Christians have been able to imagine: the love and joy that flow between the persons of the Trinity. Yet "he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...and became obedient unto death." Perhaps only when we can, through our own experience, get at least a glimpse of the distance between these two poles of existence can we begin to appreciate the sacrifice of Christ. Likewise, the Francis who danced and sang and talked about Perfect Joy was also the Francis who agonized over his mission, suffered bitter disappointments in his community and received the stigmata at La Verna.

Yet the dominant culture says we should seek security by controlling our lives, staying away from "extremes", and living inside a really tiny little emotional/spiritual continuum that is deemed respectable. Geez, who wouldn't be depressed?

*(continued on page 4)*

**Two New Books From Third Order Authors**

Yvonne Willie has just released *The Boy Who Didn't Want to be Black* (available for \$14.95 from Lightbearers Publishers, Inc., PO Box 5895, Maryville, TN 37802-5895). The brochure describes it as a touching story of a young boy's reaction to a classmate's claim that "all blacks are bad," and how the young boy comes to grips with his own racial identity.

Stuart Schlegel in Santa Cruz is in the last phases of writing *Wisdom from a Rainforest: The Spiritual Journal of an Anthropologist* about his spiritual experiences in the Philippines. We hope to publish excerpts from these two books in future issues.

**1998 Convocation Information Thus Far**

- **Southeast:** 9/18-20, Ignatius House (Atlanta, GA). Contact Land of the Sky and the Servants of San Damiano.
- **Southwest:** 4/24-26, Picture Rocks Retreat Center, Tucson, AZ). Contact Pat Shelton.
- **Western:** 8/7-9, The Angela Center (Santa Rosa, CA). Contact Joan Kidd.
- **South Central:** 5/15-17, St. Crispins (Wewoka, OK). Contact Caroline Benjamin or Dixie Mosier-Greene.
- **Midwestern:** 8/7-9, Divine Word International (Teckny, IL). Contact Mark Drish.
- **Northeastern:** 8/28-30, Graymoor Friary (Garrison, NY). Contact Janet Moore.
- **Caribbean:** 4/17-19, Tobago. Contact Gloria Waldron.
- **Guyana:** Contact Gloria Waldron.
- **Order of Ecumenical Franciscans:** 5/21-24, Sacred Heart Monastery (Richardton, ND). Contact The Rev. Fred Ball.

## T S S F B A S I C S

available from Dee Dobson  
4001 S.W. 5 Terrace, Miami FL 33134-2040

suggested prices are:

**The Principles of the Third Order  
of the Society of Saint Francis  
for Daily Reading (\$2.50)**

**Devotional Companion (\$4.50)**

**Way of St. Francis (\$2.50)**

**Order of Admission (\$1)**

**Source Book (\$2.50)**

**Spiritual Director Guide (\$2.50)**

**Directory (\$3)**

### True Joy (cont.)

I know that as I grow older life continues to present me with situations that stretch me emotionally and spiritually beyond anything I had hitherto experienced. After I'm back to "normal," I always observe two things: (1) the range of psycho-spiritual potentialities is much larger than I had thought; (2) no matter where I went, God was there.

John Snyder

#### Is True Joy a Rocky Mountain High?

Louann wrote:

*My question is: How does this relate to the spiritual concept of joy? Are there Christians who can serve mightily but this lack of "joy" is just their "thorn in the flesh?" there Christians who can serve mightily but this lack of "joy" is just their "thorn in the flesh?"*

I doubt that there are many Christians who have not had moments of joy, but there are many great Christians whose lives are not characterized by joy. Take Kierkegaard, for instance. Definitely an "Eeyore" sort of person, though he clearly had moments of joy. Many of the saints and Church Fathers seem pretty somber to me, if not downright irascible.

Many American Christians have been led to believe that they are supposed to go around all day in a sort of John Denveresque "Rocky Mountain high" with big grins on their faces, "just praising the Lord." The formal psychological term for this is "repression," and

the formal theological term is... "YUK!" In such circles, people may feel considerable social pressure to put on a happy face. This has nothing to do with Franciscanism or Christianity or authentic human existence as I understand them.

As an aside, I believe there is a great deal of spiritual wisdom in the liturgical calendar, which takes us together as a community through the entire gamut of spiritual experience from the depths to the heights. Likewise, praying the Psalms through the year also takes you from the depths to the heights and back. From personal experience I can tell you that non-liturgical churches are always in danger of getting stuck at one end of the spectrum or the other, which is ultimately very damaging to the soul. (It can happen in liturgical churches too. If it's the 5th Sunday in Lent and your church is still singing "Shine, Jesus, Shine", take my advice and get a new church.)

I see three sources of joy in Francis's life, although there are probably others I'm not seeing. First, he seemed to have joy that came from a kind of childlike openness to people and experience. I suspect this was a personality trait he had all his life and that it acquired a religious dimension only in his mature adulthood. Second, he seemed to have joy that came directly from his prayer life and his direct experiences of God's presence, especially God's presence in the natural world. Third, he aspired to a kind of joy ("Perfect Joy") that comes from letting go of one's attachments to the world and the unregenerate imperialistic self.

## 2002 Convocation—Step 1. A Request for Proposals—3rd Call

Fellowships and/or individuals are invited to offer locations for the next Convocation that could take place in your local area. You and your Fellowship will be integrally involved in the process. A decision on the location and time for the 2002 Convocation will be made at Chapter, October 1998. Please mail all your proposals to John Brockmann, Editor of the *Times*.

We need:

- a place for 200 attendees for five days in the summer
- accessibility both in terms of handicapped access and in terms of a nearby airport, preferably a hub
- a large liturgical space and a minimum of six small group spaces
- food services that offer a range of diets (low salt, diabetic, vegetarian)
- public transportation
- costs roughly equivalent to those in New Orleans: \$250 for double occupancy, \$300 for a single including all food, meeting rooms, and coffee breaks.

Suggested sites include:

- universities on vacation
- retreat and conference centers
- off-season hotels

We strongly desire

- a local Episcopal church
- recreational/tourist attractions nearby
- a copy shop nearby
- a recreation/exercise center

With regard to "Perfect Joy," I understand Francis to be saying that it is the ability to maintain connectedness to God and be a vessel of the Spirit even under the most trying circumstances. I don't believe he's saying that to be abused is to have Perfect Joy.

Also if the TSSF requires joy would that preclude someone who has the misfortune of suffering from a depressive illness from formally being a Franciscan? TSSF doesn't require joy; it invites Tertiaries to pray for it just as Francis did. In the Principles of the TSSF, there is this passage:

*Joy is a divine gift, coming from union with God in Christ. [...] The humility, love and joy which mark the lives of tertiaries are all God given graces. They can never be obtained by human effort. They are gifts of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of Christ is to work miracles through people who are willing to be emptied of self and to surrender to him. They then become channels of grace through whom his mighty work is done.*

John Snyder

### Loss & Joy

When I was much younger, I had a period of time where I was essentially homeless. Actually, I had a roof over my head (thanks to a generous roommate), but no food except what people gave me, a loaf of French bread a day (the 50 cent day-old stuff from the supermarket) and a pound of butter a week. I was employed, but only part-time in a town where jobs were hard to come by. I had no resources with which to move or look for work elsewhere, and I had no transportation to get anywhere else anyway. I also had some serious knee problems from injuries I had sustained and was able to walk and stand only with great difficulty—my job required both walking and standing on concrete floors. There was constant pain, no matter how much medicine I took. Most of my friends had moved away and I had no family in that town.

It was the best year of my life. I could FEEL God's presence, and rejoiced in the sunshine and the rain, in the hard work I put into making my body better and in playing the guitar. When I went to church, THERE was my family! When I got really hungry, my landlady realized I was losing too much weight and started bringing me food. When the holidays came around a family from church invited me into their home.

Some people would think I was crazy for feeling this way, but unencumbered by the things, alone with my thoughts and unable to hide from the intensity of God's gaze, I HAD to let go. I let go of more than the physical things (after all, even now that I have enough food and warm clothes, I am still a spiritual person); I

let go of the anticipation and the planning. I let go of the fear—what was there to fear? Pain? I already had it. Poverty? Loneliness? Death? Not even death scared me. At least then I wouldn't be in pain any more, and I had the assurance that I was spiritually on the right path.

I was not happy back then, and I am not always happy now. I would like to be out of debt, to have a car that has enough room to make only one trip a week for groceries, to actually own the land my garden is on. Those things would bring happiness. But then, happiness is not the same thing as joy. Joy is more a way of life, how you look at the world, something that allows one to reach out to others. I have been happy many times, but it doesn't coincide with joy... I felt joy three weeks ago when I took communion to a dying man, although my sorrow was great as he and his daughter are old friends. I felt joy when I looked at my husband the other day and realized that in spite of my physical frailties and seasonal depression (boy oh boy, is this the season!) he loves me, and lets me do as much as I can.

I realize that not everyone has the opportunity to experience life in this way, and to be honest now that I

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**The Franciscan Times**  
is a publication of The Third Order  
Society of St. Francis, American Province.  
MINISTER PROVINCIAL  
Anita Catron

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#### Who to Send Changes To

Name and address changes  
Convocation Dates  
Profession Mandates & Record of Novicing  
Notification of Deaths  
should be sent to the secretary:  
Robert Kramish  
P.O. Box 460550, San Francisco, CA 94146-0550  
BOB190559@aol.com

Requests for Release from Vows  
and other pastoral matters  
should be sent to the Chaplain of the Province:  
The Rev. David Burgdorf, 40-300 Washington St,  
Apt. M204, Bermuda Dunes, CA 92201  
74554,643@compuserve.com

### True Joy (cont.)

have a family I will do everything I can so they never have to go through what I did. I don't think people should have to live that way, and I wouldn't want to give up so much again. But I am not afraid to give a person money if they need it, even if it means a little less food on our table. How many desserts does one need? I am not afraid to lend my possessions, and I don't worry if they don't come back. If someone has a need, I am now free to help when I can.

I wonder, although it is often easier to study subjects separately, if perhaps all these concepts of St. Francis aren't really all tied up together in a bundle? Simplicity (not being overly concerned with things, whether you have them or not), Joy (allowing yourself to be with God in any situation), and many other concepts I don't know the names for all seem to fall into the same category: Loving God.

When I let myself love, I am freed from many terrors. When I let myself love, I can sense God with me.

And that, for me, is JOY: To know God is there in the pain, the loneliness and the hunger and that I am still able to love and give. And in the good times, and the happy times and through it all I am able to give, and love—and be loved...

Kathleen Stidham

#### Joy and Happiness

I too appreciate everyone's comments on this subject. I think I do confuse joy with happiness. I too suffer from depression, and it seems that joy is rare for me. Then I hear the expression "true joy" and I immediately panic - maybe the joy I think I'm feeling isn't the real thing!!! I remember someone telling me at an Alanon meeting once that JOY means Jesus - Others- You. I got a serious attitude about this at the time, because I was in the middle of two major surgeries and fighting cancer—my daughter was suicidal—among other things, and I just couldn't summon up any joyous feelings whatsoever. So for me, joy seems to sneak up on me when I least expect it—and especially when I am out in nature.

Hilary Burwell

#### The Christian Duty of Happiness

I have very much enjoyed the mails on Joy. I have recently re-read a delightfully straightforward (and short) book which was published some years ago written by the (presumably late) Dean C. A. Alington, *The Christian Duty of Happiness*.

We all know, in theory at any rate, that duty may be a source of happiness, but can happiness itself be a duty?

Dr. Alington propounds the theory that it is the duty of Christians to be happy (he resists the word 'joy' as being too ecstatic and 'cheerfulness' as being too slight).

He says:

*"That happiness is a Christian duty seems to me to be a point of doctrine which is unduly neglected; it is not, as many people suppose, a matter of temperament, but rather an inevitable corollary to those beliefs which all Christians profess. Our own sense of unworthiness should no more diminish our thankfulness for God's mercies than it affects our gratitude for any kindness shown us by our fellow mortals: it might rather be expected to enhance it. Though, as a matter of temperament, some of the great saints have dwelt rather on the sense of sin than others, it is preposterous to suppose that gratitude is lessened by the extent of the favor bestowed. Though it is, again, as a matter of temperament or circumstance, easier for some than for others to feel their happiness consistently, the knowledge that we are children of a living God, living in a God-made world, is a knowledge so tremendous that it should surely override every other thought: we have all known people who have remained consistently happy under the most staggering blows of fate, supported by a faith as simple as it is sincere."*

St. Francis seems to follow this line of reasoning too:

*"Once Blessed Francis reproved one of his companions who appeared with a doleful countenance, and he said to him: "Why do you make an outward show of grief and sadness because of your sins? This sadness is a matter between yourself and God, pray to Him to spare you out of His mercy and to give back to your soul the joy of its salvation of which your sins have deprived it. But when you are with me and others, try always to be joyful, for it is not seemly for a servant of God to show his brother or anyone else a sad and doleful countenance."*

(From *The Writings of Br. Leo and his Companions*: 21(33))

Tim Daplyn TSSF Bristol, England

#### Archbishop Desmond Tutu, TSSF

*We were made to enjoy music, to enjoy beautiful sunsets, to enjoy looking at the billows of the sea and to be thrilled with a rose that is bedecked with dew...Human beings are actually created for the transcendent, for the sublime, for the beautiful, for the truthful...and all of us are given the task of trying to make this world a little more hospitable to these beautiful things.*

From, *The NPR Interviews, 1994* edited by Robert Siegel (Houghton Mifflin, 1994) [Consider also borrowing Raphael Brown's *True Joy* from Assisifrom the TSSF Library]

**Do Depressives Have More Joy?**

I always thought that my special vocation was to share the beautiful—I'm a student of literature and of opera and love to teach it to other people. Ironically, I too suffer major depression!—and while I do feel joy occasionally, sometimes am so debilitated emotionally that I feel as though I can't get out of bed.

Last year I was very depressed and ended a long relationship. I didn't think I'd live through that. I hated the man and I just hated God for doing this to me. Well, over the year someone else fell in love with me (or said he did). I don't think he was completely honest with himself, or the person he left, or me, because he said that he abruptly "fell out of love" too, just last week, with no warning. As you can imagine, I am very very sad. I was depressed before, and this doesn't help. And yet this man valued me for several big reasons—my joy in living (even though I could not see it myself!), my integrity, and my spirituality, which he thanked me for even as he left, still just a novice in the kinds of sacrifices the spirit asks for.

Thank God! Someone showed me, and it doesn't matter who, that I have joy and the spirit and truth with me, even though I doubt it often! and thank God, too, that this time I am not angry with Him, and know that he means me not to hurt; that He truly loves me. I do not know where this comes from, it truly is a gift, probably much better than the ephemeral love of this particular man.

All this a long posting, I suppose, but here's the crux. We depressives have so much more joy than we think. I firmly believe we will have it twice—now, in the vague glimpses even the perfectly healthy get of the heavenly kingdom; and in the future, where all the burdens in the way of feeling true Joy will be gone, and where we will see Him face to face, and not be stunned by our own Joy.

Melissa D. Aaron

**One Sunday in January**

Stephen J. S. Smith

[Editor's Note. In the last issue of the *Times* and on AngFran-L, I drew attention to this article of Stephen's that appeared in *Episcopal Life*. A number of people wrote to say that they do not get EL and would like to see the article. With Stephen's kind permission, here it is.]

Our third winter storm had ended. Heavy snow covered the ground. But the roads were passable, so I was able to drive from my house in the Lakota reservation town where I lived to the first of the five communities I served as a mission priest.

I reached the community and pulled up at the church. Grandpa Rufus High Elk, eighty-two years young, was clearing the snow off the front steps. We exchanged greetings and stepped inside to light the stove. There was a good supply of wood. Rufus liked to keep his grandsons busy.

By the time the bell was rung the church was warming up, and a dozen or so folk, mostly elders and children, were seated around the stove. We celebrated the Eucharist. Then while the children ran outside to warm up the pickups, we exchanged the week's news before people headed back to their homes, and I took Communion to a housebound elder.

I slithered to a halt in Grandpa Charlie Brown Wolf's yard. Grandpa Charlie was in his early nineties. The government said he was ninety-one, but Charlie had always argued that you cannot be nothing when you are born, so he was really ninety-two. Whichever it was, he had spent over fifty of his years serving the church locally as a Senior Catechist and Lay Eucharistic Minister. It was always a pleasure to sit at his table, listen to his stories, share Holy Communion, and receive his blessing before I left.

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**CONVOCATION NOTES  
ATTENTION CONVENERS:**

The Franciscan Times will reach interested and/or isolated tertiaries in your region (and elsewhere) who might make plans to attend your gathering. Advance notice and a name of a person to contact will be helpful to them. Please send the details. to:

R. John Brockmann TSSF,

P.O. Box 277, Warwick, MD 21912-0277.

Deadline for the Summer issue is May 15, 1998.

### One Sunday in January (cont.)

However, I'd only just sat down to visit when the door flew open and another elder ran into the room.

Charlie's house was one of the few in the street with a phone and his neighbor needed to call an ambulance. The neighbor's stove had nearly gone out, and before he could stop her, his teenage granddaughter had taken off the lid and poured in some gasoline. The back blast had caught her directly in the face.

The ambulance was called, but it would be a while before it arrived—the hospital was back in the agency town. Charlie told me not to worry about his Communion and to get up to his neighbor's to see what I could do. Feeling helpless, I left his house, praying that the girl was not too badly burned. Then miracle of miracles: looking down the road I saw a reservation police cruiser coming toward me. The car came to a halt. The officer leaned across the front passenger seat and rolled down the window. "Where does the girl who got burned live?" he called out. "I'll show you," I said, as I opened the passenger door and got in.

I noticed that as we moved off the cruiser's wheels were really gripping the snow. "You've got good traction," I remarked. "No way," he replied, "just a lot of weight in the back seat." I looked over my shoulder and there was a young man who probably weighed three hundred pounds, lying unconscious across the seat. "Lucky for him," the officer continued, "someone saw him asleep on a snow bank and called us to pick him up. He can't have been there long, he was still warm. Probably been partying all night and collapsed on the way home. We'll dry him out in jail for twenty four hours, then take it from there. I was just leaving the community when I heard the emergency call on my radio. If we can move the girl, I'll take her down the road to meet the ambulance."

I drew my breath as we went into the house, not sure just what we were going to find. But my prayer had been answered, things weren't as bad as I had feared. The girl was sitting upright staring into space, slightly shivering. Clearly she was in shock. There were no obvious burns, but her face was a vivid shade of red.

The officer, trained in first aid, knelt down beside the girl to examine her. I went over to comfort her grandparents who were standing together in a corner of the room. They were quietly crying, sharing in their granddaughter's shock. The officer stood up. "We'll risk putting her in my car," he said. "Would someone get her outdoor clothes?" I was relieved. The girl was beginning to shiver and the house was growing cold. Nobody had been near the stove since the accident. The grandfather went to get her clothes and we soon

had the girl in the cruiser. The car left, heading toward the ambulance and the reservation jail.

I went back inside with the grandparents. The immediate crisis had passed and it was time to deal with practicalities. Had they enough gas in their car to get to the hospital to be with their granddaughter? How were their funds for the journey back? What other relatives should we contact? How was their log supply for the stove? Soon matters were sorted out and they were on their way.

After seeing them off, I walked back down the road to Charlie's. But I didn't go in, he'd be fast asleep by now, and I needed to get to my next scheduled visit with a family who had just lost a teenager.

The boy had been murdered a few weeks earlier. He'd just turned fourteen. His skull had been split by a baseball bat. He was the first victim of a phenomenon new to the reservation, teenage gang warfare—yet another unwanted influence courtesy of urban society.

I had been called to the murder site shortly after he was killed. From that moment until the mourning meal after the funeral some six days later, normal community activity went on hold. Grief was widespread. Prayer services needed to be held every night while we waited for the authorities to release the boy's body from autopsy. A lot of cooking had to be done: for the meals following every service, then for the two wake nights preceding the funeral. The women were busy quilting for the traditional "give away" of family belongings and gifts, held after the funeral. The men were busy digging the grave, hauling vats of soup for the meals, and arranging the community hall for the wakes and the mourning meal.

The funeral had taken nearly all day: the gathering of the relatives and other mourners from all over the reservation, the Eucharist, the procession carrying the boy's casket to the cemetery, the long and prayerful vigil while immediate family members filled in the grave, the final meal and the "giveaway." It had been a day of ritual, sacrament, powerful words of sorrow spoken from many hearts - a day of outreach and generosity.

In a year's time there would be another service, followed by a meal and "give away." This was the traditional ceremony of "Wiping Away the Tears," held when a family came to the end of twelve months of mourning. The Lakota knew how to grieve.

Today I was meeting with family members to return with them to the murder site and bless the ground. The earth as well as the family had been violated by the boy's death. I arrived at an aunt's house where relatives had gathered. We exchanged greetings, climbed into a small caravan of cars and pickups, and drove as far as

the snow would let us to the murder site. We finished our journey on foot, stumbling through a windblown drift, and formed a circle around the spot where the boy had fallen. I opened a flask of water, blessed the contents, and invoked the name of the Trinity, sprinkling the water within the circle and on the boy's family. We shared the Our Father and a Lakota prayer, three simple words used to end ceremonies, *Hau Mitakuye Oyasin*: we are all related.

Back at the aunt's house we sat around her kitchen table and warmed ourselves with hot soup, fry bread, and coffee. Conversation was a mixture of tears and laughter, nourishing our spirits. I could have stayed long into the evening, but I had one more call to make before the day was over, to another community some way up the road.

This community was isolated and not many people lived there. I would go there on alternate Sundays to celebrate the Eucharist and visit. But sometimes there was not a congregation and residents were away, visiting elsewhere. When the community's news reached me, it was usually at the agency town.

A few days earlier I had heard there was to be a one night wake at the church this evening, followed by a burial tomorrow, and I should go and help out. This was all a little mysterious. I had not been contacted by any funeral director, and most surprising of all, when I asked around town, nobody knew the name of a family in the community who had recently lost a loved one.

By the time I pulled up at the small wooden church, night had fallen. But a new moon shone overhead, its light reflecting off the snow, and the sky was laden with stars. This could not be called a dark night.

I entered the church to find nobody there. But there were sure signs of life. The lights were on; in the cramped dirt floor narthex the stove was lit, with a pot of soup warming on the lid. I drew aside the curtain between the narthex and the nave, and saw that someone had placed a bench in front of the altar. On top of the bench lay a "rough box"—a box made from planks nailed together, in which a casket is placed for extra protection in the ground. For an adult burial the box is placed directly in the grave, to receive the lowered casket. But it is a common custom for a child's box to be kept in church. We would place the casket inside it at the end of the service, and carry them together to the graveside. The box I saw before me was not even three feet long. I now had my first piece of information. We were burying a baby.

I heard the crunch of tires on the snow. The door behind me opened and Joe Flying By, the senior warden, walked in with a load of wood in his arms. We exchanged greetings. I asked him whose baby had

died. Joe shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know their name," he said, "they're not from around here." One mystery solved, only to be replaced by another: nobody knew the family's name because the family didn't come from the community. But if they weren't from around here, what were we doing burying this child?

Joe smiled wryly as he looked at my perplexed expression. Then he told me what he knew. "My cousin, the one who lives off the reservation, in Wall City, called by at the beginning of the week. His boy works in a repair shop. There's a white boy working with him whose wife went to the hospital to have their first baby. Well, she lost it, and they're only young, can't afford a funeral, and are too upset to organize one, even if they knew how. It looks like they haven't got too many relatives to do it for them either, and the county would have to bury the baby. My cousin's kid doesn't like the sound of that and says not to worry, we've got plenty of experience, we'll do it. So I've dug the grave, my wife's begun the cooking, and they should be here soon."

While we waited, Joe stirred the soup and put more logs in the stove. I lit the altar candles, moved the "rough box" to one side, found an old piece of cloth, and dusted the bench. Then there was the sound of more tires, a flurry of pickup doors opening and shutting, and framed in the church doorway against a background of Lakota faces, stood a young white couple, the man holding in his arms a tiny, simple casket.

I walked over and introduced myself. The young man told me their names, Sue and Mike. I asked the name of their baby. Sue's reply told me that she was a little girl, Alice Marie. As she replied Sue handed me an envelope. It contained a state death certificate stating that their daughter had died from heart failure. There was also a burial permit. The documents were in order. We could proceed with our ceremonies.

I invited Sue and Mike to carry Alice Marie to the front of the altar, where we placed her casket on the bench. I put my arms around their shoulders, asked God to give them strength throughout the night, and then asked if it was okay for me to open the casket lid. Mike bowed his head in assent. I reached down and lifted the lid. Alice Marie looked serene. It was hard to believe that she was not just asleep. I stepped away from her casket and left her alone with her parents.

Back in the narthex I shook hands with the Flying By clan who were busy bringing in folding chairs, pots of fried chicken, boxes of sandwiches and pound cake. Joe's wife, Amy, had squeezed a large jug of coffee behind her soup pot on the stove. No one would go hungry or thirsty tonight.

(continued, p. 10)

## One Sunday in January (cont.)

Slowly the church began to fill as Flying By relatives and community residents came in to pay their respects, say a private prayer in front of Alice Marie's casket, then take a seat for the evening service. As they stood looking down on the little girl, female elders would bow their heads and cry audibly. Infant mortality was all too common on the reservation. They were not only looking at Alice Marie, but also at the faces of their grandchildren.

I walked around the church distributing copies of the Lakota Hymnal. This was basically the 1940 Hymnal translated into the Lakota language. Soon we were on our feet lifting our voices with old favorites: *Unnipi taja s'a etan, Jesus unki panpice; Jesus calls us o'er the tumult. Kici maun ye, Christ, ohan ko ya; Abide with me.*

The service was a mixture of hymns and prayers, offered in Lakota and English by Joe and myself, and extempore eulogies, all mourning the loss of young life, spoken by various elders. We concluded with the vigil prayers from The Book of Common Prayer. Then Joe said grace in Lakota, and the Flying By family turned to the task of serving the food.

The small narthex meant that the nave had to double as a dining hall. So we sat where we were, eating, drinking, and talking. Sue and Mike sat in a nest of Flying Bys as community members went over to shake their hands and offer more words of consolation. An hour or so passed. Then it was midnight, time to sing and pray again.

The midnight service was compline, with collects from the burial service. After the final hymn and blessing, we followed custom and closed the lid on Alice Marie's casket. It would remain closed until daylight broke. Sue and Mike were now free to go and get some rest for tomorrow. Somewhere in the community someone had prepared a bed for them. Members of the Flying By family would take turns to keep Alice Marie company throughout the night. As for me, it was time to drive home.

Tomorrow I would return to conduct the burial of a white baby, who along with her parents had been taken under the wing of a Lakota family determined that she should be mourned and buried with proper ceremony. They didn't even have to know her name at first. For a grave to be dug, a wake to be organized, and a service to be held, it was enough to know quite simply that there was a need.

It had been a good day. The Eucharist had been celebrated, a little girl was not too badly burned, and a man's overnight drinking had led to a police officer being nearby here. A family had gathered together to

give each other strength as they grieved, and on this winter Sunday night the Lakota had taught me, yet again, that it doesn't matter who we are or where we come from: *Hau Mitakuye Oyasin.*

## Healing Wounds and Celebrating Diversity: Accompanying Transgenders in Downtown Los Angeles

by Ralph Shower

[Editor's Note. The last issue of the Times printed the Riverside Diocese's convention citation honoring Ralph's work. It is very appropriate, then, to reprint an article Ralph wrote about his work and which appeared in the European Province's newsletter the *Chronicle*.]

The other morning before I went off to the 10 am. Sunday Mass of my parish church here in Los Angeles near Hollywood, I got a rare call from Imperio and Baby, two transgenders who form a household in the San Fernando Valley. They called to wish me a Happy Birthday (my 60th) and Imperio let slip that some others were planning a surprise party for me. I had made a commitment to Benito to go to his apartment to proofread the most recent edition of "Paradigma", a small magazine in Spanish for transgenders and others who live in downtown Los Angeles. As it turned out, I only proofread my own column: "La Porciuncula: Notes from the Margins of Downtown Los Angeles". Not long after doing the proofreading on my column and reading some of the other items in the magazine, the first party guests began to arrive.

The group who made up the party, who planned, who brought the food, etc., illustrates the variety of people one gets to know through contact with, through growing friendships with, transgender persons. Benito, who defines himself as bisexual/ bi-gender, lent his apartment for the occasion. I am sure Julia, who is transgender and who often uses the term "effeminate homosexual" to describe herself and others, was the main organizer of the event. Martha came by later after being called and invited; Martha is a transgender who helped me so much in my outreach work in 1994-95 through her knowledge of life and people on the streets. She has great leadership potential and is a natural comedienne. Although he has cross-dressed in the past, Miguel decided he just did not have the courage to continue doing so and now simply defines himself as a Gay man.

The two lesbians who helped us celebrate my day are Veronica and Hendy, two women who are recent

acquaintances that met through Julia. They certainly do not fit any stereotypes that many people probably have of lesbians. The other two women define themselves as heterosexuals and each brought a child along: Rebecca brought her preadolescent son Jason and Elena brought her adolescent daughter Rosie. Besides eating good food and experiencing genuine fellowship, the adults among us participated in one of the best group discussions on the spectrum of sexualities that I have ever been a part of. It all happened spontaneously as we men and (biological) women and transgenders asked and answered questions in such a pleasant, tolerant atmosphere. Two ideas that came up were how definitions and classifications are fluid, are still in process, and how other individuals' gender identification can help us define our own gender and sexuality. I ought to add here that the fluidity just mentioned, although it is full of positive creativity, can also contribute to confusion and doubt.

The previous Friday afternoon Martha had shown up at "La Hora del Cafe" (The Coffee Hour) after what seemed a long time. It was really good to see her because as soon as she arrived, the dynamic of that afternoon changed: it became more passionate and spirited. "La Hora..." was begun in January or February of 1995 and has continued to the present with certain modifications. "La Hora del Cafe" meets just one block away from Olvera Street, the historical center of Los Angeles, not far from the Los Angeles River, originally called "La Porciuncula". The focus of the Coffee Hour has always been the "quinas" (a "Spanglish" word), the transgenders who live in the downtown area. Just as is the general public, the transgenders who attend "La Hora..." and who are served by the outreach team of the community agency (Jovenes, Inc.) of which I am a part, are made up of distinct individuals with gifts and problems of many kinds. Many work at very low-paying jobs; many are sex workers; most are undocumented; and the majority are affected in one way or another by drug and alcohol abuse and by HIV/AIDS. Hopefully many will overcome these obstacles to their full development and liberation as children of God.

When Martha showed up on Friday, she said one of her reasons was that she wanted to go out on outreach with us. I had to tell her that the Thursday and Friday afternoon/evening outreach had been canceled due to big cuts in funds. Since I enjoy Martha's company so much, I invited her to a little Salvadoran restaurant near where she's now living. Over the coffee, "pupusas" and fried plantains, I mostly listened as Martha expressed her need for a better job and talked about her father. Martha is once again "nanny" to seven children ranging in age from four to 15. The

children all seem to like her and she gets along well with the single mother of the family. The problem is that the family is poor, too, and Martha is only working for board and room. As Martha and I discussed her father who died many years ago, Martha made it clear that the wounds she has are both psychological and physical.

I cannot mention wounds or scars without remembering the homeless Afro-Cuban man who came up to the van we used while looking for our people who lived under the Macy St. Bridge. This was a few years ago and one of the reasons I am still an outreach worker. The man opened up his shirt and showed the scars from knife wounds on his chest. When I asked him his name and he answered "Evangelio Martinez" (or was it Gonzalez?), I asked him to repeat it because I had never heard of a first name such as his: Evangelio=Gospel. The last name is as common as perhaps Smith. Gospel Smith! That left me "dazed" and I am still reflecting on its meaning...

The people we were looking for under the bridge were Lorena and Mario and others. When I had first met Lorena, a transgender sex worker and drug addict, on Tuesday of Holy Week 1992, I was converted to the "bridge people" and other marginal people by the splendid hospitality I was offered. I remember looking inside their improvised, "comfortable" bedroom and seeing an image of Clare of Assisi. I now consider Clare both as a mother and a sister. How I appreciate the prayers of the Poor Clares as I continue my work on the streets, under the bridges and freeways, and in so many other "cracks" through which people fall here in the concrete heart of Los Angeles.

As Holy Week 1997 was approaching, I was planning to participate in my parish's annual Viacrucis on the block where the church is located. As Holy Week neared, Julia began to talk about our having a Viacrucis in her neighborhood, an industrial area of downtown L.A. What we finally decided on was a procession in her neighborhood, beginning at a next-door apartment building and then going along some streets to another apartment building and from there along more streets to end up in front of a church for the 14th Station. The first station was in front of the apartment of a transgender who had AIDS and who was not at home at the time. Julia's inclusive approach was endearing: several of the people she gave blessed bread and coins to were women and children. She had earlier obtained a basket on which she arranged a purple cloth and white lace and the blessed bread and coins (these had all been blessed earlier at a local church). The procession consisted of Julia, Martha, Benito and me and then two day laborers who joined for part of the Way. Those

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**Healing and Celebrating (cont.)**

who wished to, commented on the significance of the particular station in their daily lives. We were surely doing theology from the margins...

This "doing theology" from the streets should not have surprised me in any way because shortly after meeting and becoming aware of the work I attempt to do, Julia had repeatedly suggested I read a book she had read during time in a California state prison, a book that had themes similar to my own work/ministry: *Mi Cristo Roto (My Broken Christ)* by Ramon Cue, S.J. After reading the book, I marveled at, and felt humbled by, Julia's theological perception of what I have been trying to do. The book is a series of imaginative Lenten meditations about a dismembered, battered old crucifix that "visits" a variety of people, mostly marginal; and the questions raised, changes made, etc., by Christ's presence... This is the same presence I meet in the "quinas" and others and I hope that they, however slightly, find in me.

## A Meeting of Franciscans: Part 2 of 3

**Moderator:** Fr. Bill Graham, TSSF

**Guests:** St. Francis of Assisi; St. Clare of Assisi; Br. Elias; St. Elizabeth of Hungary; St. Louis the Ninth of France; Dee Dobson, TSSF; Fr. John Scott, TSSF; Bp. Desmond Tutu, TSSF

**Fr. Bill:** I'd like to welcome some special people who have come together today to share something of the ways that they have tried to serve God in their lives. Would you please stand as I introduce you to our audience.

First we have several guests from Europe of the 13th century. From the Italian city of Assisi comes, Francis Bernardone. Also from Assisi is Clare Scifi and from Cortona, Elias Bombarone. Next, we have from Hungary the princess Elizabeth. Along with her is Louis the Ninth, king of France. From our own time I am delighted to introduce Bishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu of Cape Town, South Africa, Mrs. Dee Dobson from Miami, FL, and Fr. John M. Scott of the Philadelphia, PA area. These last three and myself, are all members of the Third Order, first begun by St. Francis in the 13th century

...when last we left off...

**Fr. Bill:** Before asking for comments from St. Francis and Br. Elias, let me explain to our audience that as the order expanded, two differing sets of opinions developed as to the future. St. Francis and his early followers became known as the "Zelanti", the zealous

ones or the spiritual friars. The other group, represented by Br. Elias, were the "Mitigati" or the conventual friars. By the way, conventual means having convents or buildings. Elias, would you tell us about the structure of the order?

**Elias:** Gladly! It has already been mentioned that the Rule which Br. Francis had approved by Pope Innocent was pretty much just passages from scripture. However, it did specify that there was to be no Prior, that is no person given authority over the others. Everyone was an equal. All the brothers met annually in what was called the General Chapter. Francis served as Minister General and all the brothers looked to him as their leader despite there not being a structure that gave him authority.

**Fr. Bill:** Francis, how long were you minister general?

**Francis:** When I returned from the Holy Land in 1220, I was suffering from malaria, and glaucoma was starting to affect my eyesight. At that time, I picked Peter Catanii to replace me. He was one of the first two brothers to join me. Unfortunately, Br. Peter died in March of 1221. Br. Elias was chosen by the chapter to replace him.

**Fr. Bill:** Elias, on what did you and Francis disagree?

**Elias:** There were two important areas. One had to do with the communal owning of property; the other with books and learning.

**Francis:** That's right. We were to keep a rule of absolute poverty. The gospel says to sell all that we have and give to the poor.

**Elias:** That means that we aren't to own anything individually!

**Francis:** But even communal ownership tempts the brothers to become attached to possessions!

**Elias:** You're right that this is a danger. However, the Friars minor had grown a lot by the time I became minister general. There wasn't enough work for us to earn our food on a daily basis and the lack of buildings was a real hardship in the winter. Our calling is to be out in the world bringing others to Jesus, but we can do that better if we have a home base.

**Fr. Scott:** You both have made some good points. The Anglican First Order in our century had some similar problems in the United States. Their main house of Little Portion on Long Island had become too comfortable. The brothers decided that they had to stay there for shorter periods and began looking for ways to stay in a number of smaller, more temporary houses or apartments.

**Fr. Bill:** A few years after this, they resumed making

more use of Little Portion, so we can see that the use of communal property is still an issue where Franciscans struggle to find a balance.

**Francis:** Our other major disagreement was over learning.

**Elias:** You were pretty well educated for our time. If you couldn't read Latin, how would you ever have been able to seek guidance from the scriptures? Remember the time when you, Bernard, and Peter entered the church of San Niccolo. You randomly opened the Bible and pointed to scripture verses three times. Each of these ended up being verses that became part of the first rule.

**Francis:** Of course it's important to learn what's written in the Gospel. That's why priests have to be educated, but we brothers minor only need to put our whole reliance on God. When we put too much of our energy into learning instead of serving the Lord, we risk relying upon our own abilities instead of upon our maker. I had the same disagreement with Dominic when I met him in 1215, that I have with you, Elias, and with those friars who share your ideas.

**Elias:** I have always admired your total dedication to our Lord, Francis. Unfortunately, there are very few people who are able to surrender themselves to the ideals that you and Clare live.

**Clare:** The sisters managed to do quite well at living the Gospel. Our Rule stated, "And those who do not know how to read should not be eager to learn. Rather, let them devote themselves to what they most desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, and to have humility, patience in difficulty and weakness, and to love those who persecute, blame, and accuse us."

**Elias:** Clare, the sisters under your guidance did indeed do a marvelous job of being open to the Spirit. However, we brothers had to make some adaptations so that our order could survive when we no longer had your encouragement and example. Also, I know that you're aware that the directions I led us were in keeping with the wishes of Pope Honorius III, who approved our Rule of 1223.

**Clare:** Instead of dwelling on our differences, I suspect that our audience would appreciate hearing about what God did for Francis after he relinquished the control of the First Order.

I'm especially thinking about that September of 1224 when you were on retreat. That was when you were given the wounds of our Savior to bear for the rest of your life. I can attest first hand to seeing the

marks of the nails in your hands and the wound in your side.

**Francis:** That was indeed a blessed experience for I was truly able to understand just how much God loves us. I think that experience, coupled with my blindness, helped me to compose the Canticle of Sun the following Spring. Shortly after that I managed to dictate my testament.

**Fr. Bill:** Fr. Francis, I believe that you left out mentioning one of the things that several of us here consider extremely important. You have said absolutely nothing about starting the Third Order.

**Francis:** Thank you for reminding me. I can't believe that I left that out with so many tertiaries here with us. That was done in 1221 with the help of Cardinal Ugolino, who became Pope Gregory IX two years after my death. We composed the Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of Penance living in their own homes.

This Rule was written because I knew there were many devoted followers of our Lord Jesus, especially married people, who were unable to follow the Rules of either the First or Second Orders.

**Fr. Bill:** I'd like to hear from Elizabeth and Louis some of what was expected of the members of the Third Order in the 13th century. However, before telling us this, could we first find out something about each of you?

**Louis:** Why don't you begin, Elizabeth?

**Elizabeth:** I was born to King Andrew II and Queen Gertrude of Hungary in 1207. At the age of four, I became engaged to Louis IV, the Landgrave of Thuringia. Customs were rather different in our time and I was moved to that city in Germany so that I could grow up with my betrothed.

**Fr. Bill:** If more people did that today, maybe we wouldn't have so many divorces. Please continue!

**Elizabeth:** My next five years were like a fairy tale. Louis' father, Duke Hermann, adored me and there was not a subject who did or said anything contrary to his wishes. Furthermore, the love between Louis and myself grew daily. I was also filled with the love of God and this pleased both the Duke and his son.

That all ended with the death of Hermann when I was nine. The Duchess Sophia, Louis' sister Agnes, and others began to constantly berate me because of my piety. When I was not quite fourteen, they tried to convince Louis that he should send me back to Hungary and find someone else to wed.

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**A Meeting: Part 2 (cont.)**

Two years later, Louis turned 18 and, armed as a knight, led his first campaign of war. When he returned, we were married despite strong pressures from his court. The year was 1218.

**Fr. Bill:** Wasn't that about when you began spiritual direction under Master Conrad?

**Elizabeth:** Yes, it was. One of the most useful things that he did was to give me what he called "Twelve Maxims of the Spiritual Life".

**Dee:** What were some of them?

**Elizabeth:** Let me just recite the twelve for you.

1. Patiently endure contempt in the midst of voluntary poverty.
2. Give humility the first place in your heart.
3. Renounce human consolations and pleasures of the flesh.
4. Be merciful in all things to your neighbor.
5. Have always the remembrance of God enshrined in your heart.
6. Return thanks to the Lord for having by His Passion redeemed you from hell and from eternal death.
7. Since God has done so much for you, bear the Cross patiently.
8. Consecrate yourself entirely, body and soul, to God.
9. Recall frequently to your mind that you are the work of the hands of God, and consequently act in such a manner as will insure your being with Him for eternity.
10. Pardon in your neighbor all that you desire that he should forgive in you; do for him all that you would wish he should do for you.
11. Often think of the shortness of Life, and that the young die as well as the old; ever, then, aspire to eternal life.
12. Incessantly bewail your sins, and pray God to forgive them.

**Louis:** Master Conrad certainly gave you some good advice. There is a lot of similarity between those 12 maxims and the Rule that St. Francis wrote for the Third Order. By the way, when did you join?

**Elizabeth:** I first leaned of the Franciscan movement in 1221 when some of the friars first visited Germany, but it was in Italy that I learned about the Third Order. I actually joined in 1227.

**Dee:** We've heard a lot about your generosity, about how you sold your dowry to give to the poor and especially about how you fed the poor from the Royal granaries during the famine of 1226. You have given us a good example to follow.

**Elizabeth:** Your thanks need to go to my husband, Louis, as much as to me. I could never have aided the poor without his support.

**Fr. Bill:** We tell a story in which he was a bit critical of your generosity and was checking up on you.

**Elizabeth:** I know just the incident you mean. I used to carry food to the poor. Out of humility, I tried to do that as much in secret as possible. One day, Louis was returning from a hunting party when he came upon me descending a steep path. He was upset, but not because he objected to my generosity. It was because he didn't want me straining under a heavy load. But since I was doing God's work, the Lord showed His will by performing a miracle. When Louis uncovered my basket, the loaves of bread that I had been carrying had changed into roses. My husband never questioned my giving from then until his death in 1227.

**Bp Tutu:** It's truly wonderful the way God works such miracles. How hard was it for you after losing Louis?

**Elizabeth:** It was really terrible. Louis' brother Henry became regent since even the oldest son was too young to rule. He threw us, my four children and me, out of the castle and we had to beg just for a place to live. He even sent word to churches not to help us.

**Fr. Bill:** It would seem that Henry fell a ways short of doing God's will. I suspect that a few of us are thinking of some words to describe him that would not be appropriate for a church gathering. How did things work out?

**Elizabeth:** Even Sophia was appalled by the heartlessness of her son and helped me find a place to stay. When some of Louis' knights returned from the crusade with his remains, things were resolved. The children were placed in different homes. It was then that I became a Franciscan Tertiary. I spent the remainder of my life (only four years) caring for the sick and needy.

**Dee:** Many hospitals in our country are now named after you because of your caring for the sick. Thank you, Elizabeth.

**Fr. Bill:** I believe that it's now time for us to hear about King Louis IX.

**Louis:** I was born in 1214, just seven years after Princess Elizabeth. My mother, Blanche of Castille, bore eleven other children. She was particularly concerned to raise us as Christians. Once, she even said to me, "I would rather see you dead at my feet than stained with mortal sin." I remembered those words when I was a prisoner of the Muslims in Egypt during the second crusade. They wanted me to deny my faith, but I refused.

Mother also taught me how to rule, having served as

regent for eight years following my father's death in 1226.

In addition to being encouraged to keep the faith by my mother, I received much religious instruction from the Franciscan friars. Among my religious practices was the wearing of a hair shirt and fasting on every Friday.

**Fr. Scott:** You also have the reputation of having been generous in founding hospitals, building churches, and promoting learning.

**Louis:** Yes, I did try to live by the Franciscan principles of poverty and self denial. I also supported the Franciscans in a 1250 controversy with the Dominicans at the University of Paris.

**Fr. Bill:** Thank you, Louis. I think you've shown us why you and Elizabeth are recognized as the patron saints of the Third Order of St. Francis. Perhaps now would be a good time for you to tell us about the Third Order Rule which you were given by St. Francis. I believe that there were eight sections.

**Elizabeth:** Right. The first "Chapter" was on Daily Life. It mostly had to do with us wearing simple clothing.

**Louis:** Chapter II was "Abstinence". We were only to eat meat on Sundays, Tuesday, Thursdays, and a few special feast days. Chapter III was on Fasting, which we did on most Fridays.

**Elizabeth:** Chapter IV was "Prayer". We kept the seven canonical Hours of Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. We said twelve *Our Fathers* and *Gloria Patres* at each hour. At Prime and Compline, we also said the *Creed* and *Miserere mei Deus* if we knew them.

Chapter V was "The Sacraments and Other Matters". We were to make a confession three times a year and receive communion every Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. We were also to avoid oaths and taking up lethal weapons.

**Bp. Tutu:** I definitely approve of that last item. I stressed it over and over to the South African Blacks oppressed by Apartheid.

**Fr. Bill:** Bishop, I wish you could talk to some of the youth in our inner cities.

**Louis:** Chapter VI was "Special Mass and Meeting each Month". This was to be done in each city where there was more than one member of the order. We also had to take up collections at these meetings to help the poor.

**Elizabeth:** Chapter VII was "Visiting the Sick and Burying the Dead". Along with the areas implied by the title, it included a variety of instructions. One was that married women needed permission from their husbands to join the order.

**Fr. Bill:** That certainly tells us a lot about the status of women in the 13th century.

**Louis:** The final chapter was "Correction, Dispensation, Officers". It particularly put quite a bit of control of the tertiaries in the hands of a first order Visitor.

**Dee:** That was still true to a large degree in our own century until we had a major reorganization in 1972.

**Fr. Bill:** Dee, could you fill in a bit more about the Franciscan Orders in the Episcopal Church.

**Dee:** Gladly. The First Order celebrated their 75th anniversary in 1994. The Third Order actually predated the First Order by two weeks. I didn't actually join until about 1969. John Scott had been in twenty years by then.

To Be Continued...

## Homosexuality:

### Genetics vs. Choice

The Rev. Alden Whitney, M.D., Minister General, the Third Order, Society of Saint Francis (Reprinted from the European Province's *Chronicle*)

In March 1996, I made a presentation entitled "Homosexuality: Genetics vs. Choice" to my colleagues in Psychiatry at Norwalk Hospital in Connecticut where I work as a psychiatrist. In June of this year John Fox heard the same talk at the Third Order Convocation in New Orleans and graciously invited me to present some of it in the *Chronicle*. This is a drastically condensed version which aims to delineate something about how genetics and choice play roles in the sexuality of people who are gay or lesbian.

For the most part, gay men and lesbians will tell you that they were "born that way", or whatever be the case, that there was no conscious choice that they can recall. An opposite conviction about homosexuality is often expressed by heterosexual folk. Here's a sample from the Internet: (sic) "I am so sorry you feel that way. You see a colored man (woman) is born that way being gay is a CHOICE!!!! You can give all the chemical reasons you want. You can give all the social reasons you want. The answer is still God. Your mom was'n't right and you aren't right either." The conservative Right or perhaps more particularly the Christian Right often states that homosexuals obviously have picked the lascivious gay "life style" and sin greatly because of it. They are certain that heterosexuality is the only normal sexuality for human beings.

In a psychiatric text, dated August 1980, that I found in my library, it was clear that seventeen years ago, homosexual behavior was seen as an abnormal phenomenon in the sense that normality meant heterosexuality, and anything that wasn't heterosexual was

(continued, p. 16)

## Homosexuality: Genetics vs.

### Choice (cont.)

not quite normal. At that time there was thought to be no demonstrable genetic evidence for homosexuality. Rather the most prevalent theory was that of Bieber and his associates who, and I'm quoting the book, concluded that "the most significant factor in the genesis of homosexuality is the parental constellation of a detached hostile father and a close binding seductive mother who dominates the husband and diminishes his stature."

Early in 1996, in the Castro in San Francisco, I found two books which promised to shed light on the questions of genetics vs. choice. The first is Dean Hamer's *The Science of Desire* (Simon & Schuster, 1994). He embraces a view that heterosexuality and homosexuality are natural variations of the human condition that are at least as deeply rooted in nature as in nurture. Genetically identical twins have been shown to more likely be both gay than are brothers who are not twins. His initial research with the lineages of gay men showed that far more gays were on the mother's side of families than on the father's side, a pattern consistent with a special type of inheritance called sex linkage.

Hamer's follow-up posed the question: "Is there a gene on the X chromosome that influences male sexual orientation? Then [he says] we devised a straight forward test. If there is such a gene there should be markers close to it that are shared by more than half the pairs of gay brothers in the study. Half the brothers would get the markers by chance so that we would have to find it in more than half for there to be some genetic linkage. Finally we got a clear answer. There are such markers so there must be a gene." Hamer showed that the results were certainly well more than by chance. No matter how the data were analyzed there was a better than 99% probability that the observed linkage was a real one.

Hamer detected a genetic marker on the X chromosome showing that a gene exists in a general location called X28. But that finding is not the same as actually isolating or finding the gene itself, measuring its incidence and its effect on people, or understanding how it works. That research remains to be completed.

We now turn to the question of whether being gay or lesbian could be mostly a matter of choice. In the book (derived from the doctoral dissertation of Vera Whisman) *Queer by Choice* (Routledge, 1996), Whisman selected a sample of 39 lesbians and 33 gay men mostly from New York City, stating at the outset that the sample was not statistically representative of U.S. gay

and lesbian people. She found them divided into three groups. (1) The "determined" group who believe they were born gay and have always been gay. (2) The "mixed" group, people who see both hereditary and choice factors as playing a part in the formation of their sexuality. And the (3) The "chosen" group: people who believe that they have entirely chosen their sexual orientation. Over and over again in the various ways of looking at the data, the mixed group is predominant for both men and women. Lesbians compared to gay men are somewhat less inclined to believe they were born gay. They are more likely to have had various forms of heterosexual experience and/or identity over the course of their lives. Thus, they are more apt to claim that their sexual preference is chosen. Even so the chosen group is small and for the most part those speaking vehemently about deliberately choosing their sexuality are lesbians who have become so in later life.

Dean Hamer's most recent view of the genesis of sexual orientation is spelled out in the October 14, 1997 issue of *The Advocate* (gay & lesbian news magazine in the U.S.). "...Sexuality is too complex to ever be completely explained by genes. Although DNA may influence brain chemistry and thus tilt us to feel and behave in particular ways, it does not govern sexual identity. Predisposition is not predetermination. The social and cultural environment will always play a major role, as will chance and serendipity, choice and free will...In the future we will need laws prohibiting the altering of genes that influence personality and behavior traits such as intelligence, anxiety, sports ability, optimism, etc. The trick will be to make sure that sexual orientation is included on a list of anomaly traits rather than a list of diseases and disorders, such as schizophrenia or bipolar illness."

So with this information in mind, let's take every opportunity given us to educate others about human sexuality. For in the long run education will be a major factor in bringing about the much needed social changes we seek.

## With the SSF in Papua New Guinea

by Chris Garland, Area Chaplain of Essex (reprinted from the *Chronicle*)

The unmade track leading to the Friary at Haruro in Papua New Guinea speaks of Franciscan simplicity. Entering the Friary area, through a grove of slender coconut palms, you notice scattered functional two-storey buildings made of flimsy boarding, sporadically

skirted by tropical bushes. Off-centre is an almost round, half opened-sided chapel, spiritual center for the brothers and the many local people who look to them for encouragement and direction as the brothers walk about the villages and welcome villagers to the Friary. The social center is the refectory, where the brothers make up for an almost unvaried diet of friary-grown local vegetables—mainly sweet-potato—eked out by a little tinned mackerel, with the boisterous yet courteous goodwill of their companionship.

Buildings and diet reflect the lifestyle of the brothers—close to that of the local people, individually no better off than neighboring villagers, communally reflecting the strong local sense of togetherness, but showing signs of their contact with an organization of European origin.

I have happy memories of the hospitality at Haruro, and of the joyous festal occasions highlighted by fine local dancing and witty drama, during the nine years when I lived nearby at Newton Theological College. I admired the extent to which expatriate brothers, who contributed their notable leadership and teaching skills of the local Franciscan community, involved themselves in a Franciscan lifestyle that was strongly influenced by local custom. When I helped at retreats or day events I began to appreciate the way in which the brothers helped to tackle local social problems, and to promote the Christian devotion of the people. I also got to know and feel affection for many of the local brothers, not least those whom I taught at the Theological College. I saw the Franciscan ideal being successfully incarnated in another very different culture, and gained more of a vision of Franciscanism functioning as a world-wide movement.

## Some Old-Fashioned Help With Your Self-Examination

Check off your transgressions.

**Regulation 1 (Chap. II, 2 of the Rule).** a) omitted grace before meals ( ) times; b) after meals ( ) times.

**Regulation 2 (Chap. III).** Broken abstinence or fast a) on Fridays ( ) times; b) Ember Days ( ) times; Lenten Wednesdays (for those who have assumed that rule) ( ) times; d) during vigils ( ) times; Ash Wednesday or Good Friday ( ) times.

**Regulation 3 (Chap. IV).** a) Omitted morning prayers ( ) times; b) Evening prayers ( ) times; daily office ( ) times; some prayer for Franciscan intention ( ) times; daily Our Father and Hail Mary for intention of all our brethren ( ) times.

**Regulation 4 (Chap. V).** Omitted daily meditation ( ) times.

**Regulation 5 (Chap. VI).** Omitted daily examen ( ) times; monthly confession ( ) times; weekly Holy Communion ( ) times.

**Regulation 6 (Chap. VII).** Failed to assist at or celebrate Mass once a month ( ); b) failed to attend monthly Fellowship (if there is such) ( ). (No report is to be made regarding alms.)

**Regulation 7 (Chap. VIII).** Omitted the daily act of charity ( ) times.

**Regulation 8 (Chap. IX).** Omitted duty in the case of a departed tertiary ( ) times.

**Regulation 9 (Chap. X).** Omitted to make a will (applies only to those who have property) ( ).

**Regulation 10 (Chap. XI, 3).** I am now striving to gain the virtue of \_\_\_\_\_ (other matters for the report)

a) Failed to make my report promptly ( ) times since my last report; b) failed to wear the Little Habit or its proper substitute ( ) times. c) Failed to say my penance ( ) times.

(From *Third Order Manual*, first published under the title *A Bundle of Myrrh* at Merrill, Wisconsin in 1924, with a second edition in 1929 under the title *The Little Book of the Rule* at Mount Sinai.)

## Rainbow—A Final Meditation

Frank Kelly, Santa Barbara Fellowship  
When I see a rainbow, I don't think of a pot of gold at the end of it.

To me, a rainbow never ends. It shimmers in the sky for a little while and then it's gone—but it vibrates in my heart.

It assures me that God loves beauty, and God is playful.

Every rainbow conveys a shiver of eternal joy. It's liquid laughter flowing through the sky. It sings a special song—a rising, lifting song that raises my heart toward the heart of the Great Painter, the Artist who makes music out of a leaping glory in the clouds.

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4001 S.W. 5 Terrace  
Miami, FL 33134-2040**

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CELEBRATING DISCIPLINE**
- **"A MEETING OF FRANCISCANS"—A PLAY BY  
FR. BILL GRAHAM, PART 3 OF 3**
- **MORE FROM OUR ANGRAN-L ON-LINE  
REPORTER**