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CONVOCATION

Enclosed is a Paper prepared by our Chaplain, Br. Mark Francis, S.S.F., to set the tone for the 1977 Convocation. You can be a part of this Convocation by reading the Paper, and sending your comments to: Convocation Notes, c/o Chaplain of the Third Order, Box 399, Mt. Sinai, New York 11766. Although the comments will not be acknowledged in writing, they will be used at the Convocation in Fayetteville for a fuller impression of the strengths and weaknesses we all face in coming to terms with the fullness of the Gospel message and our role as Christian Franciscans.

CONGRATULATIONS

We were pleased to learn of:

- the marriage of Beth Ann Morgan to Earl Gorham.
- the ordination to priesthood of Robert George Brandt on December 18.
- the profession of Jack Stapleton on December 9.

FROM AROUND THE WORLD

The Rev. John A. Filler, of Kohala Episcopal Mission, Kapaau, Hawaii, wrote: Br. Mark Charles came out for a visit in November. The people of the Diocese were pleasantly surprised to learn that a male religious order was and continues to be a vital part of the ministry of the Episcopal Church. Later in the month Brother John Charles stopped here on his way to Australia, and preached at the Cathedral in Honolulu. My life has taken two distinctive major forward movements this past year. On July 1, I was professed. Then on October 16, I was ordained a priest. Both events were Spirit filled, and I feel very humble to be what I now am - a Franciscan Tertiary and a Priest. Both Dorothy Nakatsuji and I have been answering inquiries concerning the Franciscans, and we believe that some seeds have been sown on fertile ground.

Excerpts from Br. Geoffrey's Minister General's Letter of Fall 1976. His visit to the European Province was highlighted by the General Chapter at Hilfield in September. More than 100 professed brothers and sisters took part. He speaks of visiting the newest SSF house at Canterbury, a busy pilgrimage center. Other SSF work he mentions: in Soho (London), Notting Hill, Plaistow, Birmingham and the care of boys. In Belfast he found the scars of war everywhere apparent. One of the Brothers' most important functions, he feels, is to gather groups of people together to bring hope and light and encouragement. He later attended the Third Order Provincial Chapter at Salisbury, and the Interprovincial Chapter at Bishop's Ranch in the United States.

The African Province Third Order Newsletter, January 1977, summarized a report of the Interprovincial Chapter, on the first page. The rest of the paper describes individual tertiaries, their work and volunteer activities: from Durban, Natal - a hospital doctor, public health nurse, grandmother, driver, a rheumatic patient, university student, doctor's wife, physiotherapy tutor and lecturer.

In Johannesburg: nurse, parish priest, teacher, full-time grandmother, head of a play group, lay minister, wife of a company executive, art teacher, priest. Four tertiaries in other countries are affiliated with the Jo'burg group. Seven novices in Rhodesia are described.

From the Pacific Newsletter. In Auckland, there was a joint meeting of the First and Third Order and Companions to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the death of St. Francis. At Christchurch, there was a Third Order gettogether on a Friday evening followed by a Quiet Day on Saturday. One of the New Zealand Third Order novices is trying her vocation with the Poor Clares. From Selwyn, two tertiaries wrote brief impressions and shared a favorite poem. In Wellington, Stephen Stead wrote of his profession and priesting; and invited others to a community life with him. There is a new Third Order library, of about 40 books, primarily used to aid novice counseling.

From Guyana, South America, there is a short article by postulant Canon John Dorman. He wrote that although in ten years' traveling by river the Carib steersmen had never had an accident, one did take place recently as a particularly difficult trip through some falls was attempted. That day a boat sank; no lives lost. Still, Canon Dorman says "the Cuyunu boat men are second to none, and I shall never lose my admiration for their courage, skill and devotion to duty." His description of the happening was vivid!

NOTES

Much of the above material is available in full from our Librarian, Mrs. Lawrence Mahon, 1990 S.E. Mulberry Ave., Portland, OR 97214. We had hoped to publish a list of books newly available, with this mailing, but it is just not practical. There are two books by Hugo Muller; some Krishna, Buddhist, Yoga and Zen material as well as Merton, and Christian classics.

Do you have the following basic material of our Third Order? It is available from Helen Webb. Checks for voluntary donations for material should be made out to Third Order, Society of St. Francis.

1. Directory: Third Order intercession & address list (annual)
2. Manual: Admissions, Constitution, Rule, Way of Life, Statutes
3. Purple book: The Way of St. Francis
4. Book of Roots: Source documents
5. Calendar and Devotional Material

Please send your change of address to Helen Webb, Secretary and Editor. The Post Office charges for corrections have a way of mounting up! Have you returned the card enclosed with the last Newsletter? If not, please write to Helen, with information about whether you are a postulant, novice, or professed, date of renewal, date of pledge, and/or comments.

Have you sent in your reservation for the Fayetteville Convocation? That goes to Mrs. John Hamilton, 320 W. North Street, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701.

Did you add the new Bursar's name and address to your directory? There is a place for it inside the front cover.

Mr. Richard Hohlfeld
Fidelity Bank, Suite 1342
Philadelphia, PA 19109

" HERE I STAND "

Br. Mark Francis, S.S.F.
Chaplain to the Third Order

"Life does not demand much more of us than constancy and truth. If we remain fixed in our determination to follow the truth where we see it, we can hardly go far wrong. It is the people, where principles are dictated to by mind, and view of truth is therefore prejudiced, who make failure of their lives.

"Uncertain though our true function in life may be, the stage is largely set for us. In the last analysis our success lies not in the quality of our performance but in our sincerity as performers....

"Life for most of us means that we have to go on and on, playing our own part against scenery which is no longer of our own choice, and which we feel to be entirely inappropriate. It means playing to an audience which has not necessarily the best interest in us, but which has been forced by circumstances to be present while we perform. It means we will have no idea how the play is going to work out, and that we know only the lines of the speech which we happen actually to be reciting. Even the costume and the make-up are not of our own choosing. We have nothing to bring to the stage but ourselves. So, it must be our selves and not other people's. Nobody can be my understudy: I can be nobody else's.

"Whether I know myself or not, whether I like my life or not, I and my life will be judged on the single issue of conformity. Am I one with God's will! Have I conformed to the pattern of God's love?"

(Van Zeller, Dom Hubert, The Inner Search, 1957, Sheed and Ward; New York. pp. 15, 16)

Preface and Personal Introduction

For some time I have thought that the world in which I was born is not the same, has changed; and this has made my life difficult and painful. Now I am not so sure. Yes it has changed, but where I was putting my value, what I was trying so desperately to see was a static, unchanging world. I saw and did not see. Heard and did not hear. When I am able to look at history with a reasonably unprejudiced eye and am able, if only for a moment, to open my ears to listen to the world around me, I know, for that moment I am able to tolerate it, that the world (and myself as a very real part of the world) is constantly moving -- waxing and waning, changing. My great problem is that in this waxing and waning, in this change, I suffer. There is pain. It always seems that every time the world moves, someone gets hurt. I get hurt, because I am trying to live in a static world, a world in which "all truth" is and is not constantly being unfolded. We are all so tied to our pet beliefs and, unfortunately, to our own theology.

I am coming, more and more, to the statement that St. Paul said originally, and St. Francis again made over 750 years ago: "The only thing I can know is Christ and Him crucified."

Our major problem it seems is that we still (and this is our sin) put our trust, our values, in things and ideas rather than the man-incarnate, Jesus Christ.

Every time I do this I come to realize, usually from hindsight, that I have closed the door on "being led". Yes in a very real sense I close the door on the Holy Spirit, who has been sent to lead me - to lead us - into all truth. This does not mean that in the leading I - we - will avoid making mistakes. History has all too clearly shown us this. And it does not mean that where we are led today will be our final resting place, or even where we will be tomorrow; much less be "all truth". We all have such a desire to know that we often, more often than not, assume that what little pieces of the puzzle we have been given are the whole thing. And here again history says something entirely different - not to mention Scripture, which calls this "the sin of Adam"; or the words of our Lord who says, "You see and do not see, hear and do not hear." Logically, what follows is: "Judge not that you be not judged," said, too, by our Lord.

Brother Geoffrey, our Minister General, said in a sermon at Little Portion Friary, on Epiphany II, "The Church is at its weakest when it is concerned only with its own defense." - and I am sure Geoffrey is right. For the Church, as the mystical body of Christ, must be as defenseless as Christ was on the Cross; and if need be to cry out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" allowing God to work His will. Here too, if we have the courage to look back on history: ours, the Church's and the world's, every time there has been a crisis or involvement in what we would today call atrocities, that is when someone (or its - our - own self) has tried to defend it. We must remember difficult as it may be for us that, much to the bewilderment of his accusers, Jesus, the Christ, did not try to defend himself. His reply was, "You say that I am."

This brings us to a very real, significant, and painful point. If we are to be reconciled, someone must give up, someone must die. This is the Christ-model, for he died to reconcile us to God the Father. If we could die a martyr's death it would be much easier. But we are Franciscans. This is a Franciscan world. We are called from martyrdom to the role of peacemakers; and peacemakers are the ones who die - die inside to our values and our illusions; being brought face to face (and, hopefully, others with us) to the only truth we have: "Christ and Him crucified". This is the real truth for the Christian. For do we actually know the divine plan? We know through Scripture that there is a plan, and that that plan is Jesus Christ, his life, death, and resurrection. Reconciliation in action! Peacemaking on an eternal scale of which we are all a part! But we must be obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit, also remembering that even Jesus feared where he was being led. For in that Garden where the final hour was laid out for him, his sweat "was like great drops of blood".

Finally, there is the resurrection. Even this, Jesus did not do, it was done to him. So it is with the Church, and each one of us individually and corporately as the world. For the Church is the mystical body of Christ, the outward and visible life itself, life that waxes and wanes, being constantly brought to an ever new resurrection. Here too is real freedom, true liberation from our fantasies, our illusions, our defenses - or as Charles Williams would say, "where we meet our shadows" - thus beginning to become one with God, creation and ourselves.

"People who ask questions (Where is the good news? etc.) apparently cling like children with their arms full of balloons, to images of cherished innocence. They are willing to concede occasional error, but.... None of them will admit to what the sturdier clergy would identify as original sin (underlining mine) ... They prefer to believe that Americans live in a condition of almost perfect grace...

"The 'bad news', so called, is the common soil on which men raise the works of civilization. The bluebird of happiness sings on a compost heap."

("Countersigns: The blue bird of happiness," Harper's, 245:53 December 1972)

The Christian calls this compost heap the Cross; and truly a "bluebird of happiness" does sing, and is called Jesus Christ. Scripture, in both the Old and the New Testaments, is constantly reminding its readers - us hopefully - to come to terms and accept reality. In the language of religion, this is to say, "confess" -- the acknowledgement of our existence as that of "fallen creature"; the acceptance that we do not really "know"; the admitting that we all need help; and that for the Christian our help is in the name of the Lord. But for most of us there is a real tension, that manifests itself in many ways, in coming or beginning to come to this realization. David Baken states in a paper, "Idolatry in Religion and Science", presented at the Star Island Conference of the Institute in Religion in an Age of Science, August 1, 1960, that the three sins for which the death penalty was prescribed in the Torah were: murder, adultery, and idolatry. Idolatry, of these, was and is the most heinous. He goes on to define Idolatry as ~~the worship of the means toward the fulfillment of the religious impulse~~, as if it were the end (the fulfillment). He says, "In both science and religion there is the assumption that the fundamental reality is that which is beyond the manifest.. the huge world of the unmanifest. If at any stage of development we begin to worship the manifest, or the means whereby we have made some part manifest, then indeed can it be said that we are being idolatrous."

With this in mind we can begin to see the real significance of our Lord: incarnate man, born of a woman, and fully God; the manifest and the unmanifest. In the Gospel according to Saint John, Jesus says, "And I shall draw all men to myself, when I am lifted up from the earth." (St. John 12:32) This points immediately to two liftings up that were to follow: the lifting up upon the Cross, and the lifting up in the Resurrection. The manifest and the unmanifest. Our problem is that we desire the unmanifest so much that we do not acknowledge the manifest; and this is called "Original Sin". And actually it all began, the Passion began, at the dawn of history in the Garden of Eden. For our Lord was materially present in the Garden as the Tree of Life. Yes, the Adam in that paramount moment in time rejected Life: our Lord, the Christ. Thus the Passion began, and was consummated in the first blood sacrifice: Cain taking Abel's life - the ultimate rejection of Life: death.

The very story of the Hebrews is the struggle of trying to return to the Promised Land, the garden over whose gate the Angel with the flaming sword stands guard. We can see from the 6th chapter of Isaiah that the Angel was not to refuse entrance to the garden, but:

"Woe is me! I am lost
for I am a man of unclean lips
and I dwell among a people of unclean lips;
yet with these eyes I have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." (v.5)

and with a "glowing coal",

"See, this has touched your lips;
your iniquity is removed,
and your sin is wiped away." (Is. 6:7)

For the Hebrews, the Promised Land never actually materialized for any period of time. They were too busy with their own manifestations. This is the cry of the prophets. They paid a terrible price, for since 70 A.D. they have not had a land, but have been only sojourners in other lands. But there is a very real parable here, as well; for land - any land - is manifested; and we are journeying to the unmanifested.

This is the story of Jesus the Christ, perfect man and fully God, who was sent in the fullness of time as the new Adam, Life itself, and also the fulfillment of the first Adam's original choice in the Garden of Eden: and, "he sinned not." The truth of Jesus' message was in the acceptance of the cup of which he was to drink, the Passion; the acceptance and taking upon himself the responsibility for our actions. And actually there is no way man - we - can escape the life he has chosen except through the painful death of idolatry. But at the same time, in the saving of creation until that ultimate moment when all creation suffers the passion, and idolatry no longer masks the pain of death, man can see, even though darkly, if he has the courage, in all things shadows and glimmers of the true reality - the unmanifested. For even in man's most brutal choices, something of the true reality is there to see and hear. But "we see and do not see, hear and do not hear." Yes, truly blessed are the poor in spirit for they have little choice except the Passion, even though they too do not realize it.

II

If you are finding these words strange, is it not equally strange that one of the first "lifting up" to save life was in the journey of the Hebrews in the desert to the Promised Land: yes, the lifting up of the bronze serpent, the very serpent that tempted Adam to move, act, and choose. A mystery, or an eternal verity?

The saving of creation - not just man - is an act by God himself. For man cannot save himself. This is the Christ-model, only God saves. As a matter of fact, man cannot even work out his own salvation. This was done for him before the foundation of the world, through God the Father's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The only thing man can actually do is either to choose, or not to choose. To choose, man must whether he realizes it or not accept the Passion in one form or another: the Passion of death that comes from rejecting life; or the Passion of birth that comes from accepting life. But, too, man has the option - as temporary as it might be - of not choosing, and then being tempted. This is a very important part of the story of the Adam in the Garden of Eden.

In choosing the ultimate reality: God, man must also accept the Passion: Jesus Christ. The Passion and Jesus Christ are of the same substance through the Incarnation. One cannot be had without the other. This too is a mystery of the Godhead...just as man "saved" in the reality of the Passion cannot have just the "good" of atomic energy, for example. He must also accept the "bad", the nothing. This is a very part of the choice man made in the beginning of his temporal history. For since man's creation was good, and for good, and a choice to know

both good and evil; he must now squint at the mirror or window of the manifested reality which has been made dark by his own proliferation. "He sees and sees not; hears and hears not." This too is a part of his journey back to the Garden of Eden, the Promised Land. It is an acknowledgement of his situation as it is, and an asking - crying out - with humility of heart, with the true passion of the soul, "What are the choices?" then making them with courage, knowing full well that the result would be at best only a step in the journey, a "terrible good". Undoubtedly, this too is a very real part of the Passion of the God-man, Jesus Christ: that in his asking all men to follow him, they too would be led into the fullness of the Passion, the "same cup". The real pain and the ultimate paradox is that this is not actually an individualistic choice. Man - mankind - is a created body, created for the singular purpose of exercising dominion over the rest of creation, whose head is Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God.

What is right? What is wrong? What should I do? These are questions of the Passion, where the ultimate answer is to accept God through His Son, and to live with your fellow man, to live with the result of your choices or no-choices. Hidden somewhere in the paradox to life together is a great truth, the image and likeness of the Godhead. We can see however darkly that man was not to remain a child-gardener, he was not to remain in an eternal sandbox. For, in his created destiny he had a journey to make, a journey to make into the very life of the Godhead through Jesus Christ as one of His members - the Tree of Life.

Man's journey is now two-fold. He must accept the manifestation of his own creation and the rest of creation for which he has been given responsibility. And man must accept the unmanifested life of which he too has been "drawn". He - man - we - are faced with choices that are absolute, and yet are saved from being absolute; faced with the choice of "having to be", and at the same time, he knows in the very core of his being that this is only a fiction, a shadow of his real being, an image and likeness he knows not, not even his own name.

III

"I am the Truth, the Light, and the Way." It is in the Passion that we begin to find reality, our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is through the Passion we come to God. It is of little wonder that St. Francis said, "The only thing I can know is Christ and Him crucified."

Man - modern man, as well as primal man: the Adam - does not want to live life as it was created. He wants another reality, another perfection: his reality and his perfection. He wants to know all things good and evil, to be as God without the responsibility of God. God took responsibility for His creation and sent His only-begotten Son. This other reality seems to be the real search of all too many people - the occult, magic, strange mysticisms, not to mention the everyday ones of social stature, wealth, intellectualism, drug, sex, etc. This is true both in the Church and outside it; for the Church is the outward and visible sign of the Passion. In that other reality all are illusions, idols, and at the same time shadows of the true reality. One of the great mysteries of the Passion is that even in knowing the illusions and shadows for what they are, not all of them can be put aside; but all of them can be offered, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

Man's great problem which results from his own created ability to create without the intrinsic knowledge of all things, creates something far different even though similar than is there. And man bases his own value on seeing himself and his God in a "perfection" that man himself has created. We can see a strange

reflection of this inability to see and hear in the command, "Be ye perfect as I am perfect," with the Adam making the move under the pressure of temptation but without obedience and without Christ, the Tree of Life. We can also see Cain struggling in the same way, even as he took Abel's life. Then if we have the courage, we can see ourselves in the same desperate struggle. In this way, the "fallen way", our struggle is to exist, to survive by our own strength, to maintain our illusions of the Garden. We only want to do what is good and right. But "only God in heaven is good," and only Christ is the Truth. Then, as the Passion presses in, impinges upon our fantasies and illusions, we strike out against this intrusion in defense of what we conceive as good and right.

The Passion, in one way, is very much like a trap where we are damned if we do and damned if we don't. If this be our case then we may have to endure pain and suffering, until we are able to cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!" This is one of the most critical moments in man's mortal life, where he can give up either to Nothing, in despair, or give up his fantasies and illusions so that he can be transformed into a new creature. This is the moment of ultimate choice: Life or Death.

IV

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:1,2)

The whole idea of sacrifice, of sacrificial transformation, is not very popular today. Here possibly we are reacting against, rather than responding to the Passion. The Passion is and was the sacrificial transformation of Jesus Christ. And too, the idea of sacrificial transformation is not easy to accept. For we also have to accept the as yet unknown quantity and quality, not only of ourselves but also of the Godhead. For it is in the Godhead we are created; and it is in the Godhead we are saved until that moment in time and eternity known only by the Father, when we are to be brought face to face with "glory". If such a transformation were to be one of instantaneous and absolute change, then it would be easier; but even our Lord was in the tomb three days. Such change does happen, mostly in rather rare cases. For most of us it is gradual because we hold back, not wanting to acknowledge our fantasies and illusions. Did not God try a variation of this type of change in the Flood?

Sacrificial transformation within the Passion is not unlike Jesus' forty days in the wilderness when he too was tempted to choose. But he responded to, accepted his situation "perfectly" as not reality, and chose God. He gave himself up, denied the illusion of reality, for the void (nothing) from which creation was made, has its magnetic pull, and chose God. He chose to be led, to be taught, to be strengthened, to grow in stature and wisdom -- and, to be saved. Then he went on to do the very same things, or even more spectacular works at other times and for vastly different reasons. We can also see this in Jesus' healing ministry - not in that they were healed (which they were), but in that which caused the injury was changed, transformed - - very similar, extremely different. We can see this in the life of Jesus himself: from his Incarnation through the Transformation on the Mount, to his Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension - the same God-man, but with a very real "glorified difference".

Actually, in the Passion we have a very little alternative but to do many of the same things but for vastly different reasons. In a science fiction book this was stated:

"...for it suddenly seems to me that the destruction of what should not be, that is, the destruction of what you people call evil, is less just and desirable than the conversion of this evil into what you call good."

(Author and title unknown)

Our real value rests in, by and through God. It is in our created ability to receive value by giving value. This is also, on the other side of the coin, one of the reasons for our fall. We must at all times go to the primary orders: "You shall have no other god to set against me." (Exodus 20:3) In this way the freedom fighter can and will be a part of the blood sacrifice, only he will know it, accept it. The lover will still be a lover, but being able to love more fully and more completely by knowing and accepting the inadequacies of his love, yes, the depravity of his love. The judge will still judge, knowing that this is only to continue a necessary fiction of justice until real justice is given. This is all a part of the Passion.

V

"For God so loved the world" ... "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy soul, and all thy mind...Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Love is the true "image and likeness of God" in which we were made. Yet, within the Passion, within the salvation of our fallen natures, we both love and hate, "lukewarmness": indifference, in the abomination. Yes we must fuse the "ambivalence", and come to accept this ambivalence in our manifested beings as yet not brought "to glory". Part of the very real tension and pain of the Passion is in this fusing of the ambivalence, a "terrible good".

This is also one of the processes in growth and wisdom. Each age experiences this mystery, for each age has the answer. But there is always the Holy Spirit leading and bringing us into all truth, with the truth of the Godhead yet to be revealed. And we forget that because of Adam's original choice we are being led, not only into the truth of the Godhead (Good), but into the truth of Nothing (Evil), the truth of "all things", "to know even as we are known".

The only unforgiveable sin is the sin against the Holy Spirit who has been sent to lead, to lead us into all truth. Yes the Holy Spirit is to lead us into the Truth, the fullness of Christ, the second Person of the Godhead. The tension of fused ambivalence is continued as part of the mystery of salvation - in our being able, within the context of not actually knowing, to bind or loose from time to time as needs permit in our life together. This is both a mystery of the interaction of the Godhead, and the mystery of the Godhead's interaction of love in the form of mercy to its creatures, fallen as they are.

Finally, in a very real way the Passion is like a cocoon where the metamorphosis and transformation of life goes on until the new creature breaks forth. Or, by way of analogy, it is like happy children in a room filled with toys, all of which can be used, played with, enjoyed, learned from and shared, if need be.

Some of the toys will hurt if used wrongly. Some will kill if used wrongly. Until the children find a balance in their life together, chaos will reign - a real Nothing. The children must come to find love - love of self, love of others, seeing differences, accepting uniqueness. For each has been created for a particular purpose, similar but far from the same. Within this room the children are happy, without fear, because they know that nothing is lost. "Abba," their Daddy, will fix and heal that which has been broken or killed - but in his good time, for that too is a part of the learning process. The children continue to play and learn under the watchful eye and correction of Abba, some times by a loving gesture, some times by a strongly loving pat on the behind, and some times, especially for the stronger-willed children, by allowing them to learn the hard way, by getting burnt. But Abba is always there looking on, waiting, and saying by not saying: "When you have grown in stature and wisdom you are to join me. But until that time, you are still my son, my man-child."

Yes, he is a loving Father, training us to join him in his love and power, each of us as he created each of us to be. And within the confines of the room where we have been created, we are free to accept or reject what is going on; and we will, in his time, have to face the responsibility of our choice. This is true love and true justice combined. We are to join him as the Body of the only-begotten Son, who is the Head of this Body - a mystery yet to be revealed. When he has determined that the time has come, he will send his Son to close time and life as we now know it. In this final act he will also deal with his children who did not want to be a part of the dance of life, or who had wanted all other children to dance their way. Like all children some will want to continue to play in the sandbox, taking no responsibility for themselves or for others. And there are those children who think they are ready to accept the responsibility for everyone. From these two sources spring all the evil and sin as we know it. This, too, is a combination of the story found and first acted out in the Garden of Eden - the Passion.

In closing: there does come as promised with the acceptance of the Passion, with the acceptance of Christ - even though the moments may be rare - "a peace that passes human understanding".

But this peace is of the Passion, given by the Holy Spirit as he leads us into the simplicity of life, the wisdom of life itself. For wisdom is the ability to see and the ability to choose, to exercise dominion over, to be a part of creation as creature. This is the final step in integrity for man, and for the man who will not put aside his created destiny for the illusions of reality. Yes, there is a peace in knowing that we no longer have to pretend to be gods. We no longer have to be good, for "only God in heaven is good"; nor can we. We no longer have to be right, for Jesus the Christ is the Truth; nor can we.

There is actually only one choice we have to make, with all others depending on this primary choice: Life or Death, Jesus Christ or a return to Nothing. Our choice of the Tree of Life, Jesus Christ, justifies us for all time, as long as we try however darkly or feebly to make this choice primary in all of our acts.