



**THE ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS:  
ITS SPIRIT AND ITS MISSION IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

By Kajetan Esser, Ignatius C. Brady, 1959

This digital edition is presented by  
The Orthodox Anglican Society of St. Francis

## Chapter One

### **UNITY AND DIVERSITY OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS**

Catholic life takes many forms and possesses untold ways of unfolding itself. Nowhere is this more evident than in the variety of orders and congregations in the Church. All religious indeed have a common goal, perfect likeness to Christ and union with him. All seek to attain Christian perfection in their personal life, since each has received the same invitation from our Lord: "Come, follow me" (Mt. 19,21), even to the Cross: "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Lk. 9,23) . They seek to follow more closely him who said: "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn. 14,6). All Christians are called by God to follow Christ, to live according to the Gospel, and thus grow in holiness. But religious, by the very nature of their special vocation, are to live that Gospel wholeheartedly and without reserve. In the freedom assured them by the three vows of poverty, obedience and chastity, their duty and privilege within the Church is to achieve completely the ideals of a Christlike life. Yet they are not to do this for themselves alone, since their life is to be of benefit and inspiration for all members of the Church. Especially must it be a reproach to those Christians entangled in the things of this world, who all too often run the danger of compromising the Gospel by a life that is but half-Christian. Thus by their life and work all religious orders are to make the good news of the Gospel incarnate, so to speak, in the Church, by living to the full the pure truths of that Gospel.

Yet if this is the goal common to all religious communities, history and our own experience show that the ways in which it is fulfilled are many and varied. What is it then that sets one order off from another?

#### **Two Types of Orders**

In many instances, the difference between one order and another is largely a matter of external characteristics. Some religious orders or communities were founded to fulfill a very definite purpose, since some specific need or particular emergency in the Kingdom of Christ called them into being. Thus, for example, the military orders of the middle ages (the Knights Templar, the Knights of St. John, etc.) were formed, it would seem, for the special task of defending the Holy Land and protecting the pilgrims who visited the Holy Places. Or again, certain orders were founded primarily to ransom Christian captives enslaved by the infidel and thus save them from the danger of renouncing their faith. Much the same may be said, though it is not always so apparent, of the great nursing orders, or those devoted to teaching, and of the many active mission societies of the present day. In addition to the goal common to all orders, such religious communities usually derive their special, individual traits and even perhaps their spirit and spirituality from the particular need of the Church which gave them birth.

On the other hand, there are orders which do not draw their distinctive marks from any such limited purpose, since they can and do serve the Church in all her needs. The difference between them lies rather within, in the special or peculiar spirit which each embodies and with which they undertake their mission in the Mystical Body. To illustrate this, we may take as examples the oldest and the newest of the great orders of the Church, the Benedictines and the Jesuits.

The long history of the Order of St. Benedict, in all its branches and congregations, is a glorious story of manifold service to the Church. So varied has been its contribution that there seems to have been scarcely a need in the Mystical Body of Christ that was not in some way or other met by this monastic family. Yet we cannot but notice that whatever the task it has undertaken to fulfill, the Order has always done so in a very definite spirit which no other order is capable of achieving.

The same holds true for the Order founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola. More than any other group, perhaps, it has made its own all the needs of the Church. But even as it zealously and vigorously works for the Kingdom of Christ, it too is completely directed by a spirit all its own, the inner source of its wisdom and strength.

### **An Inner Spirit**

For orders of this type a definite mentality or inner spirit, rather than some specific external task, determines their characteristic pattern of life. From this arises a second difference between such orders: their particular mode of following Christ. Their inner spirit leads each order to its own distinctive way of looking at the spiritual life, so that each is marked by its own spirituality as well as spirit. In more concrete terms, this means that each embodies a special way of imitating Christ. Generally, this can be traced to the historical circumstances or milieu in the Church when the order was founded. Yet if an order thus reflects its historical origins, it is not thereby a mere monument to the past. Its peculiar way of following Christ continues to have lasting value in the Church, even as it gives the order itself its own special stamp and character. To clarify this by specific examples, let us return to the two Orders mentioned above.

St. Benedict is best pictured standing in awe and adoration before the glorified Christ, the *Kyrios Christos*, King and Lord of time and eternity, who as the great High priest forever offers to the Eternal Father the homage and the petitions of mankind. About him and his followers is thus assembled a community of worshippers, men, women, united by the bonds of the sacred liturgy, who have left everything and offered up all things that in imitation of Christ the High priest they may present to the Father all the needs of the Church and evermore plead her cause. Their primary role is thus to be the living voices of the Church and the world before the throne of God, through the Mystery of Christ hidden in the sacred liturgy of his Mystical Body.

St. Ignatius of Loyola, on the other hand, is the soldier-saint, fighting valiantly at the side of Christ to conquer the kingdom of the evil one and to obtain victory for the kingdom of God in the world. Around him and his holy disciples is thus assembled

an army of fighters for Christ who pledge unswerving loyalty and absolute obedience to the standard of Christ. His Order is composed of men who are ready to offer all and leave all things that in imitation of Christ the King they may undertake all the needs of his kingdom. This they are to do at any cost, often in lonely outposts, or in the front lines where the battle is thickest, for wherever Satan rears his head they are to be found in battle array against the powers of darkness.

The first group of religious orders, those founded primarily for some specific need or purpose, can lose their meaning and importance for the kingdom of God. When their task is completed, as happened to the knightly orders of the middle ages, they may disappear from history. The second group, however, that of orders distinguished more by an inner spirit and spirituality, will scarcely ever become extinct. Even when their usual forms of the apostolate are lost or changed, they have not lost their purpose. In them, what they do is of far less importance than what they are and how, in what spirit, they serve the Church. They would become meaningless and forfeit their right to exist only if they should renounce their peculiar spirit and thus be untrue to the very heart of their being.

## Chapter Two

### **THE ORIGINAL MISSION OF THE FRIARS MINOR**

In the light of this distinction between types of religious orders, we can now ask the question: did the Order of Friars Minor come into being for some particular purpose? Was it, in other words, founded to meet some specific need in the Church, so that its special character would derive from some definite field of labor or form of the apostolate? To answer such a question we must go back to the beginning of the Order and see what work or what apostolic tasks Francis proposed to undertake.

#### **Early Franciscan Work**

At first, the friars seem to have continued at whatever trade they had previously followed. They had no convents or friaries in the beginning, but lived rather among the people, accepting lodging wherever it was offered.<sup>1</sup> A change came toward 1216, when Bishop Jacques de Vitry saw the friars at Perugia, and wrote: "By day they go into the cities and towns, that by working they may earn their livelihood; at night, however, they return to deserted and solitary places, to give themselves to contemplation."<sup>2</sup> Exhortations to a right manner of working (that is, manual labor) occupy a large place in the writings of St. Francis. Thus, in the so-called First Rule (more correctly known as the non-confirmed Rule, to distinguish it from the final, confirmed Rule), he devotes a whole chapter to "The Manner of Serving and Working": "The friars, wherever they may be serving or working for others, are not to be chamberlains or cellarers or in any way to have charge of the houses of those they

serve; nor are they to accept any position that may beget scandal or bring harm to their soul (Mk. 8,36). Instead, they are to be underlings (minores) and subject to all who are in the same house. And the friars who are skilled at work are to labor at the trade they know, if it is not against the salvation of their soul and they can do it uprightly ... And for their work, they may receive whatever is necessary for them, except money. And when there may be need, let them go for alms like other poor people. And they may have the tools and instruments required by such trades."<sup>3</sup>

These injunctions Francis repeats in the final Rule, approved by Pope Honorius in 1223. His words are briefer, but they have more importance: "When the friars are blessed by the Lord with ability in some form of work, they should do their work faithfully and out of a sense of dedication. In this way they will put to rout that enemy of the soul, idleness; and at the same time not destroy the spirit of holy prayer and devotedness. For to this inner spirit all other things of life must positively contribute. As pay for their work, they may receive things necessary for bodily sustenance, for themselves or their brethren, but not money in any form. In this let them act in all humility, as befits men who are the servants of God and the disciples of most holy poverty."<sup>4</sup>

Shortly before his death, in his last admonition to the friars, Francis once more recommended to them this duty of work: "And I worked with my hands, and I still have that desire. And I definitely wish that all the friars be occupied in some kind of work, as long as it becomes our calling. Those who do not know how should learn, not indeed out of any desire for the pay the work may carry with it, but to give a good example and to avoid idleness. And if there are times when no pay is given for our work, then we may have recourse to the table of the Lord, and beg alms from door to door."<sup>5</sup>

These words prove clearly that Francis did not work for the sake of working or in view of any reward. Rather, work, manual labor, was for him a holy task, an apostolic duty. For him, it was an important aspect of the Franciscan apostolate, which primarily consists in giving to the world an example of a wholly Christian and Christlike life, living among men and working with them, but completely in the spirit of the Gospel: "They are to be underlings — lesser, minores — and subject to all who are in the same house, and ever ready to serve them." Work all too often turns men's hearts from God because they seek primarily the money it brings, and thus it proves a real danger to their Christian vocation. The example of the Friars Minor of earnest work that leads to God, not away from him, will help offset that danger.

In the early Rule Francis speaks likewise of the care the friars may take of the sick, and especially (after his own example<sup>6</sup>) of those afflicted with leprosy: "Other services, which are not contrary to our way of life, the friars may render with the blessing of God. Yet when the lepers are in manifest need, the brothers may seek alms for them. They are, however, to avoid money, and take care that they do not go about from place to place in search of filthy lucre."<sup>7</sup>

## **Preaching and Missions**

In the same Rule the priests of the Order are considered as shepherds of souls in the kingdom of God. To them Francis gives prudent counsel on the way they should hear confessions and preach the word of God.<sup>8</sup> In those early Franciscan days, sermons usually took the form of itinerant preaching, whereby the friars, even when not priests, would speak in the church, the marketplace, or wherever they could attract a crowd. This work had such phenomenal results that Jacques de Vitry wrote in astonishment: "This is the Order of the Poor Men of the Crucified, the Order of preachers whom we call the Lesser Brothers."<sup>9</sup>

Again, for the first time in any religious rule, Francis speaks at length of foreign missions. A special chapter is devoted to "The Friars who go among the Saracens and others not of the Faith." To them the Saint gives clear and farsighted admonitions and directives for their apostolic life and work. They must be dedicated men, ready if necessary to sacrifice life itself for the spread of the Gospel: "And let all the friars, wherever they may be, remember that they have surrendered themselves in soul and body to our Lord Jesus Christ and must for love of him expose themselves to enemies visible and invisible, because the Lord says: 'He who loses his life for my sake will save it unto life everlasting (Lk. 9,24).'"<sup>10</sup>

Yet another side of the Order's life and place in the Church is revealed in the brief Rule Francis wrote for those of his sons who felt called to solitude and the contemplative life in holy prayer and meditation on the mysteries of God.<sup>11</sup> This form of the Christian life Francis considered so urgent and so necessary that for a long time he debated with himself whether he should not choose it instead of the apostolic work of preaching. When God settled his doubt through St. Clare and Brother Sylvester, he saw that he and his Order were to embrace both the apostolate of preaching and that of contemplation.

Lastly, Francis approved the apostolate of study and teaching, especially in the sacred sciences, when he wrote to St. Anthony of Padua: "It pleases me that you should teach theology to the friars, provided that those who give themselves to such study do not destroy the spirit of holy prayer and devotedness, as is contained in the Rule."<sup>12</sup>

## **Integration in the Liturgy**

These manifold and diversified tasks of the Franciscan apostolate are daily to be permeated and sustained by the celebration of the sacred liturgy, in the Mass and the Divine Office. In words that were particularly forceful Francis insisted on this as a solemn duty. Not only did he enjoin on the friars the recitation of the office, but even gave them his own formula for its spiritual fulfillment: "Let the clerics say the office with devotion before God, not attending to melody of voice but to consonance of mind, so that their voice will be in harmony with their mind and their mind be in tune with God."<sup>13</sup>

This integration of the whole of Franciscan life in the celebration of the liturgy Francis considered so important that despite his usual gentleness and amiability he could write sternly: "Whoever of the friars refuse to observe these things, I do not hold as Catholics or as my brethren; and I do not wish to see them or speak to them until they have done penance and become of a different mind."<sup>14</sup>

From the beginning of the Order the activities of the Friars Minor were thus rich and diversified, and this inheritance of St. Francis it has continued to maintain. Its tasks reach from simple manual labor to the life of sublime contemplation, from the active care of the classroom and lecture-hall, with the observance of the sacred liturgy occupying a special place and unifying all seraphic activities. A broader range of apostolic work could hardly have been conceived at that time. We are right, then, in drawing the conclusion that the Order of St. Francis does not obtain its special character or inner purpose from any one particular type of activity.

### Chapter Three

#### **HOW ST. FRANCIS IMITATED CHRIST**

If the Order of Friars Minor does not belong to those religious institutes founded for some special need of the Church, the further question arises whether Francis gave to his Order a well-defined spirit or attitude which would give an inner unity to its manifold external activities. To answer this question is to ask another: Does St. Francis embody in himself and his Order a distinctive way of imitating Christ, so that Franciscan spirituality would represent and reflect in a special way the life and actions of Christ?

#### **The Mirror of Christ**

At the heart of St. Francis' way of life stands the figure of the God-man Jesus Christ. Since the time of Bernard of Clairvaux, the piety of the middle ages had discovered anew the human side of the person of our Savior. This new piety — *devotio* as it was called — chose to dwell on the events of the earthly life of Christ as related in the Gospel. It delighted to contemplate Christ on earth as poor, despised, lowly, unknown; as preaching by preference to the poor and the ordinary people; as become the servant of all, especially of the sick and the weak; as the good shepherd, who helped the distressed and sought out the erring and the sinner, and, in the end, laid down his life for his sheep in his sufferings and death on the Cross. These scenes were the most prominent features of the new picture of Christ to which the pious and "devout" Christian of that time found himself irresistibly drawn, as in joy and love he came to realize that through the Incarnation Christ had become our Brother.

It was this new portrait of Christ which likewise enthralled St. Francis and completely dominated his life and thought. He "lived" the good news of the Gospel in

an altogether new, direct, personal way, the way of love. The love of Christ, which literally consumed his heart, banished the barriers of space and time, and what was past became present and real. For him Christ lived once more in the pages of the Gospel, and the words of Christ seemed addressed directly to him. In such a spirit, he constructed the crib at Greccio that he might imitate and, imitating, might experience what happened long ago in Bethlehem.

In such a spirit, too, his love of the Passion so plunged him heart and mind in the sufferings of Christ that the marks of the Crucified were imprinted on him. Thus did the pages of the Gospel, while remaining wholly divine, cease to be remote and afar-off and became for him so humanly near. God's infinite love, which reveals itself in the Incarnation and becomes ever more visible in the life of the God-man, so captivated the Saint that he could do nought else save follow Christ. As it was his deep conviction that the life of Christ is the way by which the love of the Father becomes real and visible to men, so he saw too that the way of man to the love of the Father is that same life of Christ. The imitation of that life remained for Francis the one and only secure path to God's love. Hence with a heart afire with deep personal love of the Savior, he set out to imitate step by step the life of Christ. This he did with a directness and simplicity that often confounded human prudence, since he took the Gospel with a literalness that admitted neither compromise nor accommodation that might explain away its meaning.

As a result, the life of Francis so reflected the life of Christ that to his contemporaries he seemed like Christ come back to earth. For them, as his first biographer, Thomas of Celano, wrote, he was a mirror of Christ: "I am convinced that the Blessed Francis was a most holy mirror of the holiness of the Lord and an image of His perfection" (II Cel.n. 26). What characterized Francis' way of following Christ was that it was wholly a matter of love: It grew out of love and in turn led to love. Christ has loved us and become our Brother that he might make us, his brothers, children of his Father. How then could Francis refuse to love him in return? Man's love is but the answer to God's love; and as God's love is so overflowing, so must man's answer be total and unreserved. This complete emphasis on love is truly the characteristic mark of the way Francis followed Christ.

### **As Rule and Life**

This following of Christ in loving imitation Francis set before his brothers in his life and words as the ideal for them to follow. As Christ had lived, so Francis desired to live, and thus too should his friars live. This goal, so central to the inner life of the Order, no one has grasped more clearly than St. Clare, that truest disciple of St. Francis: "The Son of God became for us the Way; and that Way our Blessed Father Francis, his true lover and imitator, has shown and taught us by word and example."<sup>1</sup> Hence Francis constantly held up this ideal as binding on his friars: "The Rule and Life of these friars is this, namely, to live in obedience, in chastity and without anything of their own, and to follow the teaching and footsteps of our Lord Jesus

Christ."<sup>2</sup> To make sure no doubt remained how he wished this life according to the Gospel, this following of Christ, to be understood, Francis made use, by preference, of the words of Scripture: "*segi vestigia eius*, follow in his steps."<sup>3</sup> The friars are literally to imitate that life step by step, and set their feet in the very prints left by our Savior. The law and pattern of their life is simply "the words, the life and the teachings of Christ and his holy Gospel," to which they must hold fast.<sup>4</sup> "Let us look, all my brothers, at the Good Shepherd, who, to save his sheep, endured the Passion and the Cross. The sheep of the Lord have followed him in tribulation and persecution and shame, in hunger and thirst, in weakness and trials and all else."<sup>5</sup> The example of the life of Christ must thus be ever before the eyes of the friars, and they must always conform to it in their own personal life.

### **The Spirit of the Lord**

Whoever thus faithfully follows the footsteps of Christ and unswervingly imitates His example, in him does the spirit of Christ become alive. His life and deeds will reflect, as did those of Francis, a new and shining image of Christ as the spirit of Christ becomes fruitful in him. For this reason Francis was so insistent that the *Spiritus Domini*, the spirit of the Lord, take possession of his friars.

In this emphasis on the "spirit of the Lord," which is the crown of a life of imitation of Christ and its most precious fruit, we can find the heart of the thought and Christian outlook of St. Francis. His two Rules, his letters and his admonitions are full of the contrast between the "spirit of the Lord" and the "spirit of the flesh," or, in more modern language, the spirit of self and selfcenteredness.<sup>6</sup> One must conquer the other, and in the Christian and the Friar Minor, the *spiritus Domini* must overcome the *spiritus carnis*, the spirit of self.

In his exterior life, it is true, Francis practiced and demanded of his friars a literal and even slavish imitation of Christ, to the extent that he seems to have "played" the role of Christ in his own life (for he was an actor and a poet, and could well give vent to his creative fancy). Yet for him, the following of Christ was not to be found primarily or exclusively in a mere external or formal imitation of the life of our Lord. Francis' own life may have been dramatic, to borrow a phrase from Chesterton, but it was not a drama. He lived Christ to the fullest sense, so that what might have been a mere external following became rather a true inner imitation of the Master, a sharing in the very life of Jesus. The outward imitation of Christ is of value only as a means to an end. It must be accompanied by and produce a complete change in the inner man. Therein a new spirit must reign, the *spiritus Domini*, "the spirit of the Lord and the workings of his grace," the spirit, Francis once called it, of Holy Scripture.<sup>7</sup> Only thus, through the conquest of the *spiritus carnis* by means of a life completely in accord with the ideals of the Gospel, can the spirit of Christ take possession of a man and perfect in him a total and absolute likeness to Christ.

The more we study and meditate on what St. Francis has written of the *spiritus Domini*,<sup>8</sup> the more we come to realize how deep and far-reaching is the meaning of

this expression. Whoever, for example, possesses the spirit of the Lord and the operations of his grace, no longer judges things from an earthly point of view, according to the standards in vogue among men. He no longer sees and evaluates the meaning of life in the spirit of the world and its passing show, or from the viewpoint of self and self-interests. Rather, through the spirit of the Lord all things of time and eternity, of life and action, are interpreted completely by the spirit of the Gospel. Such a man sees all things, as it were, with the eyes of Jesus Christ. By that spirit is explained most clearly the call to "penance" that runs through the Franciscan movement, since such penance is to be understood as the Metanoia of the Gospel, a change of mind and heart under the inspiration of the spirit of the Lord.<sup>9</sup> By that same spirit the standards and values of an earthbound humanity, which can so deeply influence both the Church and the Christian despite the Gospel and the Sermon on the Mount, lose their attraction and appeal. By that spirit the "new man" of Christ is led to return to the marrow of the Gospel, which rejects so completely "what comes forth from the heart of man" (Mk. 7,21), to replace the selfish, self-centered, independent ego of man with a life, thought and action patterned only on the Holy Gospel. In such a man, so changed by the spirit of the Lord, the mystery of the redemption of all creatures is made truly visible. Freed from self and self-interests, he sees once more the whole compass of creature values in that right order and in that full beauty which it had from God and for God. The new spirit within him restores the world and all things in it to the order God gave them in creation, and allows him to pierce to the very depths of their being. We need not wonder then at St. Francis' close kinship with all things, which seemed at times almost to make his life a renewal of the happy state of Paradise. Because he sought nothing for himself in the things of creation, they became for him so many steps that led to God.

### **The New Man**

What Francis thus lived — and required of his brethren — was the new man: the man of Christ, penetrated by his spirit, formed in the way of perfect imitation of Christ; the man who thus belongs wholly to God and in him reaches his perfection. Hence Francis could write so beautifully: "And on all who act in this manner and persevere therein to the end the spirit of the Lord shall rest, and he will make for himself in them a tabernacle and a dwelling-place, and they shall be children of the Father in heaven, whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are spouses when the faithful soul is united to Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. We are his brothers when we do the will of his Father who is in heaven. We are his mothers when we carry him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience, and bring him forth by a holy manner of life, which must shine to others as an example."<sup>10</sup>

These words are, we might say, a classical expression of this central thought of Franciscan life. When the spirit of the Lord has overcome the *spiritus carnis* and all self-interest, the fullness of God begins to reign in the soul, which is now united in

almost inexpressible closeness to the Triune God. It is free from all obstacles to the spirit of Christ and all cares and anxieties or attachment to worldly concerns, and so is set wholly on the paths of love which come from God and lead to God. Only such a man can serve, love, adore and honor the Lord God with a pure heart and a pure mind." In him will "the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, have his tabernacle and dwelling-place."<sup>12</sup>

Thus molded and guided by the spirit of the Lord, he no longer lives for self, but in complete purity of heart lives unto God alone, seeing everything and judging everything only in relation to God. He has become a "simple" man with that *sancta simplicitas* which "confounds all the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the flesh" (i. e., of self),<sup>13</sup> because its gaze cuts through the duplicity of self and the man-made complications of human existence, to view all things only in the light of God. Above all, the "simple" man has entered into the mystery of the Triune God, where he has come to experience the simplicity which is God's love. Lastly, the man of "holy simplicity" becomes of necessity the seraphic man, as was Francis of Assisi in his own God-centered life.

## Chapter Four

### **THE INNER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR**

The spirit of the Franciscan Order is the spirit of St. Francis. Since we have just traced the nature and depths of the spirit of the Seraphic Saint, it should not be difficult to discover thereby the essential marks of his Order.

Once a man undertakes in all earnestness to imitate the life of Christ by living the "manner of life of the holy Gospel" (*forma sancti evangelii*), the spirit of the Lord and the workings of his grace will gradually overcome in him the spirit of self and the love of self. Such a man will then be able to draw near to God in holy, unaffected love, and in that love find anew all things and all creatures. He becomes truly, as Francis says, the child of the Eternal Father, the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his whole life and activity is united with that of Christ. But where such union with Christ our Brother is practiced by many together, we have the beginnings of a true brotherhood. Not by mere chance then does Francis constantly call his followers a *fraternitas*, for it is a brotherhood in the original and deepest sense of that word.

### **Franciscan Brotherhood**

But if the followers of St. Francis are a community of brothers in and through Christ, a brotherhood in which each member is called to imitate the life of Christ in his own person and each is likewise personally responsible for the good of the whole, it follows that each individual as brother of Christ is possessed of great personal worth. Here is the reason why deep respect and reverence for the God-given

personality and talents of the individual has marked the Order from its very beginning; the reason also why it has such high regard for the originality of each of its members and throughout its history has permitted the utmost liberty for the development of the individuality of its members.

There is thus a note of knightly freedom and personal responsibility about the Franciscan type of brotherhood. It relies far more on the inner ideals of members foamed by the spirit of Christ than on external forms and practices. In consequence, authority does not play as important a role as it might in other orders. So Francis could write in his first Rule: "Let none among those who lead this manner of life be called prior, but let all in general be called Fratres Minores."<sup>1</sup> The head of a community is to be called simply "minister and servant," according to the spirit of him who said of himself: "I have not come to be ministered to, but to minister."<sup>2</sup> Franciscan superiors are not to hold office for life, but must be ready to relinquish it at any time.<sup>3</sup> Francis admonishes them further: "Those who have been set over others should glory in this only as much as they would if appointed to wash the feet of the brethren;<sup>4</sup> and if they are more perturbed over removal from the office of superior than they would be if removed from the office of washing feet, they lay up for themselves thereby 'treasures' to the peril of their soul."<sup>5</sup>

These words well illustrate that humble, serving love of others which must ever be the motive of Franciscan action and the shaping force of Franciscan brotherhood.

If the individuals of a community, whether subjects or superior, are thus to be imbued with the spirit of the Lord, after the incomparable example of St. Francis and his brethren, the community as a whole must be shaped according to "the form of the Holy Gospel." It must itself live the words of that Gospel: "But all you are brothers! and call no one on earth your father; for one is your Father, who is in heaven."<sup>6</sup> From such a text comes the Saint's concept of obedience, that the friars are to render obedience to the Father in union with Christ their Brother. Thus is obedience so essential a part of the *sequi vestigia Christi*. While the superiors pay this obedience with Christ to the Father, the subjects offer the obedience of Christ to the heavenly Father in the person of their superior. This is what Francis calls that "obedience in love" (*caritativa obedientia*), which modeled on the obedience of Christ assures among the followers of St. Francis a true *fraternitas* or brotherliness that unites all as one family of our Father in heaven. To all, both superiors and subjects, the Saint says: "Nor should any friar do or say anything evil to another. Rather, by the charity of the Spirit they should gladly serve and obey one another. For this is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>7</sup>

### **Franciscan Littleness**

Next to brotherliness, another essential mark of the Franciscan spirit is *minoritas*, the will ever and everywhere to be the least and lowliest. To be a "minor" is to be subject to all.<sup>8</sup> Hence true *minoritas* supposes and rests on *sancta simplicitas*, which confounds the wisdom of this world and puts to shame the prudence of the self-

centered man<sup>9</sup> because it sees all things with the eye of God and considers self but a lowly tool in the service of God. Whoever becomes a "minor" in this sense of the word imitates the lowliness and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Humility and poverty are thus the two foundations of the Franciscan way of life.<sup>10</sup> Christ left the Kingdom of the Father and made himself poor in this world; he became the minister and servant of all, the lowliest and most despised of men, and at the end submitted himself to a most shameful death. He did not cling to his divine prerogatives, but "emptied himself" (Phil. 2,6) that as our Brother he might become like the most abject and scorned of men. Whoever then follows his sacred footsteps, and lives according to his spirit, must not desire to have anything, but rather live in true inner and outward poverty, making no claims for himself of any rights or privileges.<sup>11</sup>

This alone gives meaning to the Franciscan life of poverty, that Christ before us walked the way of poverty. Here once more St. Clare proves herself the truest disciple of St. Francis and his equal in a Christ-centered life. In her Testament she reveals her grasp of this basic principle: "The Son of God as long as he lived in this world wished never to desert this holy poverty. And our most blessed Father Francis, following the footsteps of Christ, never while he lived departed in example or in teaching from His holy poverty, which he had chosen for himself and his friars."<sup>12</sup>

But whoever wishes to live this life of gospel poverty must also embrace the way of humility, and thus be ready to serve all men even as Christ emptied himself and became the servant of all. The deep meaning of such Franciscan poverty and humility is, perhaps, best expressed in Francis' Letter to the Chapter: "See, brethren, the lowliness of God, and pour out your hearts before him, and make yourselves little that he may make you great. Keep back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that he may receive you wholly who has given himself wholly to you."<sup>13</sup>

Nowhere did Francis more clearly lay down this fundamental law of the Franciscan life: the conquest of the self-centered man by the Spirit of the Lord. Humble poverty and unassuming humility are to be the way the Friar Minor, and every Franciscan, empties himself with Christ. Only thus does he merit the title of Minor. Only thus, at the same time, does he prove a true Friar, for such poverty and humility are the one sure foundation and safeguard of brotherliness, since they alone conquer most speedily and thoroughly the ego of man, the *spiritus carnis*, which is the greatest enemy of real *fraternitas*.

### **Liberty and Joy**

In every man who realizes in his life the poverty and humility of our Lord there grows and develops that liberty of spirit which, to a surprising degree, is characteristic of all true Franciscans. Such liberty lies in perfect freedom from all things and creatures, from all desires and attachments of self, and, positively, in that freedom for God that so characterized Francis of Assisi. Only this kind of total detachment from self, the world and men, makes one completely "empty" and receptive of God and his

love.<sup>14</sup> To him alone who lives purely for God and is rooted and hidden in him will Francis' words to the sick brother hold any meaning: "And I ask the friar who is sick to give thanks to the Creator for all things, and to desire to be whatever God wills for him, whether healthy or sick."<sup>15</sup> As he thus abandons all regard for self, such a man makes himself one with the Will of God, not merely in an attitude of patient resignation but rather in the spirit of genuine and positive acceptance of "whatever God wills for him." Such a joyous- disposition demands of him the highest detachment because it touches the very center of self.

Liberty born of poverty and humility, the happy fruit of *minoritas*, becomes in turn the root and source of Franciscan joy. In the heart of him who lives for God and whose desires are always in accord with the Will of God there arises such joy that nothing in the world, whether men or circumstances, can destroy or lessen it. For him there can be no reason for sadness save abandonment of this attachment to God — and that is sin. The gloomy friar finds no sympathy in St. Francis: "Let the friars take care not to show themselves outwardly as gloomy and sad hypocrites, but let them show themselves joyful in the Lord, and gladsome and becomingly courteous."<sup>16</sup> Only the true "minor" possessed of the Spirit of the Lord attains the true and deepest source of perfect joy, for only to him is revealed the secret of this joy which comes down to all Friars Minor not only as the heritage but also as the challenge of St. Francis.

"Let all in general be called *Fratres Minores*." Was it by pure chance or rather with clear and prophetic vision that Francis chose to name his followers the "*ordo fratrum minorum*," the Order of Lesser Brothers, and thus capsule the very essence of their life and spirit? A life consecrated, under the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord, to the imitation of Christ and the attainment of divine love reaches its perfection in the daily living of *fraternitas*, brotherliness, and of that *minoritas*, littleness, which seeks always the lowest place and to be subject to all.

Our search for the spirit and essence of the Franciscan Order leads to this conclusion: it is a community of brothers who out of a living and burning charity follow literally and without gloss the sacred footsteps of Christ; who, because they are filled with the Spirit of the Lord, must ever be *minores*, the lesser ones; who, because even in this life they have come to know the depths of God's love, are ready to share that love with all men in word and in deed.<sup>17</sup>

One more thought must be added to clarify the essence of the Order. In his lifetime, St. Francis produced a tremendous and vital movement in the world simply by being what he was. In this he was but God's instrument, for he himself had had no thought of such a revolution, nor any deliberate plan to "found" an Order. The brotherhood of the Friars Minor began and grew almost in spite of him, more under the influence of his example than of any action on his part. This fact, that the Order was not and is not the result of any well-laid plan or project, is not without importance. From the beginning, one must admit, the Order was poorly organized and perhaps is still so today. But it had thereby a great advantage in meeting and fulfilling a real need of that age. It cannot be denied, finally, that this very suppleness of character which almost defies too much regimentation and organization has been all to

the good throughout the Order's history to our day.

## Chapter Five

### **DIVERSITY OF LABOR IN THE ONE FRANCISCAN SPIRIT**

If St. Francis himself, in his life and character, is thus the best explanation of the heart and soul of his Order, perhaps he will in turn supply the answer to our last question, on the work or mission of his brothers.

First of all, it is well to recall that the Order was not founded to meet a specific need in the Kingdom of Christ. Its first concern was not to undertake some particular external work, but rather to realize a new life within the Church. For this reason Francis speaks less of an "Order" than of "this brotherhood," less of a "Rule" than of "our form and manner of life." This new life to which Francis drew his brethren by word and example was to be the fruit and expression of a new inner spirit and attitude. The latter, in turn, would be the inner bond of unity for all the many external activities of the friars.

It follows that whoever is imbued with this new ideal and is filled with the Spirit of the Lord, can undertake whatever the Kingdom of Christ asks of him — and his work will thereby be necessarily Franciscan in character. Even today, then, the Order cannot and does not limit itself to certain particular tasks, since now as throughout its whole history all the needs of the Kingdom of God are included in its apostolate. There is hardly a field of activity in the Church today that the Order can disclaim as its own or refuse to accept as not in keeping with its goal of "following the footprints of Christ." As one of the greatest missionary orders of the Church, it labors in many pagan lands, ever true to an ideal set by St. Francis himself. In untiring zeal the friars devote themselves to the countless humble tasks of the modern apostolate, to strengthen the Christian life of the faithful and lead back those who have gone astray. In the retirement of solitary convents (usually called *ritiros*) they cultivate the life of contemplation, which has always occupied a place of honor in the life of the Order. In its schools, colleges and research centers the Order carries on its work of teaching and writing, and has tried in each age to render ever new and fruitful the Franciscan tradition in philosophy and theology, which it sees as the precious heritage of its inner spirit. Nor must we forget the many artists, poets and musicians who have belonged to the Order and whose works definitely are of lasting value.

#### **Not a Work but a Life**

Yet this variety of external work is not of first importance. Today as much as in the beginning of the Order its most distinctive work is within, to maintain its inner spirit. Simply stated, this task or mission is to be true to its own inner self, by re-

presenting in every age and clime the living figure of Christ. He must live again in every Friar Minor who walks in his footsteps. Like Christ, the Franciscan is to be the brother (*frater*) of all men, and in such brotherly love seek out all men, especially those who have wandered far from our Lord. Like Christ, he is to become by his poverty and humility the lesser (*minor*) and even the least of all men, that he may draw all men of every class and condition to the love of the Father. Thus, while all orders hold up to the faithful the ideal of the following of Christ, the Friars Minor must exemplify to the world in a special way the emptying of Christ, which they must reflect in a life of real poverty and genuine humility.

Clearly, then, the principal mission of the Order is not some form of activity, but a manner of life. Its special task is not some specific external work, but the development of a particular way of the Christian life. No one man, of course, nor any one order can ever perfectly and completely re-present the life and labors of Christ. The Church alone, as his Body and Spouse, can in the unity and diversity of all her members fully reflect the perfection of Christ. Yet to this fullness the Order of Friars Minor has its special contribution to make in every age, more by its characteristic manner of life than by the performance of any certain work. In this more than anything else lies the importance of the Order for the Church, and this in turn gives the Order its undeniable right to exist. At the same time, it imposes on the Order the obligation to embody this contribution in all its external activities.

### **Piety and Learning**

The piety of the Order is perhaps more within than without. It has never put great stress on exterior acts of devotion, but seeks primarily to form a man dedicated entirely to God in simple and unselfish love, a man whose whole being is completely and unconditionally surrendered to God. This type of piety Francis himself expressed in a simple yet revealing prayer: "Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God, give to us poor wretches for thy sake to do what we know thou wilt, and always to will what is pleasing to thee, that inwardly cleansed, inwardly enlightened and set aflame by the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may follow the footsteps of thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and by thy grace alone come to thee, Most High; who in perfect Trinity and simple Unity livest and reignest in utmost glory, God Almighty, through all ages. Amen."<sup>1</sup>

Again, in view of the goal of the Order, the Friar Minor cannot pursue learning merely for the sake of knowledge. It must be for him rather a means of increasing his love of God and of growing in holiness. It thus becomes for him a way to God, for every increase in knowledge fills him with more and more wonder and reverence for God's love for us. It was only with such a proviso that St. Francis permitted Anthony of Padua to lecture to the friars on sacred theology, that in such study "they do not destroy the spirit of holy prayer and devotedness" to God.<sup>2</sup>

In keeping with this exhortation, the Seraphic Doctor, St. Bonaventure, gives two goals for the study of theology: It must lead to contemplation, and it must make us better morally (*ut boni fiamus*), and this second is the nobler of the two.<sup>3</sup> In like

manner, the great theologian of the Order, John Duns Scotus, considers love as the ultimate goal of theology, since for him it is a practical science which is intended to lead men to God on the path of love.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of all knowledge, indeed, he adds, is to show God as most worthy of all our love.<sup>5</sup>

This same spiritual outlook must also animate the Franciscan apostolate among the people. The Friar Minor is to meet every man with love and, because he recognizes the worth of his fellow man, seek to make him once more a true friend of God and thus let the sunshine of God's love warm his heart: "For to this are we called, to heal the wounded, to make straight the crooked, and to lead the erring back to the right way. Many who now appear to us as members of Satan will yet become disciples of Christ."<sup>6</sup> In his exhortations Francis gives an even deeper directive on the care of souls in keeping with the seraphic spirit: "Blessed is that religious who finds his whole delight and joy in the most holy words and works of the Lord and by them leads men in all gladness and joy of heart to the love of God."<sup>7</sup>

### **The Inner Spirit**

By now it should be clear that in the life of the Order of Friars Minor what matters most is not "what" is done, but "how" it is done. Not "how" indeed in the sense of any certain method or technique, but rather of the spirit and approach that inspires its work. Whatever the needs of the Church the Order may seek to help, they must always be met in the spirit proper to the Order, the spirit of the *frater minor* in the deepest meaning of both words.

In the Church of God the Friar Minor must ever act as the loving follower of the earthly life of the God-man, as the brother of all men, the brother indeed who knows he is less than all others. His weapon, his strength, will not lie in knowledge or in power, but in a love that grows more perfect as he seeks to serve. When Francis sent his brethren among the Saracens, he warned them "to engage in neither strife nor controversy, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake, and simply confess that they are Christians."<sup>8</sup> Nothing reveals more clearly the real spirit of the Order, nothing guarantees more infallibly its effectiveness, than this complete subjection to all men in the service of that love the friar is to show every man that he may lead him back to the love of God.

Since the Friar Minor imitates in his life the poor and humble Christ, he is enabled thereby to penetrate all classes of society and leaven them with the spirit of the Gospel. Yet in this, his preference is to be found among the lower classes. His very spirit and spirituality must incline him to seek and find his real field of labor among the common people, the so-called lowest strata of society. "And the friars should rejoice when they associate with mean and despised persons, among the poor and the weak and the infirm, the leper, and the beggar by the wayside."<sup>9</sup> To those above all whom society scorns the Friar Minor must be a guide to the Gospel, a guide to Christ. Thus with a holy unconcern Francis could admonish them: "No matter who shall come to the friars, be he friend or foe, thief or robber, he is to be received with

kindness."<sup>10</sup>

This is truly the secret of that seraphic spirit and outlook Francis learned from Christ, which is so necessary for a life according to the Spirit of the Lord: to leave all things for the love of Christ and to become like the poorest and most despised of men. Francis placed himself on the lowest level of medieval society, and lived his ideal of *sequi vestigia Christi* in the midst of the poor. Such a life was not something he accepted with patient resignation to the inevitable, but a challenge he embraced with all the fire and zeal of a lover. He knew no other pleasure or joy than to immerse himself in the words and teachings of the God-man and to fashion his life on that of Christ. Because he did all for love, he did all in "gladness and joy." By such joy and love he proves to all the world that the Christian life can be lived in any circumstances, and that the Christ-life does not require special or favorable conditions. Accordingly, it is the duty and mission of the Friars Minor, to adapt his words, "to lead men in all gladness and joy of heart to the love of God" by their life "in the most holy words and works of the Lord."<sup>11</sup> Wherever the Friar Minor may be, whatever the tasks he is bidden to fulfill, he has always the duty, precisely because he is a *frater minor*, to lead men *ad amorem Dei in gaudio et laetitia*.

### **The Hour of St. Francis**

Perhaps in the time of St. Francis it was God's special design to ease and solve the prevailing social tensions through the Franciscan movement. The Church of the middle ages was largely a feudal Church. Its hierarchy and its religious life were generally reserved for the nobility. Even in ecclesiastical learning it was the noble class among the clerics and monks that furnished the teachers and students. But times were changing in the early thirteenth century. A new class, the citizens of the towns or communes, then considered the lowest social group, stood waiting at the doors of the Church demanding equal recognition with the nobility. It was through the Franciscan and Dominican Orders, or even more generally through the whole Mendicant movement, that this class was given the opportunity for a deeper spiritual life. In the Mendicant Orders, and especially in their Third Orders, the common people gained a religious life of their own and attained thereby their proper place in the Church. By these same orders likewise their sons made their way into the hierarchy and the university world of learning. Above all, however, it was through the Franciscan movement of the thirteenth century that this new class found a home in the Church, not so much indeed because of any effort on the part of the friars as through the effect of their manner of life, or, more simply, through what they were. Thus did the spirit and outlook of the *frater minor* contribute much to the solution of those social tensions that had been plaguing the Church in the preceding centuries.

Today the problems of human relationship which affect human society and, in consequence, the Church of Christ, are far more difficult both in their extent and in their effects. Once more another class of society looks for entry and a home in the Church, even as did the bourgeoisie of the middle ages. The fact that this group, the

laboring class, has so long remained alienated from the Church, has been branded by Pope Pius XI as "the greatest scandal of the nineteenth century." The same great Pontiff likewise points out our ensuing duty in his famous words: "The Church without the laboring class is not the Church of Christ."

Yet these modern social problems are not primarily economic, and much less political, nor can they be solved on such levels alone. Basically, they are human problems, problems which concern men, Christian men, and all men of good will. Our times — and God Himself — ask therefore this one thing of the Franciscan of today, that in true brotherliness and out of love of "littleness" he lead this group also, the laboring class, "in all gladness and joy of heart" to the ways of Christ. Through his life and deeds more than through his words the Friar Minor can help bridge over the chasms that have divided individuals and nations, and heal the social tensions that so trouble the Church and the world today. Thus may strike again the Hour of St. Francis, to the good of the Church and of all mankind!

## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

1 Cf. R. Schneider, *The Hour of Saint Francis* (Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1953).

### CHAPTER TWO [no notes in ch. I]

1 I Celano, n. 39 (*Analecta Franciscana*, X, p. 31).

2 Cf. L. Lemmens, *Testimonia minora saeculi XIII de S. Francisco Assisiensi* (Quaracchi, 1926), p. 79f.

3 Rule I, c. 7 (cf. J. Meyer, *The Words of Saint Francis*, Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1952, p. 257; cited hereafter as *Words*).

4 Rule II, c. 5 (cf. *Words*, p. 289).

5 Testament (*Words*, n. 282d, p. 245).

6 Testament (*ibid.*, n. 282, p. 243); I Cel., n. 17.

7 Rule I, c. 8 (*Words*, p. 260).

8 Rule I, c. 12, 17, 21; Rule II, c. 9 (*Words*, pp. 265, 269, 273f., 292).

9 In his *Historia orientalis*: "Haec est religio vere pauperum Crucifixi et ordo praedicatorum, quos Fratres Minores appellamus" (text in L. Lemmens, *op. cit.*, p. 81).

10 Rule I, c. 16 (*Words*, 268); cf. also Rule II, c. 12 (p. 294).

11 "Religious Life in a Hermitage," in *Words*, pp. 111ff.

12 *Words*, n. 55, p. 62.

13 Letter to the Chapter (*Words*, n. 192h, p. 149).

14 *Ibid.*, n. 1921, p. 149. On the Divine Office, cf. Rule I, c. 3; Rule II, c. 3; Testament (*Words*, pp. 253, 287, 247).

### CHAPTER THREE

1 Testament, n. 2 (cf. I. Brady — Sr. Frances McLaughlin, *The Legend and Writings of Saint Clare of Assisi*, St. Bonaventure, N.Y., 1953, p. 82).

2 Rule I, c. 1 (*Words*, p. 250). Cf. Final Rule, c. 1: "The Rule and Life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ through a life in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity" (text from *The Marrow of the Gospel*, ed. I. Brady, Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press, 1958, p. 107).

3 I Peter 2, 21; used by St. Francis in Rule I, c. 1 and 22 (*Words*, pp. 250, 274); Letter to the Chapter (*ibid.*, p. 150); Letter to Brother Leo (p. 99); cf. also his last will to St. Clare (*Words*, n. 122, p. 97; *Legend and Writings of Saint Clare*, p. 74).

4 Rule I, c. 22 (*Words*, p. 278).

5 Admonition 6 (*Words*, p. 134).

6 "Caro, corpus," have in the language of Francis a much deeper meaning than these words convey in our modern usage. By "flesh" and "body" he understands not only the body in the sense of a living organism, the body in contrast to the soul, but also an attitude of mind which would constantly relate everything to the body, or to the natural order, and especially to self — which always stands in opposition to God and prefers self to God. The "spirit of the flesh" (taken from St. Paul, Rom. 8,6, and I Cor. 2,12) is thus, in modern language, the spirit of self-centeredness, which sees and judged everything from the viewpoint of self and self-love. This notion corresponds to what St. Paul calls the "sarx" (e.g., Rom. 8,5-7; Gal. 5,16-17;6,8), while the "spiritus Domini" would be the "pneuma" or "spirit" (in the same texts). Such contrast is also found later in the opposition Thomas a Kempis sees between "nature" and "grace" (Cf. *The Imitation of Christ*, book III, c. 54).

7 Admonition 7 (*Words*, p. 135).

8 See for example, Rule I, c. 17 and 22 (*Words*, pp. 270f., 274f); Rule II, c. 10 (p. 293); Admonitions 1, 7, 12 (pp. 129, 134f., 136f.); Letter to the Faithful (n. 230i-j, pp. 189f.). In this connection, we should note likewise that Francis frequently uses contrasting expressions, such as "spiritualiter-carnaliter," "spiritualis-carnis," etc. Cf. also the study of this topic in *The Marrow of the Gospel*, pp. 197-205.

9 "Metanoia" is the word used by St. John the Baptist (Lk. 3,3 and 7), and then by our Lord (Lk. 5,32;13,5), and St. Paul (Acts 26,20; II Cor. 7,9). Literally, it means a renewal or change of outlook, equivalent to the "new man" of St. Paul. As used by St. Francis, it has three meanings: 1) Penance as the interior detachment from sin through true sorrow, as well as the exterior manifestation of repentance through the sacrament of Penance (Admonition 24; Letter to the Faithful; *Words*, pp. 141, 187, 192ff.); 2) sometimes it is also understood as the satisfaction imposed in confession (Rule I, c. 20; Rule II, c. 7; pp. 272f., 290); 3) in most instances, however,

Francis uses it in a much deeper and more scriptural sense of a complete conversion whereby we say Yes to God and No to creatures. Thus he himself "began to do penance" as he turned to his new life (Testament, p. 243); and prays that he and his friars may serve God in penance (Rule I, c. 23, p. 280); while they are to preach penance, that is, gospel conversion, to others (ibid., c. 21, p. 273f.); and if they are not received anywhere, they should go elsewhere to do penance (Testament, n. 282f, p.246). [Addition of the translator from the German edition of the writings of St. Francis, Die Schriften, Werl, 1951, pp. 166-68.]

10 Letter to the Faithful (Words, p. 190).

11 Rule I, c. 22 (Words, p. 277): *mundo corde et pura mente*. For St. Francis, "purity" here does not mean only freedom from sin or guilt, but rather freedom from all self-seeking and attachment to things of earth. That man is "pure" who lives for God alone and has no room in his heart for whatever might be opposed to God, whether this be self or the world or the things that are in the world (cf. Schriften, pp. 162-64; The Marrow of the Gospel, p. 203).

12 Rule I, c. 22 (Words, p. 277).

13 Salute to the Virtues (Words, p. 74). "Simplicitas," which is so basic to the thought and character of St. Francis, must be correctly understood. "Holy simplicity, the daughter of grace, the sister of wisdom, the mother of justice, was a virtue Francis sought earnestly to possess and loved in others. Yet not every kind of simplicity met his approval, but that only which, content with its God, reckoned all else of little worth" (II Celano, n. 189). It places God first, and thus sees all other things in proper focus. The man of holy simplicity is void of duplicity or lack of candor; he does not calculate or scheme to achieve his ends; his heart is not divided between God and the world. "Simplicity" for Francis is, in brief, that childlikeness which Christ requires in the Gospel: "Amen I say to you, unless you turn and become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18,3).

#### CHAPTER FOUR

1 Rule I, c. 6 (Words, p. 257).

2 Mt. 20,28; Rule I, c. 4; Admonition 4 (Words, pp. 254, 132)

3 Rule I, c. 17: "And no minister or preacher is to take to himself the ministry of the friars of the office of preaching, but if at any time it is commanded him, he must forthwith without any opposition lay aside his office" (cf. Words, p. 269).

4 Cf. the non-confirmed (First) Rule, c. 6: "And let one wash the feet of the other" (Words, p. 257).

5 Admonition 4 (Words, p. 132f.).

6 Mt. 23,8; cf. Rule I, c. 22 (Words, p. 278).

7 Rule I, c. 5 (p. 256). We cannot attempt here any further study of the Saint's ideas on obedience, which underwent some development as he grew wiser with experience. But in essence it ever remained the fruit of love in imitation of Christ's complete obedience.

8 Cf. Rule I, c. 7 and 16; Testament; and Letter to the Faithful (Words, pp. 258, 267; n. 282d, p. 245; and n. 230i, p. 190).

9 Salute to the Virtues (Words, p. 74).

10 See the concluding words of Rule II, c. 12; Rule I, c. 9; Admonition 14; Salute to the Virtues (Words, pp. 294, 261f., 137, 74).

11 Cf. C. Esser in The Marrow of the Gospel, pp. 149-59.

12 Testament, n. 10 (Legend and Writings, p. 84).

13 Letter to the Chapter: "Videte fratres, humilitatem Dei et effundite coram illo corda vestra. Humiliamini et vos, ut exaltemini ab eo. Nihil ergo de vobis retineatis vobis, ut totos vos recipiat, qui se vobis exhibet totum" (cf. Words, n. 192e, p. 147).

14 Admonition 16 (Words, p. 138).

15 Rule I, c. 10 (Words, p. 263).

16 Rule I, c. 7 (Words, p. 259). Thomas of Celano relates the circumstances in which these words were written: "So much did the Blessed Francis love a man full of spiritual joy that at a certain chapter he caused these words to be written as an admonition for all" (II Cel., n. 128).

17 Cf. the General Constitutions of the Friars Minor (Rome, 1953), n. 2.

#### CHAPTER FIVE

1 Conclusion of the Letter to the Chapter (Words, n. 192k, p. 150).

2 Words, n. 55, p. 62.

- 3 Sent. I, prooemium, q. 3 (Opera Omnia, I, pp. 12f.)
- 4 Ordinatio, Prol., pars 5, q. 1-2, Vatican edition, torn. I, 1950, pp. 151ff.
- 5 Loc. cit., n. 29, p. 205.
- 6 Legend of the Three Companions, f 58 (cf. edition of E. Y. Salter, London, 1932, p. 91).
- 7 Admonition 21 (Words, p. 139).
- 8 Rule I, c. 16 (Words, p. 267).
- 9 Rule I, c. 9 (Words, p. 261).
- 10 Rule I, c. 7 (p. 259).
- 11 Admonition 21 (Words, p. 139).