

Ganz Notes for St. Bonaventure, Part II (16 November 2021)

Ganz Notes, Part II – St. Bonaventure

For The Night School, Series 9, Part III (16 November 2021)

Life

The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* – **Bonaventure, St** (c. 1217–74). *Franciscan theologian, 'Doctor seraphicus'. An Italian by birth, Giovanni di Fidanza studied in the Faculty of Arts in the University of *Paris. Probably in 1243 he entered the Franciscan Order and then studied theology under *Alexander of Hales. In 1248 he began to teach publicly; in 1253–4 he became doctor in theology; he continued teaching until 1257, with a short interruption due to the quarrel between the secular masters and the mendicant orders. On 2 Feb. 1257 he was elected Minister General of his order, and in this capacity he took a prominent part in settling the internal dissensions by which the order was then rent.

"Around 1235, a young man by the name of Giovanni di Fidanza entered the University of Paris. Barely eighteen years old, Giovanni began his studies for the Master of Arts degree. In time, this young man would assume the leadership of one of the fastest-growing religious movements in medieval Europe—the Franciscans—and would be recognized as one of the leading General Ministers of the Order. He would eventually be known as Bonaventure of Bagnoregio." [Ilia, Delio. *Simply Bonaventure, 2nd Edition: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings* (p. 16). New City Press. Kindle Edition.]

"Bonaventure began his studies under one of Europe's leading theologians, Alexander of Hales. An Englishman by birth, Alexander held the chair in theology at Paris and soon came in contact with a group of poor mendicants known as Franciscans. Inspired by their simplicity, poverty and gospel way of life, Alexander decided to join the

Franciscans in 1236 at the age of fifty. 10 This marked a turning point for the Franciscans, for upon joining the Order, Alexander not only continued to teach but he brought his chair of theology with him, establishing the school of the Friars Minor as an official part of the University of Paris." [Ilia, Delio. *Simply Bonaventure, 2nd Edition: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings* (p. 16). New City Press. Kindle Edition.]

Summary of Part I of Bonaventure

1. 1. We explored the idea of "imitation" – what it does **not** mean (not cloning Christ; not making a copy of Christ, a "knock-off" of Jesus; not making a counterfeit of Him); what we **do** mean by it. As to the latter, we mean that the way we imitate Christ is to learn how to become human in exactly the way God intended; which includes a long and challenging experience of self-discovery; of experimentation; of false trails; of coming to clarity about one's particular gifts and then training oneself in them ... and then sharing them as generously as one is able.
2. 2. What did it mean for Bonaventure to be educated? He was formed to think by a philosophically and theologically alert progression through the disciplines, and these disciplines attentive to the "powers of soul".
3. 3. The classical *ratio studiorum*: the **Trivium** (the Art of Language and Communication); the **Quadrivium** (the Art of Nature: finding Pattern and the Clues to finding its Maker). – Completion of these Seven Disciplines – mastery in them – **before** one could/would be admitted into an intensive two-years long study of Scripture. And only then, after mastery in the reading of the Sacred Text, could/would one be admitted into the study of Philosophy and Theology.
4. 4. *The Soul's Journey to God* – A short presentation about how we "climb" through the works of Nature into an awareness of the Maker.

Brother William Short, OFM on the "Liberal Arts" at the University of Paris

The Art of Words, of Communication

Grammar (*grammatica*): The study of language itself; how language is structured; moods (inner dispositions, intentions) and tenses (experience in relation to Time); the "connectors" (conjunctions) where the thinking happens, etc. The rules of language are the rules of human thought. Language is first *spoken* (sound, music) and then *written*.

Logic (*dialectic*): The rules of reasoning; non-contradiction; how thought properly develops; building arguments; syllogisms; formal and informal fallacies of thought (mistakes people make inadvertently in their thinking, or deliberately for the sake of manipulation), etc.

Rhetoric: The way that one can present a case that something ought, or ought not, to be done; how to dispose one's hearers; the art of relationship with others through one's words.

The Art of Nature: measure and proportion and pattern

Arithmetic: About number; counting; a building-block of reality; what numbers mean; why do some numbers keep appearing in the natural world; the symbolism and mysticism of numbers. For example, the number 9.

Geometry: The relationship of number to space; recognizing patterns; learning to recognize how the created world is structured; finding the form, the shape of things.

Music (harmonics; experience of Beauty): The study of tones, harmonies; the "harmony" in all things (the music of the spheres); about the "musicality" of proportion. Consider the "musicality" (or not) of the human voice when speaking.

Astronomy: Perception of a world vastly bigger than just the ground on which we stand looking up; the humility; the pattern of the weather; the moveable stars (planets) and the unmovable ones. The constellations; the signs of the Zodiac.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**zodiac**" – "Astronomy. A belt of the celestial sphere extending about 8 or 9 degrees on each side of the ecliptic, within which the apparent motions of the sun, moon, and principal planets take place; it is divided into twelve equal parts called *signs*."

After Bonaventure had concluded the "Liberal Arts" curriculum, he was pronounced Master of Arts. This then led to the beginning of the next stage of his training, towards what we call the disciplines of Theology and Philosophy, but only after two years spent mastering the Scriptures.

Ronald Rolheiser, OMI on A Parable of Grace by Piet Fransen, SJ –

A Parable of Grace

Piet Fransen, SJ (1913-1983) wrote many important books, but he will always be most remembered for giving us a wonderful parable that runs something like this:

A Girl

Once upon a time there lived a young girl who had been cheated in love. Born to parents who didn't want her, she grew up tolerated more than accepted, put-down more than encouraged, cursed more than blessed. Not once in her young life had she ever experienced being wanted and admired simply for who she was. Every bit of love and generosity she experienced had a string attached.

Soon enough it began to show. She became rough, hard, calculating, manipulative, mean, given over to crude language, a bitter young person who bit in order not to be bitten. She ceased caring about her appearance. She also ceased caring about the consequences her actions. She gave herself over to loveless affairs, using sex as recreation and as a way of punishing others for the world's lovelessness and for the fact that normal joys would never be hers.

A Boy

In the same city there lived a young man for whom fate had drawn a different straw. Much wanted and loved, he grew up in a happy home, nurtured by his mother, blessed by his father, surrounded by siblings and friends who, appreciative of his person, teased and humoured him. Soon enough this too began to show. He grew into a young man who was grateful, generous, careful of his appearance and speech, witty, and anxious to give back to others the love that had so generously been

given him.

One day, by chance, he met the young woman. He saw through her shabby exterior – her coarse language, her bad manners, her deliberately ill-fitted clothing. **He saw her soul, its dormant beauty.** He fell in love with her.

What Happened

But she thought him a joke. She laughed at him, saw his approach as condescending, threw his gentleness back in his face as an insult. But he was still smitten. He grieved her bitterness, ignored the insults as best he could, and continued to invite her into his life with an understanding and a humour that caught her off guard. She laughed, but this time, not at him. She laughed like Sarah laughed, at age 90, when God told her that she was still to have a baby: "Am I to have normal joy in my life? Am I to have the love and tenderness that I have so often disdained?"

She flashed him a shy smile. But it was ever-so-brief. Normal joy was not for her; she knew it. But, bolstered by that smile, he continued to reach out to her, offering her a surprising understanding, inviting her into his life. Unexpected bursts of tenderness began to swell in her and she began shyly to clean up her appearance, to tone-down her coarseness. This made him more bold, and he pronounced his love for her. She responded in tears, her heart full of new resolutions to never do anything to not be worthy of this love.

But old habits die hard, especially in times of disappointment. One day, angered by a perceived slight, she set off to be with her former friends, to take up again her habits of lovelessness. He called her, but she didn't answer. She wanted to make him feel some pain. In bitterness, she threw her infidelity into his face, saw his hurt, and was happy for it. A bitter satisfaction seeped through her soul as he walked away, silent, defeated. But her victory soon turned to defeat, and she found herself weeping, regretting that it was too late. But it wasn't.

He called the next day. She was beside herself with relief. She fell in his arms, wept. No words were necessary. He cried too and asked her to

marry him. She said yes and felt a joy that, for all her life, she had bitterly assumed was only for others. She knew too that she would never betray him again. **She was ready for love.**

Their life together was not without its pain; but, as the years went by, their love grew and was deepened by the birth of their children. Her graciousness grew with each passing year as did a joy that began to etch itself into the very lines of her face. As her hair grew grey, her eyes softened. Each day she felt more grateful. Her husband often expressed his pride in her and her children, alternatively, argued with her and humoured her.

One day, looking through some old photographs, she found a picture of herself as she had once been, before love entered her life. She studied for a long time a snapshot of that bitter, young girl, finding it hard to believe that this once was her. She prayed in gratitude that love had found and saved her and asked God to help all those who find themselves excluded from the circle of love and happiness.

We are that young woman. God is that young man.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 CE to c. 215 CE) in his *Stromateis* [i.e., thoughts on this and that] – **“God is love, and God is knowable to those who love Him.”**

Close Reading the “Prologue” of the Tree of Life

What Love Knows – the Seraphic Doctor

Seraphim. The supernatural creatures, each with six wings, which *Isaiah in his inaugural vision saw standing above the throne of Yahweh (Is. 6:2–7). Unless they are to be identified with the ‘fiery serpents’ mentioned in Num. 21:6 ff., Deut. 8:15, Is. 14:29, and Is. 30:6, they are not mentioned elsewhere in the OT. From an early date Christian interpreters held the ‘Seraphim’ to be a category of *angels, and considered them counterparts of the ‘*Cherubim’;

hence their occurrence together in the *Preface of the Roman Mass and also in the **Te Deum*. **The further view, which was widely accepted among Christian exegetes, that the Heb. word 'seraphim' was connected with a root meaning 'to burn' led to the notion that they were esp. distinguished by the fervour of their love. As such they came to be ranked highest in the nine orders of angels (the Cherubim filling the next place).**

See my ***Ganz Notes*** on this text.

About St. Bonaventure by Dr. Elizabeth Dreyer

BONAVENTURE, ST. (ca. 1221–1274)

Bonaventure was born in Bagnoregio, a small town located about sixty miles north of Rome, Italy. At the time of his birth the Franciscan Order was growing both in numbers and in influence and Bonaventure himself attests to having been cured of a serious illness as a child through the intercession of Francis of Assisi. His commitment to sing the praises of Francis remained an important thread throughout his life. At the age of seventeen, Bonaventure began studies at the University of Paris, where he again encountered the Franciscans, especially the great Alexander of Hales who was his teacher. Bonaventure entered the Franciscans in 1243 and until 1257, when he was elected minister general of the order at the age of forty, studied and taught at the University of Paris. Bonaventure was made a cardinal in 1273, remained head of the order until the chapter of May, 1274, and died in July of that year. He was canonized in 1482 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1588.

Bonaventure's life encompassed two often opposing roles—that of Scholastic theologian/university professor and that of pastoral leader of a new and growing mendicant order. In fact, this very tension was reflected within the Franciscan Order and was threatening to break it apart. Some members were wary of new developments in the order which seemed to jeopardize the radical ideals of poverty and simplicity espoused by Francis. Others felt that the order needed to adapt and develop with the times, which meant owning books, buildings and property, and holding illustrious positions at the University of Paris. Bonaventure pursued a moderate position, struggling to remain faithful to the ideals of Francis while allowing the order to change and adapt to new circumstances. His *Life of Francis* embodies this tension and Bonaventure's attempts to hold the struggling order together. Because of his intelligence and personal holiness, Bonaventure is called the "Second Founder of the Order."

Bonaventure was a prolific writer. At the beginning of his career, he produced speculative, theological texts and biblical commentaries. After his election as minister general, his thoughts and his writing turn to

more pastoral, spiritual concerns. His most well-known mystical work is *The Soul's Journey Into God*, a text that continues to inspire Christians who set out on their own spiritual journeys.

Bonaventure's theology reflects a number of distinctive elements. In true Franciscan fashion, Bonaventure is profoundly aware of the presence of God in creation. In an ascending pattern from inanimate matter to human persons, he sees all of creation as a mirror of God. Second, his theology has been characterized by the phrase "coincidence of opposites." In his life and work, Bonaventure maintained a creative tension between the God who is beyond us and the God who is within us; between intellectual rigor and poetic, mystical expression. Third, his theology is eminently Christocentric. Bonaventure sees united in Christ "the first and the last, the highest and the lowest, the circumference and the center ..., the Creator and the creature" (*The Soul's Journey Into God*). Finally, Bonaventure's theology builds on the affective theology of Augustine. Bonaventure places love and will (not intellect) at the center of his theology and spirituality. As one moves toward the heights of mystical encounter with God, Bonaventure notes that "affect alone keeps the vigil, and imposes silence on all the other powers" (*The Six Days of Creation*).

ELIZABETH DREYER

Michael Glazier and Monika K. Hellwig, [*The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*](#) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 99–100.

About St. Bonaventure by Dr. Stephen E. Lahey, Ph.D.

PIOUS PEACEMAKER

Bonaventure

c. 1217–1274

Giovanni Fidanza, later known as Bonaventure, joined the Franciscans when he was 17. After Francis of Assisi, Bonaventure was the person most responsible for the organization and growth of the Franciscan order. He was also one of its greatest theologians.

Bonaventure began a friendship with Thomas Aquinas at the University of Paris, where they received their doctorates together in 1267. He wrote voluminously, establishing himself as the Franciscans' answer to the Dominican Aquinas.

In each of Bonaventure's theological works, he reveals his devotion for the beauty of creation and the realization of God's love in each creature. Perhaps the best example of his unique approach is "The Mind's Road to God," which leads the reader in a series of six meditations from contemplation of God's reflection in nature, in the natural faculties of the human soul, and ultimately through grace to the perfect Being of the divine.

The purely intellectual theorizing that was creeping into scholastic discourse repelled Bonaventure. He was determined to keep love, compassion, and an awareness of nature's abundance as integral parts of daily spiritual development.

"The beauty of things," he wrote, "in the variety of light, shape and color, in simple, mixed and even organic bodies—such as heavenly bodies—and minerals like stones and metals, and plants and animals clearly proclaims the divine power that produces all things from nothing, the divine wisdom that clearly distinguishes all things, and the divine goodness that lavishly adorns all things."

Bonaventure had gained a reputation for an even-handed, judicious

temperament while studying in Paris, and the Franciscans desperately needed that influence. The order had been split by violent disagreement about Francis's ideal of apostolic purity. One group, the Spirituals, denounced all property ownership as a compromise with the curse of Original Sin. The other group, the Conventuals, saw the Franciscan mission as including an embrace of the world and its trappings.

Bonaventure's willingness to listen carefully and lovingly to all sides of a dispute allowed him to rescue the order from chaos by instituting a code of laws that struck a balance between the two factions. His biography of Francis, approved by the order in 1263, helped define that compromise. He even explained the rule of poverty in a way that made sense to a world entranced with material success.

As his reputation within the church grew, he earned the position of Cardinal-Bishop of Albano in 1273. Bonaventure was not eager to become a prince of the church, though. When papal envoys came bearing the cardinal's wide-brimmed hat, the story goes, they found Bonaventure washing dishes outside a Florence convent. Rather than interrupt himself from his task, he told the envoys to hang the hat on a nearby tree until he had time to free his hands. He died while trying to mend the Roman church's schism with the Greek church a year later. He might have been poisoned.

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A Mingling of Minds

David B Burrell, "[A Mingling of Minds](#)," *Christian History Magazine-Issue 73: Thomas Aquinas: Greatest Medieval Theologian* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002).

ST. BONAVENTURE

THE TREE OF LIFE

Bonaventure, [*Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*](#), ed. Richard J. Payne, trans. Ewert Cousins, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 126–139.

PART I - ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS ORIGIN

FIRST FRUIT: HIS DISTINGUISHED ORIGIN

Jesus Begotten of God

1. When you hear that Jesus is begotten of God, beware lest some inadequate thought of the flesh¹ appear before your mind's eye. Rather, with the vision of the dove and the eagle, believe simply and contemplate with penetrating gaze the following: From that Eternal Light which is at the same time measureless and most simple, most brilliant and most hidden, there emerges a coeternal, coequal and consubstantial splendor, who is the power and wisdom of the Father. In him the Father ordered all things from eternity; through him *he made the world* (Heb. 1:2) and governs and directs it to his own glory, partly by nature, partly by grace, partly by justice and partly by mercy, so that he leaves nothing in this world without order.²

¹ **“thought of the flesh”** – This is St. Paul's notion of “flesh” by which he means those “places” within us (it could be a memory of harsh and difficult things) that to this point have remained impervious to the word of grace and redemption. Those “parts” of us that continue to belong to our functionally unredeemed self-awareness.

² **“nothing in the world without order”** – In other words, this world belongs to God, not to us. Our “flesh” concludes habitually that the world is ours, belongs to us, and that it is up to us to make it do what we wish. In other words, the one thing in the world that defies “ordering” is human beings.

Jesus Prefigured

2. At the beginning of the creation of nature, our first parents were placed in paradise; but they were driven out by the severity of God's decree because they ate of the forbidden tree. From that time his heavenly mercy has not ceased calling straying man back to the way of penance by giving hope of forgiveness and by promising that a Savior would come.³ Lest such condescension on God's part should fail to effect our salvation⁴ because of ignorance and ingratitude, he never ceased announcing, promising and prefiguring the coming of his Son in the five ages of history, through the patriarchs, judges, priests, kings and prophets, from Abel the Just to John the Baptist. Through many thousands of years, by many marvelous prophecies he stirred men's minds to faith⁵ and inflamed their hearts with living desires.⁶

Joachim of Fiore (c 1135-1202 CE) – “The central doctrine of his three chief works, ‘Liber de Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti’, ‘Expositio in Apocalypsim’, and ‘Psalterium decem Chordarum’, is a **Trinitarian conception of the whole of history, viewed in three great periods (‘status’)**. The first, characterized by the ‘Ordo conjugatorum’, was **the Age of the Father** in which mankind lived under the Law until the end of the OT dispensation; the second, characterized by the ‘Ordo clericorum’, is **the Age of the Son**, lived under Grace and covering the NT dispensation which Joachim calculated as forty-two generations of about thirty years each; the third, that of the ‘Ordo monachorum’ or ‘contemplantium’, is **the Age of**

³ “**promising that a Savior would come**” – Bonaventure articulates the essential reliance of the New Testament on the Old Testament – the latter being that which fully conditions the possibility of the former.

⁴ “**fail to effect our salvation**” – The “ineffectualness” of salvation has its source in a person's refusal of it, in his or her culpable ignorance of God. Human beings were created to be relational, and especially in relationship with God. Therefore, God's offer of redemption to each of us restores that relationality – human beings, then, *must* cooperate in the grace offered them, because that cooperation is proof of effective redemption.

⁵ “**stirred men's minds to faith**” – I recall what I learned from St. John Henry Newman years ago, that “faith” is a transformation of our merely human intellect when our intellect follows and serves what we love. In other words, faith is a transformation of our intellect – what it is able to understand – when we are filled with love for God. For example, we are far more likely to understand sufficiently a person when our love for them causes us to want to understand them. If we do not care for someone, or dislike or hate him or her, then our intellect gets distorted, skewed – it “wants” to find “reasons” why we don't care for him or her.

⁶ “**inflamed their hearts with living desires**” – The Tree of Life is substantially committed to such “inflaming”, by which “flame” is meant one that purifies “killing desires” (we, step by step, lose our “taste” for killing desires) but also one that captures “were not our hearts burning within us?”.

the Spirit, to be lived in the liberty of the 'Spiritualis Intellectus' proceeding from the Old and New Testaments. This age would see the rise of new religious orders to convert the whole world and usher in the 'Ecclesia Spiritualis'. Joachim never advanced his doctrine of the third age to a point of danger to ecclesiastical authority, but his expectations concerning history had a far-reaching influence in the following centuries among groups who carried his ideas to revolutionary conclusions, notably certain *Franciscans and *Fratricelli. ⁷

*Jesus Sent from Heaven*¹

3. Finally, the *fulness of time* (Gal. 4:4) had come. Just as man was formed from the earth on the sixth day by the power and wisdom of the divine hand, so at the beginning of the sixth age,⁸ the Archangel Gabriel was sent to the Virgin. When she gave her consent to him, the Holy Spirit came upon her like a divine fire inflaming her soul and sanctifying her flesh in perfect purity. But the *power of the Most High overshadowed* her (Luke 1:35) so that she could endure such fire. By the action of that power, instantly his body was formed, his soul created, and at once both were united to the divinity in the Person of the Son, so that the same Person was God and man, with the properties of each nature maintained.⁹

Oh, if you could feel in some way¹⁰

⁷ F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., [*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*](#) (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 883.

^{*1} Cf. Matt. 1:18–23; Luke 1:26–38.

⁸ **"of the sixth Age"** – Analyzing human history and perceiving distinct "Ages", as perceived by some profound and exceptional appearing during such a Period of time, was popular at the time of Bonaventure. Most famously were the Ages articulated by the monk Joachim of Fiore

⁹ **"the properties of each nature maintained"** – This careful expression of the unique constitution of the God-Man was given normative form at the **Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)**. **"Chalcedon, the Definition of.** The statement of the Catholic Faith made by the Council of Chalcedon of 451, and eventually accepted in both E. and W., except by the *Oriental Orthodox Churches. It reaffirms the definitions of *Nicaea and *Constantinople, asserting them to be **a sufficient account of the orthodox faith about the Person of Christ**, but declares that the new errors of *Nestorius and *Eutyches must be formally repudiated." [F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 317.]

¹⁰ **"if you could feel in some way"** – Bonaventure, as was St. Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century, taught in the "School of the Affections." Our disordered affections distort our other powers of soul, causing us to imagine or to remember poorly. And when our images are poor, then our intellect which operates on those images becomes distorted also. See: Knuuttila, Simo, "Medieval Theories of the Emotions", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/medieval-emotions/>. "Bonaventure differed from these authors in relativizing the difference between sensory and intellectual moving powers and

the quality and intensity of that fire sent from heaven,
the refreshing coolness that accompanied it,
the consolation it imparted;
if you could realize the great exaltation of the Virgin Mother,
the ennobling of the human race,
the condescension of the divine majesty;
if you could hear the Virgin singing with joy;
if you could go with your Lady
into the mountainous region;
if you could see the sweet embrace
of the Virgin and the woman who had been sterile
and hear the greeting
in which the tiny servant recognized his Lord,
the herald his Judge
and the voice his Word,
then I am sure
you would sing in sweet tones
with the Blessed Virgin
that sacred hymn:
*My soul magnifies the Lord ...*²
and with the tiny prophet¹¹
you would exalt, rejoice and adore
the marvelous virginal conception!

*Jesus Born of Mary*³

4. Under the reign of Caesar Augustus, the *quiet silence* (Wisd. 18:14) of universal peace had brought such calm to an age¹² which had previously been sorely distressed

attributing emotions to the intellectual soul in a proper sense and not merely metaphorically as was traditionally done. In addressing the soul of Christ in the third book of his *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bonaventure argues that there were concupiscible and irascible parts in Christ's intellectual will as well as passions of joy and distress. Similar ideas were also put forward earlier in the so-called *Summa Halensis* (Bonaventure, *Sent.* III.16.2.1 (354); III.33.1.3 (717); see also Prentice 1957; Vaura 2017). Even though Bonaventure's account remained sketchy, it influenced the Franciscan view of the emotions of the will that came to be more systematically analyzed by John Duns Scotus."

² Luke 1:46.

¹¹ "the tiny prophet" – John the Baptist still in the womb of his mother Elizabeth.

³ Cf. Luke 2:1–18.

¹² "brought such calm to an age" – Recent research paints quite a different picture of the Pax Romana of Augustus. For the very few in the western world under the Roman Empire's control – only 15% had Roman citizenship; all the rest of the people were "owned" by others – there was pax. But the

that through his decree a census of the whole world could be taken. Under the guidance of divine providence, it happened that Joseph, the Virgin's husband, took to the town of Bethlehem the young girl of royal descent who was pregnant. When nine months had passed since his conception, the King of Peace *like a bridegroom from his bridal chamber* (cf. 1 Par. 22:9; Ps. 18:6), came forth from the virginal womb. He was brought forth into the light without any corruption just as he was conceived without any stain of lust. Although he was great and rich, he became small and poor for us. He chose to be born away from a home in a stable, to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, to be nourished by virginal milk and to lie in a manger between an ox and an ass.¹³ Then "there shone upon us a day of new redemption, restoration of the past¹⁴ and eternal happiness. Then throughout the whole world the heavens became honey-sweet."⁴

Now, then, my soul,
embrace that divine manger;

control of the Romans over the nations was regularly brutal, as for example the practice of crucifixion makes evident. It was not a peaceful world at all, but brutal and even extremely so.

N.T. Wright notes: "The horrible personal and physical aspects of crucifixion were matched by the social, communal, and political meaning. This is important not just as the "context" for our understanding of the Jesus's execution (as though the barbaric practice were just a dark backdrop to a theology produced from somewhere else), but as part of the very stuff of the theology itself. We might already have figured this out from the careful placing of Philippians 2.8b, *thanatou de staurou*, "even the death of the cross," at the dead center of the poem that some think antedates Paul himself. As we shall see later, the first half of that poem is a downward journey, down to the lowest place to which a human being could sink with regard to pain or shame, personal fate or public perception. **This was precisely the point. Those who crucified people did so because it was the sharpest and nastiest way of asserting their own absolute power and guaranteeing their victim's absolute degradation.** [Wright, N. T.. *The Day the Revolution Began* (pp. 54-55). HarperOne. Kindle Edition.]

¹³ "**between an ox and an ass**" - This kind of imagining about the Nativity was famously the work of St. Francis of Assisi - this *devotion to the human life* (not just His incarnation and the passion and death) and the particularities of his actual human circumstances. This kind of contemplation is a way that the Incarnation "completes" its mission by becoming so fully within each of our human experiences (the world with which we interact through our senses).

¹⁴ "**restoration of the past**" - A wonderful insight. We tend to think that reception of redemption - the "moment" of redemption changes things from that point forward. But what Bonaventure reminds is how an unmerited and profound grace given us now changes the way that we understand our past. Think of that Easter "Exultet" hymn that has it: "O happy fault / O necessary sin of Adam / that merited for us / so great a Savior."

^{*4} *Breviarium Romanum*, Officium nativitatis Domini, noc. 1, resp. 2.

press your lips upon and kiss the boy's feet.¹⁵
Then in your mind
keep the shepherds' watch,
marvel at the assembling host of angels,
join in the heavenly melody,
singing with your voice and heart:
*Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace
to men of good will.*⁵

SECOND FRUIT: THE HUMILITY OF HIS MODE OF LIFE

Jesus Conformed to His Forefathers

5. On the eighth day the boy was circumcised and named Jesus (Luke 2:21). Thus, not delaying to pour out for you the price of his blood, he showed that he was your true Savior, promised to his forefathers by word and sign, and like them in everything except ignorance and sin. For this reason, he received the mark of circumcision so that coming and appearing *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, he might *condemn sin by sin* (Rom. 8:3) and become our salvation and eternal justice, taking his beginning from humility, which is the root and guardian of all virtues.¹⁶

¹⁵ “**kiss the boy's feet**” – Such could easily devolve into sentimentalism. But perhaps we should recall here St. Thomas, the Apostle, *had to touch* the resurrected Christ, so that he could be sure that Jesus was real, not a ghost.

⁵ Luke 2:14.

¹⁶ “**humility**” – In the doctrine of the Capital Sins, humility is the virtue that opposes Pride, the source of all sins.

HUMILITY (Lat. *humilitas*, from *humus*, ground). Originally denoting low estate and the cowed attitude likely to result from it, in Judaism and esp. in Christianity the word acquired more positive connotations. **Humility, understood as submissiveness before God, came to be regarded as a virtue, modelled on the example of Christ ‘who humbled himself and became obedient unto death’ (Phil. 2:8).** In both pagan and Judaeo-Christian usage it could be applied to the voluntary adoption of a posture of self-degradation, usually intended to reinforce an appeal for God's mercy and help. **In later Christian usage it came to mean primarily the virtue opposed to *pride**, but for many centuries it could also be applied to outward gestures of self-abasement, such as bowing. Although humility has sometimes been seen as involving a refusal to regard oneself as superior to other people, St *Thomas Aquinas, for instance, thought of it as meaning essentially submission to God and a consequent moderation of ambition to keep it within the bounds appointed for each individual by God; **this is compatible with recognizing that in certain ways one may be better endowed by God than someone else is (cf. Summa Theologiae, 2. 2. q. 161, a. 1 and a. 3).** In this sense, **humility has been seen as an aspect of truthfulness, neither exaggerating nor denigrating the truth of what one is.** [F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone,

*Why are you proud,
dust and ashes?*⁶
The innocent Lamb
*who takes away the sins of the world*⁷
does not shrink from the wound of circumcision.

But you,
who are a sinner,
while you pretend to be just,
are fleeing
from the remedy of eternal salvation,
which you can never reach
unless you are willing to follow
the humble Savior.

*Jesus Shown to the Magi*⁸

6. When the Lord was born in Bethlehem of Judah, a star appeared to the Magi in the east and with its brightness showed them the way to the home of the humble King.

Do not now turn away
from the brilliance of that star in the east
which guides you.
Become a companion of the holy kings;
accept the testimony of the Jewish Scriptures
about Christ
and avert the evil
of the treacherous king.
With gold, frankincense and myrrh,
venerate Christ the King
as true God and man.
Together with the first fruits of the Gentiles to be called to faith,
adore, confess and praise¹⁷
this humble God

eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 809.]

⁶ Ecclus. 10:9.

⁷ John 1:29.

⁸ Cf. Matt. 2:1-12.

¹⁷ “**adore, confess, and praise**” - St. Ignatius in the “Principle and Foundation” [SpEx 23] - “Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God....”

lying in a manger.
And thus, warned in a dream
not to follow Herod's pride,
you will return to your country
in the footsteps
of the humble Christ.

*Jesus Submissive to the Law*⁹

7. It was not enough for the teacher of perfect humility, who was equal to the Father in all things, to submit himself to the humble Virgin. He must submit himself also to the Law, *that he might redeem those who were under the Law and free them from the slavery of corruption to the freedom of the glory of the sons of God* (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:21). He wished that his mother, although she was most pure, should observe the law of purification. And he wished that he himself, the redeemer of all men, should be redeemed as a firstborn son and should be presented to God in the temple and that an offering should be given for him in the presence of the just who were rejoicing.

Rejoice, then,
with that blessed old man and the aged Anna;
walk forth
to meet the mother and Child.
Let love overcome your bashfulness;
let affection dispel your fear.
Receive the Infant
in your arms
and say with the bride;
*I took hold of him
and would not let him go.*¹⁰
Dance with the holy old man
and sing with him:
*Now dismiss your servant, Lord,
according to your word in peace.*¹¹

⁹ Cf. Luke 2:27.

¹⁰ Cant. 3:4.

¹¹ Luke 2:29.

*Jesus Exiled from His Kingdom*¹²

8. It is fitting that perfect *humility* should be adorned and accompanied by three other virtues: *poverty* in fleeing from riches which are spurs to pride; *patience* in bearing insults with composure; *obedience* in following the bidding of others.¹⁸ So, in God's design a higher providence allowed that, when the evil Herod sought to kill the tiny King, he was taken into Egypt as a pilgrim and pauper,¹⁹ directed by a warning from heaven. In the children his own age who were killed because of him, he was killed and, as it were, slaughtered in each.²⁰ Finally, after Herod's death, he was brought back by divine command into the land of Judah; and growing in age and grace, he lived there with his parents and was subject to them. He never left them for a moment except when, at twelve years of age, he remained in Jerusalem, causing his mother much sorrow while she sought him and bringing her much joy when he was found.

Do not, then, leave the mother and Child
as they flee into Egypt
without accompanying them.
With the beloved mother looking for her beloved Son,
do not cease searching
until you have found him.
O, how you would weep
if with devotion
you could look upon so venerable a lady,
so charming a girl,
in a foreign country
with so tender and handsome a little boy;
or if you could hear the sweet complaint

^{*12} Cf. Matt. 2:13-23.

¹⁸ "**humility ... poverty ... patience ... obedience**" – I have italicized these four virtues that Bonaventure enjoins. In the forefront of Bonaventure's mind is the Exemplar (Jesus) but also the incandescent Example of St. Francis of Assisi.

¹⁹ "**into Egypt**" – I learned recently that "Egypt" did not mean that Mary and Joseph and Jesus went now into the Nile delta. Egypt at the time controlled the land up remarkably near to Bethlehem. The boundary where Egyptian territory began was only some twenty to thirty kilometers south of Bethlehem.

²⁰ "**as it were, slaughtered in each [of the holy Innocents killed at Herod's order]**" – So, then, Jesus's relation to each of us is not solely as Exemplar *par excellence* – God's way of being a human being incarnate. Each person is born "in the image" of God, and therefore as a living "interpretation" of God in the world. The effectiveness and persuasiveness of that *image* becomes more when, over time, a person learns how to grow in the *likeness* of God, through the imitation of Christ. Throughout *The Tree of Life*, Bonaventure is in the most concrete of ways showing each of us how such a likeness is cultivated: what exactly Christlikeness looks like and does.

of the loving mother of God:
*Son, why have you done this to us?*¹³
as if she would say:
Most beloved Son,
how could you give such sorrow
to your Mother,
whom you love
and who loves you
so much?

THIRD FRUIT: THE LOFTINESS OF HIS POWER

*Jesus, Heavenly Baptist*¹⁴

9. When the Savior reached the age of thirty, wishing to work out our salvation, he began first to act before he taught (cf. Acts 1:1). And beginning with baptism as the doorway of the sacraments and the foundation of virtues,²¹ he wished to be baptized by John, in order to show us an example of perfect justice and to “confer regenerative power on water by contact with his most pure flesh.”¹⁵

You also, accompany him faithfully;
and once regenerated in him,
explore his secrets so that
“on the banks of the Jordan
you may discern
the Father in the voice,
the Son in the flesh
and the Holy Spirit in the dove,
and when the heaven of the Trinity

^{*13} Luke 2:48.

^{*14} Cf. Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22.

²¹ “**the foundation of the virtues**” – In my life’s experience of the Catholic Church, it was made very clear to me that I was expected to be part of the Sacramental life. However, I cannot recall even one homily/sermon (there must have been one or two, surely) that name a particular cardinal or theological virtue *as virtue*: defining the virtue; explaining how to cultivate it; describing the threats to that virtue and how to identify and overcome them, etc. Perhaps it should have been the Confessional that was the privileged place of teaching us about the virtues and how to cultivate them, but it never was that. It was more about how to “quit sinning” particular sins, which is very much different than being taught a particular human strength – a virtue – so that particular sins cease to lay hold of me.

^{*15} Bede, *In Lucam*, I, 3:21.

is opened to you,"¹⁶
you will be taken up
into God.²²

*Jesus Tempted by the Enemy*¹⁷

10. Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1). By humbly enduring the enemy's attacks, he would make us humble; and by winning a victory, he would make us courageous²³. He firmly took up a life that was hard and solitary so that he might arouse the souls of the faithful²⁴ to strive toward perfection²⁵ and strengthen them to endure hardships.

Come now, disciple of Christ,
search into the secrets of solitude
with your loving teacher,
so that having become a companion of wild beasts,
you may become an imitator and sharer of
the hidden silence,²⁶ the devout prayer, the daylong fasting

^{*16} Pseudo-Anselm, *Meditationes*, 15.

A beautiful thought about how it is that we learn, such as in this particular scene – the Baptism – to identify each of the three Divine Persons. I recall how St. Thomas Aquinas inquires in *Summa Theologica* I, Question 43 – “How do we know that a particular Divine Person has been sent?”

²² “**you will be taken up into God**” – Bonaventure most famously develops this idea of *ascent* in his *The Journey of the Soul into God*.

^{*17} Cf. Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13.

²³ “**humble ... he would make us courageous**” – A life of humility means that one will be acquainted with fear, because the arrogant and pride-swollen people of the world are attracted to the destruction of people who are virtuous in ways specifically in contrast to them. Thus, a humble person needs to be courageous.

²⁴ “**so that he might rouse the souls**” – What makes that life “hard and solitary” is other people, who do not desire to be “aroused”, or who resent who is doing the arousing: “Who the hell does he think that he is?!”

²⁵ “**to strive towards perfection**” – Knowing what “perfection” means is difficult indeed, because we far too quickly assume that it is an ideal in relation to which we *confirm* our lives, rather than learning who actually we are, and our gifts and weaknesses, and then learning over time how to let God have us, so that God can deploy us as He knows best. “Perfection” is a process articulated famously in the three Ways of the spiritual life: the purgative way; the illuminative way; and the unitive way.

²⁶ “**an imitator and sharer of the hidden silence**” – A beautiful expression of the stillness that increasingly gathers in a reflective person, a person who almost never *reacts* to experiences, but who,

and the three encounters with the clever enemy.
And so, you will learn
to have recourse to him
in every crisis of temptation
because *we do not have a high priest
who cannot have compassion on our infirmities,
but one tried
in all things as we are,
except sin.*¹⁸

Jesus Wonderful in His Miracles

11. *He is the one who alone does marvelous things* (Ps. 71:18). He transforms the elements, multiplies the loaves of bread, walks upon the sea and calms the waves; he curbs the demons and puts them to flight; he cures the sick, cleanses the lepers and raises the dead; he restores sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, the power to walk to the crippled, sensation and movement to the paralytics and those with withered limbs.²⁷

To him our sinning conscience calls out
like the faithful leper:
*Lord, if you wish,
you can make me clean.*¹⁹
Now like the centurion:
*Lord, my servant boy is lying at home
paralyzed and is suffering intensely.*²⁰
Now like the woman of Canaan:
Have mercy on me,

because he or she lives at a depth where worldly concerns cannot get to, is able to consider serenely all experiences and to wonder what God is up to in them.

¹⁸ Heb. 4:15.

²⁷ I remember being taught by St. Ephraim the Syrian to re-frame these “supernatural” powers of Jesus. When Jesus does these extraordinary things, He does them not so that we might get a glimpse of what God is like in the heavenly realms – a kind of “sneak peek”. No, everything that Jesus does is to teach us something that human beings long ago forgot; namely, who we were when God made the first of us and placed us in Paradise. In that beginning place human beings could do all of these things; these powers were “natural” to us.

¹⁹ Luke 5:12; Matt. 8:2.

²⁰ Matt. 8:6.

*Son of David.*²¹
Now like the woman with the issue of blood:
*If I touch the hem of his garment,
I will be cured.*²²
Now with Mary and Martha:
*See, Lord,
the one you love is ill.*²³

*Jesus Transfigured*²⁴

12. To strengthen the human spirit with hope of eternal reward, *Jesus took Peter, James and John up a high mountain by themselves* (Matt. 17:1). He revealed to them the mystery of the Trinity and foretold that he would be rejected in his passion. He showed the glory of his future resurrection in his transfiguration. The Law and the prophets gave testimony to him in the apparition of Moses and Elijah, the Father and the Holy Spirit in the voice and the cloud.

So, the soul devoted to Christ,
strengthened in truth and borne to the summit of virtue,
can faithfully say with Peter:
*Lord, it is good for us to be here,*²⁵
in the serene enjoyment of contemplating you.
When heavenly repose and ecstasy are given to the soul,
it will hear *the secret words*
*which man is not permitted to speak.*²⁶

FOURTH FRUIT: THE PLENITUDE OF HIS PIETY

*Jesus, the Solicitous Shepherd*²⁷

13. How great was this devoted shepherd's solicitous care for the lost sheep and how great his mercy, the Good Shepherd himself indicates with an affectionate

^{*21} Matt. 15:22.

^{*22} Matt. 9:21.

^{*23} John 11:3.

^{*24} Cf. Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-13; Luke 9:28-36.

^{*25} Matt. 17:4.

^{*26} 2 Cor. 12:4.

^{*27} Cf. Luke 15:4-10; Matt. 18:12-14.

metaphor in the parable of the shepherd and the hundredth sheep that was lost, sought with much care, and finally found and joyfully brought back on his shoulders. He openly declares the same thing in an express statement when he says: “*The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep*” (John 10:11). In him is truly fulfilled the prophecy: *Like a shepherd he will feed his flock* (Isa. 40:11). In order to do this, he endured toil, anxiety and lack of food; he traveled through towns and villages preaching the kingdom of God in the midst of many dangers and the plotting of the Pharisees; and he passed the nights in watchful prayer. Fearless of the murmuring and scandal of the Pharisees, he was affable to the publicans, saying that he had come into the world for the sake of those who are sick (Matt. 9:12). He also extended fatherly affection to the repentant, showing them the open bosom of divine mercy. As witnesses to this I call upon and summon Matthew, Zacchaeus, the sinful woman who prostrated herself at his feet and the woman taken in adultery.²⁸

Like Matthew, therefore
follow this most devoted shepherd;
like Zacchaeus
receive him with hospitality;
like the sinful woman
anoint him with ointment
and wash his feet with your tears,
wipe them with your hair
and caress them with your kisses,
so that finally,
with the woman presented to him for judgment,
you may deserve to hear
the sentence of forgiveness:
*Has no one condemned you? Neither will I condemn you.
Go, and sin no more.*²⁹

*Jesus Bathed with Tears*³⁰

14. To manifest the sweetness of supreme devotedness, the Fountain of all mercy, the good Jesus, wept for us in our misery not only once but many times.²⁸ First over

²⁸ Matt. 9:9–13, 10:3; Luke 19:1–10, 7:36–50; John 8:3–11.

²⁹ John 8:10–11.

³⁰ Cf. John 11:35; Luke 19:41; Heb. 5:7.

²⁸ “wept for us ... many times” – Bonaventure, a Master in the School of the Affections, is working hard to get us to pay attention to the affective life of Jesus, not only so that we might know Jesus

Lazarus, then over the city and finally on the cross, a flood of tears streamed forth from those loving eyes for the expiation of all sins. The Savior wept abundantly, now deploring the misery of human weakness, now the darkness of a blind heart, now the depravity of obdurate²⁹ malice.

O hard heart,
insane and impious,
to be pitied as if bereft of true life,
why do you rejoice and laugh
like a madman
in the midst of such misery
while the Wisdom of the Father
weeps over you?
Consider your weeping physician and
*make mourning as for an only son,
a bitter lamentation;
let tears stream down
like a torrent
day and night.
Give yourself no rest,
nor let the pupil of your eye be still.*³¹

*Jesus Acclaimed King of the World*³²

15. After the raising of Lazarus and the pouring of the jar of ointment on Jesus' head, as the fragrance of his fame had already spread among the people, foreseeing that a crowd would meet him, he mounted an ass in order to give a remarkable example of humility in the midst of the applause of the people who came to him, cut down branches and strewed their garments in his way. Not forgetting compassion, when the crowd was singing a hymn of praise, he lamented over the destruction of the city.

Rise now,
handmaid of the Savior, so that
like one of the daughters of Jerusalem

as an Idea only but as a fully human divine Person, but also so that we might wonder about the affects of Jesus, letting our own affections be attended to.

²⁹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at "**obdurate**" – "Hardened in wrongdoing or sin; stubbornly impenitent; resistant or insensible to moral influence. *Obsolete.*" Also, "Hardened against persuasion, entreaty, the feeling of pity, etc.; obstinate, unyielding, relentless, hard-hearted."

³¹ Jer. 6:26; Lam. 2:18.

³² Cf. Matt. 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:29–38; John 12:12–16

you may behold
King Solomon in the honor
which his mother the synagogue reverently offered him³³
as a symbol
of the birth of the Church, so that
with works of piety and triumphs of virtue –
as if with olive branches and palms –
you may follow
the Lord of heaven and earth,
sitting on the back of an ass.

*Jesus, Consecrated Bread*³⁴

16. Among all the memorable events of Christ's life, the most worthy of remembrance is that last banquet, the most sacred supper. Here not only the paschal lamb was presented to be eaten but also the immaculate Lamb, *who takes away the sins of the world* (John 1:29). Under the appearance of bread *having all delight and the pleasantness of every taste* (Wisd. 16:20), he was given as food. In this banquet the marvelous sweetness of Christ's goodness shone forth when he dined at the same table and on the same plates with those poor disciples and the traitor Judas. The marvelous example of his humility shone forth when, girt with a towel, the King of Glory diligently washed the feet of the fishermen and even of his betrayer. The marvelous richness of his generosity was manifest when he gave to those first priests, and as a consequence to the whole Church and the world, his most sacred body and his true blood as food and drink so that what was soon to be a sacrifice pleasing to God and the priceless price of our redemption would be our viaticum and sustenance. Finally, the marvelous outpouring of his love shone forth when, *loving his own to the end* (John 13:1), he strengthened them in goodness with a gentle exhortation, especially forewarning Peter to be firm in faith and offering to John his breast as a pleasant and sacred place of rest.

O how marvelous are all these things,
how full of sweetness,
but only for that soul
who, having been called to so distinguished a banquet,
runs
with all the ardor of his spirit
so that he may cry out
with the Prophet:
As the stag longs for the springs of water

³³ Cf. Cant. 3:11.

³⁴ Cf. Matt. 26:17–29; Mark 14:12–25; Luke 22:7–38; John 13–17.

so my soul longs for you,
O God!^{35 30}

^{*35} Ps. 41:2.

³⁰ Bonaventure, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, ed. Richard J. Payne, trans. Ewert Cousins, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 126-139.

ST. BONAVENTURE

THE TREE OF LIFE

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Bonaventure, [*Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*](#), ed. Richard J. Payne, trans. Ewert Cousins, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 119–122.

PROLOGUE

1. *With Christ I am nailed to the cross,*¹
from Galatians, chapter two.

Galatians 2 – ¹⁹For through the law I died to the law,* that I might live for God. **I have been crucified with Christ;**^o ²⁰yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given

^{*1} Gal. 2:19.

^{*} *Through the law I died to the law:* this is variously explained: the law revealed sin (Rom 7:7–9) and led to death and then to belief in Christ; or, the law itself brought the insight that law cannot justify (Gal 2:16; Ps 143:2); or, the “law of Christ” (Gal 6:2) led to abandoning the Mosaic law; or, the law put Christ to death (cf. Gal 3:13) and so provided a way to our salvation, through baptism into Christ, through which we die (*crucified with Christ*; see Rom 6:6). Cf. also Gal 3:19–25 on the role of the law in reference to salvation.

^o 6:14; Rom 6:6, 8, 10; 7:6.

himself up for me.^{p 21} I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.^{q 1}

The true worshiper of God and disciple of Christ,
who desires² to conform perfectly
to the Savior of all men
crucified for him,³
should, above all, strive
with an earnest endeavor of soul⁴
to carry about continuously,
both in his soul and in his flesh,
the cross of Christ
until he can truly feel in himself
what the Apostle said above.⁵
Moreover, an affection and feeling of this kind⁶
is merited to be experienced in a vital way only by one
who, not unmindful of the Lord's passion nor ungrateful,

^p 1:4; Rom 8:10-11; Col 3:3-4.

^q 5:2.

¹ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Ga 2:19-21.

² **“who desires”** - It is not about thinking about God, and of Christ in particular, but it is about what God and Jesus Christ cause a disciple to *desire*. This that Bonaventure seeks to do by this book, *The Tree of Life*, is to activate his readers' desires, affections, so his readers can “truly feel” in themselves the impact of God in their lives.

³ **“to conform perfectly ... crucified for him”** - Bonaventure will teach that any disciples must always begin his or her spiritual journey at/through the Cross of Christ. So “to conform perfectly” means here to conform to Christ on the Cross ... “until he can truly feel in himself”.

⁴ **“an earnest endeavor of soul”** - See below the note on the “three powers” of the soul. These “powers” is what “endeavor of soul” means.

⁵ **“The true worshiper of God and disciple of Christ”** - Always in Bonaventure's mind is the luminous example of St. Francis of Assisi, who is the most sufficient Example, and Jesus is the Exemplar.

⁶ **“an affection and feeling of this kind”** - Bonaventure shows discernment about the affections. He desires for his readers to receive affections “of this kind” with their crucified Lord. In other words, it is not about *any* affection that a disciple is able to stir up within himself or herself (this is where devotion can go way off the rails, becoming disordered *sentimentality*) when contemplating at the Cross. No, the affections that Bonaventure means are those given the soul to experience, such as “meriting to experience” the affections that Jesus Christ wants each of us to have.

contemplates⁷
the labor, suffering and love
of Jesus crucified,
with such vividness of memory, such sharpness of intellect
and such charity of will⁸
that he can truly say with the bride:
*A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me;
he will linger
between my breasts.*²

2. To enkindle in us this affection, to shape this understanding and to imprint this memory,⁹ I have endeavored to gather this bundle of myrrh from the forest of the holy Gospel, which treats at length the life, passion and glorification of Jesus Christ¹⁰. I have

⁷ “**contemplates**” – One can “endeavor” to *meditate* (holy thinking about holy things) by *lectio divina*, by prayerful and careful study of the Scriptures, by reading good Theology and Spirituality. But *contemplation* is something that we cannot endeavor, because contemplation is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Contemplation opens the realities themselves (not just ideas about reality) to become suddenly alive to a disciple, and the disciple to become fully present to those realities. See the *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**contemplation**” – “Religious or spiritual meditation; (sometimes) *spec.* a meditative practice in which a person seeks to pass beyond intellectual reasoning or reflection to a direct experience of the divine or infinite.”

⁸ “**memory ... intellect ... will**” – These are the “three powers of soul”. Notice that Bonaventure desires for a disciple the activation of just one of the powers of soul, but all of the powers of soul – the fullest possible personal interaction with the mystery of Christ Crucified.

^{*2} Cant. 1:12.

⁹ “**to enkindle ... to shape ... imprint**” – Again, the powers of soul. But notice the order here. He starts with the kindling of the affections, which then need to be “shaped” or discerned through the use of one’s intellect, so that what a person has felt about Christ in some moment in his earthly life is discerningly understood, with the result that one has a genuine, trustworthy memory of Christ. It is through attention to our desires that we have access to the reality of *disordered affections* functioning within us. See St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises* [16] – “if by chance the exercitant feels an affection or inclination to something in a disordered way, it is profitable for that person to strive with all possible effort to come over to the opposite of that to which he or she is wrongly attached.”

¹⁰ “**the life, passion, and glorification**” – For perhaps a thousand years – the first thousand of Christianity – what occupied the Church’s attention was the Incarnation (“Why did God become human?!”) and later, the redemption as focused on the Holy Triduum: the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But it was in the rising of the Mendicant Orders, and especially among the Franciscans that *the saving importance of the life* of Christ – the way He lived among us; what He did; what He said and to whom – was “discovered”. Notice how the Creeds “ignore” the saving importance of the life of Christ: “born of the Virgin Mary / suffered under Pontius Pilate / was crucified / died / and was buried.”

bound it together with a few ordered and parallel words to aid the memory.¹¹ I have used simple, familiar and unsophisticated terms to avoid idle curiosity,¹² to cultivate devotion¹³ and to foster the piety¹⁴ of faith. Since imagination aids understanding, I have arranged in the form of an imaginary tree the few items I have collected from among many and have ordered and disposed them in such a way that in the first or lower branches the Savior's origin and life are described; in the middle, his passion; and in the top, his glorification. In the first group of branches there are four stanzas placed opposite each other in alphabetical order.³ So also in the second and third group of branches. From each of these branches hangs a single fruit. So, there are, as it were, twelve branches bearing twelve fruits according to the mystery of the tree of life.⁴

¹¹ **“to aid the memory”** – Remember that books were precious and rare, except in the great monasteries or universities of Europe. And there existed no “school system” for young people in Europe to attend, so that they might learn how to read. The significance of memory for the “illiterate” was great indeed, and so a religious Teacher had to attentive to “aids” to memory in his teaching. *Britannica* – **“Printing Press**, machine by which text and images are transferred from movable type to paper or other media by means of ink. Movable type and paper were invented in China, and the oldest known extant book printed from movable type was created in Korea in the 14th century. Printing first became mechanized in Europe during the 15th century.”

¹² **“to avoid idle curiosity”** – This whole sentence is an excellent statement of Bonaventure's pedagogical approach. “Idle curiosity” is a misuse of the power of soul that is Understanding/Intellect. Young people need to be taught the proper use of their soul's powers. “Idle curiosity” is to ask about matters whose answers don't matter to the one asking – one asks questions because one can, not because they are the questions that one *must* ask, whose answers really matter to him or her.

¹³ **“devotion”** – As long as I can remember in my life “devotions” or “the devotional life” was for religious weirdos. Devotion was in a person (whom I was never attracted to trust) a kind of “over-ripe” affectivity in religious matters, about a person with a constellation of emotions that was quickly impatient with an intellectual challenge to the basis of these emotions. What true “devotion” happens in a religious context when a disciple's affections are aligned with a sufficient intellectual understanding of religious truth and both of these for the sake of “the praise, reverence, and service of God.” For St. Ignatius of Loyola “always growing in devotion” meant a greater and greater capacity to be able “to find God in all things” (i.e., not just in specifically religious or spiritual or ecclesial experiences).

¹⁴ **“piety”** – In the ancient Roman meaning “piety” meant duty (to the gods and in relation to the highest values of the Roman State). And in the famous “Gifts of the Holy Spirit” the “fear” of the Lord is expressed twice, such that some authors have changed the second “fear” into “piety.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* at **“piety”** – “Reverence and obedience to God (or to the gods); devotion to religious duties and observances; godliness, devoutness.”

³ Bonaventure implies that the original manuscript contained a picture of a tree. On this was inscribed a poem, which is discussed in note 5, p. 121; cf. the Quaracchi critical edition, *S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, VIII, xxxix.

⁴ This and the following passage are based on Apocalypse 22:1-2: *And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as a crystal, coming forth from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the city street,*

3. Picture in your mind¹⁵ a tree whose roots are watered by an ever-flowing fountain that becomes a great and living river with four channels¹⁶ to water the garden of the entire Church.

Genesis 2 – ⁸ The Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,* and placed there the man whom he had formed.^e ⁹*Out of the ground the Lord God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the

on both sides of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit according to each month, and the leaves for the healing of nations. Cf. Esther 10:6; Gen. 2:9-10.

¹⁵ “**picture in your mind**” – As Matteo Ricci, SJ learned to build a “memory palace” through which he built his prodigious memory during his mission in China, so Bonaventure asks his readers to allow to appear in their imagination a Great Tree. And the ordered arrangement of branches, leaves, and fruits is to assist his readers to remember all that he is now to teach them.

¹⁶ **Genesis 2** - ¹⁰ A river rises in Eden to water the garden; beyond there it divides and becomes four branches. [*New American Bible*, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Ge 2:10.]

* *Eden, in the east*: the place names in vv. 8-14 are mostly derived from Mesopotamian geography (see note on vv. 10-14). Eden may be the name of a region in southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), the term derived from the Sumerian word *eden*, “fertile plain.” A similar-sounding Hebrew word means “delight,” which may lie behind the Greek translation, “The Lord God planted a paradise [= pleasure park] in Eden.” **It should be noted, however, that the garden was not intended as a paradise for the human race, but as a pleasure park for God; the man tended it for God.** The story is not about “paradise lost.”

The garden in the precincts of Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem seems to symbolize the garden of God (like gardens in other temples); it is apparently alluded to in Ps 1:3; 80:10; 92:14; Ez 47:7-12; Rev 22:1-2.

^e Is 51:3; Ez 31:9.

* **The second tree, the tree of life, is mentioned here and at the end of the story (3:22, 24). It is identified with Wisdom in Prv 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4, where the pursuit of wisdom gives back to human beings the life that is made inaccessible to them in Gn 3:24. In the new creation described in the Book of Revelation, the tree of life is once again made available to human beings (Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19).** *Knowledge of good and evil*: the meaning is disputed. According to some, it signifies moral autonomy, control over morality (symbolized by “good and evil”), which would be inappropriate for mere human beings; the phrase would thus mean refusal to accept the human condition and finite freedom that God gives them. According to others, it is more broadly the knowledge of what is helpful and harmful to humankind, suggesting that the attainment of adult experience and responsibility inevitably means the loss of a life of simple subordination to God.

middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.^{f 10} A river rises in Eden* to water the garden; beyond there it divides and becomes four branches.¹⁷

Revelation 22: ¹⁴ Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city* through its gates.^{h 15} Outside are the dogs, the sorcerers, the unchaste, the murderers, the idol-worshippers, and all who love and practice deceit.^{i 18}

Psalm 1 –

³ He is like a tree^c
planted near streams of water,
that yields its fruit in season;
Its leaves never wither;
whatever he does prospers. ¹⁹

^f Gn 3:22; Prv 3:18; Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14.

* *A river rises in Eden*: the stream of water mentioned in v. 6, **the source of all water upon earth, comes to the surface in the garden of God and from there flows out over the entire earth.** In comparable religious literature, the dwelling of god is the source of fertilizing waters. The four rivers represent universality, as in the phrase “the four quarters of the earth.” In Ez 47:1–12; Zec 14:8; Rev 22:1–2, the waters that irrigate the earth arise in the temple or city of God. The place names in vv. 11–14 are mainly from southern Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), where Mesopotamian literature placed the original garden of God. The Tigris and the Euphrates, the two great rivers in that part of the world, both emptied into the Persian Gulf. Gihon is the modest stream issuing from Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:8; 1 Kgs 1:9–10; 2 Chr 32:4) but is here regarded as one of the four great world rivers and linked to Mesopotamia, for Cush here seems to be the territory of the Kassites (a people of Mesopotamia) as in Gn 10:8. The word Pishon is otherwise unknown but is probably formed in imitation of Gihon. Havilah seems, according to Gn 10:7 and 1 Chr 1:9, to be in Cush in southern Mesopotamia though other locations have been suggested.

¹⁷ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Ge 2:8–10.

* *The city*: heavenly Jerusalem; see note on Rev 21:2.

^h 7:14–15; 22:2.

ⁱ 21:8; Rom 1:29–32.

¹⁸ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Re 22:14–15.

^c Ps 52:10; 92:13–15; Jer 17:8.

¹⁹ [New American Bible](#), Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Ps 1:3.

From the trunk of this tree, imagine that there are growing twelve branches that are adorned with leaves, flowers and fruit. Imagine that the leaves are a most effective medicine to prevent and cure every kind of sickness, because the word of the cross *is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes* (Rom. 1:16). Let the flowers be beautiful with the radiance of every color and perfumed with the sweetness of every fragrance, awakening and attracting the anxious hearts of men of desire. Imagine that there are twelve fruits, *having every delight and the sweetness of every taste* (Wisd. 16:20). This fruit is offered to God's servants to be tasted so that when they eat it, they may always be satisfied, yet never grow weary of its taste.²⁰ This is the fruit that took its origin from the Virgin's womb and reached its savory maturity on the tree of the cross under the midday heat of the Eternal Sun, that is, the love of Christ. In the garden of the heavenly paradise – God's table – this fruit is served to those who desire it.²¹ This is suggested by the first stanza, which says:

O cross, salvation-bearing tree,
Watered by a living fountain,
Your flower is spice-scented,
Your fruit an object of desire.⁵

²⁰ Recall the title of this book – *The Tree of Life*. Bonaventure is inviting his readers back into the Garden of God. **Genesis 2:** ⁸ The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and placed there the man whom he had formed. ⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God made grow every tree that was delightful to look at and good for food, **with the tree of life in the middle of the garden** and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. [*New American Bible, Revised Edition*. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Ge 2:8–9.] What is interesting is that Bonaventure does not choose “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” as his paradisaic image – the place where Adam and Eve suffered lethal damage. If Bonaventure had used that tree, then he could have explored human failings – the Tree of Death, if you will. He did not do so.

²¹ “**this fruit is served to those who desire it**” – Obviously this is Eucharistic imagery – the receiving of the body and blood of Christ from the altar. But what is interesting is that this Eucharistic imagery is being associated with the Tree of Life in paradise rather than with the Last Supper, on the night before He died.

⁵ This and the two stanzas below, in no. 6, are part of a longer poem which Bonaventure mentions in no. 2; cf. note 3, p. 120. This longer poem, which probably had fifteen stanzas, was changed and added to by later copyists. The editors of the critical edition print within the text only the three stanzas here but add a number of others in a supplement: cf. the critical edition, *S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, VIII, 86–87.

From²² Jonathan D. Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (published November 1984) –

In 1596 Matteo Ricci taught the Chinese how to build a memory palace. He told them that the size of the palace would depend on how much they wanted to remember: the most ambitious construction would consist of several hundred buildings of all shapes and sizes, “the more there are the better it will be,” said Ricci, though he added that one did not have to build on a grandiose scale right away. One could create modest palaces, or one could build less dramatic structures such as a temple compound, a cluster of government offices, a public hostel, or a merchant’s meeting lodge. If one wished to begin on a still smaller scale, then one could erect a simple reception hall, a pavilion, or a studio. And if one wanted an intimate space, one could use just the corner of a pavilion, or an altar in a temple, or even such a homely object as a wardrobe or a divan.

In summarizing this memory system, he explained that these palaces, pavilions, divans were mental structures to be kept in one’s head, not solid objects to be literally constructed out of “real” materials. Ricci suggested that there were three main options for such memory locations. First, they could be drawn from reality, that is, from buildings that one had been in or from objects that one had seen with one’s own eyes and recalled in one’s memory. Second, they could be totally fictive, products of the imagination conjured up in any shape or size. Or third, they could be half real and half fictive, as in the case of a building one knew well and through the back wall of which one broke an imaginary door as a shortcut to new spaces, or in the middle of which one created a mental staircase that would lead one up to higher floors that had not existed before.

The real purpose of all these mental constructs was to provide storage spaces for the myriad concepts that make up the sum of our human knowledge. To everything that we wish to remember, wrote Ricci, we should give an image; and to every one of these images, we should assign a position where it can repose peacefully until we are ready to reclaim it by an act of memory. Since this entire memory system can work only if the images stay in the assigned positions and if we can instantly remember where we stored them, obviously it would seem easiest to rely on real locations which we know so well that we cannot ever forget them. But that would be a mistake, thought Ricci. For it is by expanding the number of locations and the corresponding number of images that can be stored in them that we increase and strengthen our memory. Therefore, the

²² This quotation taken from the Art of Memory website:
https://artofmemory.com/wiki/The_Memory_Palace_of_Matteo_Ricci/.

Chinese should struggle w/ the difficult task of creating fictive places, or mixing the fictive with the real, fixing them permanently in their minds by constant practice and review so that at last the fictive spaces become “as if real, and can never be erased.”

4. Although this fruit is one and undivided,²³ it nourishes devout souls with varied consolations in view of its varied states, excellence, powers and works. These can be reduced to twelve. This fruit of the tree of life, therefore, is pictured and is offered to our taste under twelve flavors on twelve branches.²⁴ On the first branch the soul devoted to Christ perceives the flavor of sweetness,²⁵ by recalling the distinguished origin and sweet birth of her Savior; on the second branch, the humble mode of life which he condescended to adopt; on the third, the loftiness of his perfect power; on the fourth, the plenitude of his most abundant piety; on the fifth, the confidence which he had in the trial of his passion; on the sixth, the patience which he exhibited in bearing great insults and injuries; on the seventh, the constancy which he maintained in the torture and suffering of his rough and bitter cross; on the eighth, the victory which he achieved in the conflict and passage of death; on the ninth, the novelty of his resurrection embellished with remarkable gifts; on the tenth, the sublimity of his ascension, pouring forth spiritual charisms; on the eleventh, the equity of the future judgment; on the twelfth, the eternity of the divine kingdom.

St. Augustine, *Confessions* – 5, 5. Who will grant me to find peace in you? Who will grant me this grace, that you would come into my heart and inebriate it, enabling me to forget the evils that beset me²¹ and embrace you, my only good? What are you to me? Have mercy on me, so that I may tell. What indeed am I to you, that you should command me to love you, and grow angry with me if I do not, and threaten

²³ **“this fruit one and undivided”** – That is, Jesus Christ whose consolations for the human race we will here contemplate through the “varied states, excellence, powers, and works” of the Christ.

²⁴ **“offered to our taste under twelve flavors”** – Bonaventure is referring to the value of “tasting” ideas not just thinking them. Constantly present in St. Ignatius of Loyola is his preference for *sentire-knowledge* (“felt or tasted or experiential” knowledge). For example, in *Spiritual Exercises* [2] – **“For what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly.”**

²⁵ **“perceives the flavor of sweetness”** – I think what Bonaventure means is the experience a person is given, through grace, suddenly to *love* the things of God. It is not just any kind of knowledge of things, but the specific knowledge of Jesus through which one a startling world – “This is real; not just a nice story!”

²¹ See Jer 44:9.

me with enormous woes? Is not the failure to love you woe enough in itself? Alas for me! **Through your own merciful dealings with me, O Lord my God, tell me what you are to me. Say to my soul, I am your salvation.**²² Say it so that I can hear it. **My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, I am your salvation. Let me run toward this voice and seize hold of you.** Do not hide your face from me:²³ let me die so that I may see it, for not to see it would be death to me indeed.²⁴ ²⁶

5. I call these fruits because they delight with their rich sweetness and strengthen with their nourishment the soul who meditates on them and diligently considers each one, abhorring the example of unfaithful Adam who preferred *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* (Gen. 2:17) to the tree of life.²⁷ No one can avoid this error unless he prefers faith to reason, devotion to investigation, simplicity to curiosity and finally the sacred cross of Christ to all carnal feeling or wisdom of the flesh.²⁸ Through the cross the charity of the Holy Spirit is nourished in devout hearts and the sevenfold grace is poured forth, as is requested in the two first and last verses.

6. Let us, then, say with devotion and tears:

Feed us with these fruits,
Shed light upon our thoughts,
Lead us along straight paths,
Crush the attacks of the enemy.

²² Ps 34(35):3.

²³ See Dt 32:20.

²⁴ See Ex 33:23.

²⁶ Saint Augustine, [*The Confessions, Part I*](#), ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Maria Boulding, vol. 1, Second Edition., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012), 41–42.

²⁷ “**preferred**” – It has never occurred to me before Bonaventure states it here that Adam and Eve preferred one Tree more than the other one. By speaking in this way, Bonaventure locates the presence of *disordered affections* operating from so early in the human story.

²⁸ “**unless he or she prefers**” – By speaking in terms of *preferences*, Bonaventure steers clear of anti-intellectualism. In other words, to “prefer” faith is not the rejection of reason but reason’s proper “ordering” in relation to revelation. But the main point about these “preferences” that Bonaventure lists has to do with *knowing* God and letting one’s life be changed by that relationship, not just *knowing about* God.

Fill us with your sacred light,
Breathe holy inspiration,
Be a peaceful way of life
For those who fear Christ. Amen.^{6 29}

^{*6} Cf. note 5, p. 121.

²⁹ Bonaventure, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St. Francis*, ed. Richard J. Payne, trans. Ewert Cousins, The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 119–122.

Our Relational World Today: Exploring the Wisdom of St. Bonaventure

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OUR RELATIONAL WORLD TODAY: EXPLORING THE WISDOM OF ST. BONAVENTURE

It was a major honor to have been invited by F. Edward Coughlin, the Director of the Franciscan Institute, to deliver the 2013 Ignatius Brady Lecture at St. Bonaventure University. Ignatius Brady was a major Franciscan scholar from the Cincinnati province whose academic focus was on the medieval period at the time of Francis and Clare. Ignatius Brady was highly instrumental in making Franciscan Studies a part of the American scene. The lecture, therefore, honors both Edward Coughlin and Ignatius Brady. Unfortunately, due to a sudden illness, I was unable to deliver the lecture. However, the following pages contain the text, and its publication in Franciscan Studies continues to honor Ignatius Brady.

INTRODUCTION

The theme of this essay centers on the ways in which the theology of St. Bonaventure, who lived in the thirteenth century, can truly enhance the theological thinking of the twenty-first century. Bonaventure's theological approach is fundamentally inter-relational, and inter-relational ways of thinking dominate the cultures of today's world. Are these two forms of inter-relational perception compatible with one another? In this lecture, I attempt to show that the Franciscan world-view, especially as formulated by Bonaventure, offers a major format that unites our current world with a current and deeply respected religious way of thinking. The basis for this inter-connection can be stated in a succinct way: in Bonaventure's writings, his relational Trinitarian theology provides a solid basis for a religious understanding of an inter-relational world. An outline of this essay is as follows:

Part One: Today's world is a relational world.

Part Two: The standard teaching on the Trinity in the Roman Catholic Church from the Council of Trent to 1950.

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Part Three: Changes in the philosophy/theology of the Catholic Church which were made in the documents of Vatican II.

Part Four: Bonaventure's Understanding of the Trinity.

Part Five: Conclusion: The relational God of Bonaventure is a major theological position and it is very helpful for today's inter-relational way of thinking.

PART ONE: TODAY'S WORLD IS A RELATIONAL WORLD

Our contemporary world has changed radically from the world-view as found in the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In these earlier centuries, there were realities which were considered unchangeable. This does not mean that every century endorsed the same unchangeable realities, but it does mean that in each century, philosophers, theologians, scientists and sociologists analyzed the world from a basis which they considered unchangeable. René Descartes (1596-1650) posited an unchangeable first philosophical reality: I think, therefore I am. Isaac Newton posited the law of gravity, in which the unity of nature presupposed the unity of the divine mind. The physical world was often referred to as a Newtonian world, in which there were precise and non-relational physical attributes.

At the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, there have been serious changes in the scientific world, which have redefined the universe in relational terms. Both quantum physics and the contemporary scientific age of the universe have changed this perception of the microcosm and macrocosm in which we live. The quantum world and the multi-billion-year-universe have been scientifically developed in a profoundly inter-relational way. Today, the globalized universe is perceived through an inter-relational framework rather than through a framework of independent and unchangeable laws and substances.

Secondly, universal globalization in and through population growth, computerization of communications, and multiple forms of quick travel has made the people throughout

the world aware of one another's multiple cultures. In the process of globalization, we have confronted in each of these cultures both problems and possibilities. In an intricate way, human life throughout the world has become multi-cultural in a depth and breadth which human civilization has to date never experienced.

Thirdly, Bonaventure's understanding of an inter-relational God has seriously helped the current science-religion discussion. The recent publication of the volume, *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, is a strong witness to today's serious conversations regarding one's belief in an eternal and all-powerful God vis-à-vis a finite and inter-relational scientific world view.¹ The many essays in this volume clearly attest to contemporary interest and at times even disinterest to the confrontation of religion and science today.

F. LeRon Shults in his essay, "Trinitarian Faith Seeking Transformative Understanding," states his purpose as follows:

I will argue that integrative developments in late modern philosophy of science and the broader (re)turn to the hermeneutical significance of the category of relationality have opened up conceptual space for the renewal of a Trinitarian faith that seeks transfor-

¹ See *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, Philip Clayton, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). Part one of this volume centers on "Religion and Science across the World's Traditions," and these essays explore the ways in which Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Indigenous Religions interface with contemporary science (7-123). In this section, the direction of thought is from religion to science. Part two moves in a different direction, namely, from science to religion. The individual essays focus on the following scientific studies: cosmology, physics molecular biology, evolutionary theory, ecology, psychology and sociology. Part three delves more deeply into the major fields of religion and science. Part four focuses on the methodological approaches of science and religion. Part five studies the central theoretical debates vis-à-vis science and religion. The final section turns to the value issues which one finds in science and in religion. In all of these sections the inter-relational aspects of science are presented in the ways in which the two areas tend to unity and also face up to ways the two areas do not coalesce.

mative understanding as it engages in the discourse among the fields of contemporary science.²

In a major way, the current re-understanding of Bonaventure's theology of the Trinitarian God offers the contemporary world a relational God which Shults describes. In the same volume, Susan Power Bratton, in her essay, "Ecology and Religion," specifically mentions Bonaventure and the richness he brings to contemporary science. She writes:

As this dialogue [on the relationship of Christianity and the natural world] continued into the Middle Ages, St. Bonaventure (1221-1274) presented a 'fecund' triune God who diffuses eternal goodness and divine life into the creation."³

Bratton finds in Bonaventure a strongly relational Trinitarian God, and she relates his relational Trinity to today's scientific findings in the area of ecology. It is only in the last one hundred years that the theology of Bonaventure has slowly been stated and clarified. One hundred years ago, scholars presented a mistaken view of Bonaventure's understanding of the Trinitarian God. Since 1950, scholars have reassessed Bonaventure's theology of Trinity in a way that Bratton can speak of a "fecund triune God," a theological explication of God which she sees as acceptable today by relational-minded scientists.

PART TWO: THE STANDARD TEACHING ON THE TRINITY IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH FROM THE COUNCIL OF TRENT TO 1950

One of the reasons why Bonaventure's theology of Trinity was not available to Catholic and Christian scholars was the

² F. LeRon Shults, "Trinitarian Faith Seeking Transformative Understanding," *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, 488-89.

³ See Susan Power Bratton "Ecology and Religion," *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, 213. For her view, she cites P. H. Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1985), 353-428.

determination by the Roman Curia to maintain an undivided format of Catholic belief. From the Council of Trent down to roughly 1950, the only theology of Trinity which was allowed was the thomistic form of Trinitarian thought. There is no need to go into detail on the issue of Catholic teaching from the Council of Trent down to the Second Vatican Council. However, in order to provide a context for the Catholic teaching on the Trinity, we need to consider briefly the period from the end of the sixteenth century – the time of Trent – down to the middle of the twentieth century – the time of Vatican II. During these 350 years, the seminary teaching on Catholic theology and Catholic philosophy slowly became a matter of officially prescribed books. Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), singled out Aquinas as the approved theologian. Consequently, from 1880 down to 1955, seminary text books for philosophy and theology had to be approved by the Vatican Curia. Only those books, which presented the views of Thomas Aquinas in a foundational manner, were allowed to be used as seminary textbooks. Basically, the Thomistic approach became the dominant theology throughout the western Catholic Church. The theological teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were based on Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.⁴ Franciscan authors, such as Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, and John Duns Scotus, were not accepted by Catholic authority. Rather, Catholic Church leadership was intent in developing a unified theology which clearly negated Anglican, Protestant, and Orthodox teachings.⁵

⁴ The theology from 1550 to 1950 was primarily aimed at a rejection of Anglican and Protestant ways of thinking. A large majority of the Catholic schools during those centuries were staffed by Jesuits. In a Plenary Meeting of all Jesuit Provinces, towards the end of the 1500s, the Jesuits officially established that the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas were to be the centerpiece for every Jesuit school. Prior to this, some Jesuits had presented the positions of the Franciscan scholar, John Duns Scotus. The Franciscan approach was officially set by the Jesuits. If we consider all the schools throughout the world which the Jesuits have established during the past four hundred years, one can see clearly that the dominant theological approach in the Roman Catholic Church became thomistic.

⁵ The transition from a “one-sided” theological Catholic Church to a “multiple-sided” Catholic Church developed slowly from the 1800s down to

During this same period of time – from the Council of Trent to the middle of the twentieth century, the Franciscan approach slowly became a side-line view. George Marcil traces this upward-downward history of the Franciscan school in his essay, “The Franciscan School through the Centuries.”⁶ At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Franciscan scholarship had only a whispering voice. However, in 1882 the critical edition of Bonaventure’s writings began to appear. This was followed by critical editions of the writings of John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham, Anthony of Padua, Alexander of Hales, and many others. The interest in Franciscan scholarship has developed strongly down to today, and Franciscan philosophy and theology has had a tremendous rebirth in the western world. The world today is a relational world and Franciscan scholarship today offers a relational philosophy and theology.

In 1892, Théodore de Régnon, in his three volumes, *Études de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité*, maintained that there were only two forms of western medieval Trinitarian theology: that of Augustine-Aquinas and that of Richard of St. Victor-Bonaventure.⁷ From De Régnon onward, his view of western Trinitarian theology was generally accepted by Catholic medieval scholars until the 1960s.

In recent times, the sources of Richard of St. Victor’s Trinitarian Theology have been the focus of scholars such as Gervais Dumiege,⁸ André M. Ethier,⁹ A Malet,¹⁰ G. Salet,¹¹ and

1950. I have dealt at length with this history in my volume, *A Theology of Church for the Third Millennium* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1-51.

⁶ See George Marcil, “The Franciscan School through the Centuries,” *The History of Franciscan Theology*, Kenan Osborne, ed. (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute Publications, 2007), 311-30.

⁷ See Théodore de Régnon, *Études de Théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, three volumes (Paris: Victor Retauz et Fils, 1892).

⁸ See Gervais Dumeige, *Richard of St. Victor et l'idée chrétienne de l'amour* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952).

⁹ André M. Ethier, *Le “De Trinitate” de Richard de Saint Victor* (Paris: 1939).

¹⁰ A. Malet, *Personne et amour dans la théologie trinitaire de Saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1956), 37-42.

¹¹ G. Salet, “Le Mystère de la charité divine,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 28 (1938), 5-30.

Olegario González.¹² Zachary Hayes notes that the position of De Régnon and his followers “tended to present Richard [of St. Victor] as a deserter from the camp of Augustine,” and that Richard “drank deeply from Greek streams and thus developed a style that was competitive to the Augustinian tradition.”¹³

Today, such views are seen as inaccurate. The Trinitarian theology of Richard of St. Victor is classified within the Augustinian framework of Trinity. Anne Hunt in her volume, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith*, states this Augustinian relationship of Richard of St. Victor in the following way.

We have noted that Augustine’s exploration of the experience of the human person as analogy for an understanding of the mystery of the Trinity yielded more than twenty variations of what came to be called the psychological analogy. One of the analogies that he presented for consideration in his book *De Trinitate* is the analogy of interpersonal love: the trinity of love that comprises the loving subject (the lover), the object loved (the beloved) and the relation or bond of love (*vinculum caritatis*), the love which unites them.¹⁴

¹² Olegario Gonzalez de Cardenal, *Misterio Trinitario y Existencia Humana: Estudio Histórico-Teológico en Torno a San Buenaventura* (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp: 1965), 258-59.

¹³ Zachary Hayes, *St. Bonaventure’s Disputed Questions of the Trinity: An Introduction and a Translation* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute Publications, 1979), 17-24. In the same volume, Hayes indicates that Bonaventure was strongly influenced by his teacher, Alexander of Hales. On the issue of Trinity, however, Hayes notes: “Despite the obvious historical and literary relations between Bonaventure and the *Summa* [written in part by Alexander of Hales], it is indisputable that the Seraphic Doctor’s Trinitarian theology transcends that of the *Summa* in unity and coherence of thought. It clearly bears the mark of a single, keen mind that has appropriated the tradition in a personal way,” 22-23.

¹⁴ See Anne Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 23. Her reference to Augustine’s *De Trinitate* can be found in 8:14; 9, 2; and 15, 10.

In medieval scholarship today, Bonaventure's theology of the Trinity is presented as a third distinct form of Trinitarian thought in the western Catholic Church, for it was Bonaventure alone who incorporated Dionysian thought into his Trinitarian structure in a primary and distinctive way.¹⁵ Bonaventure is now recognized as a Trinitarian theologian who is basically not Augustinian. His Trinitarian Theology is based on the writings of several early Greek theologians whose works in the thirteenth century had been translated into Latin. In a carefully worded way, Hayes outlines the sources of Bonaventure's thought.¹⁶

PART THREE: CHANGES IN THE PHILOSOPHY/THEOLOGY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH WHICH WERE MADE IN THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II.

The majority of bishops at Vatican II moved the Catholic Church into a church which takes today's relational form of life seriously. There was, of course, a large constituency of conservative bishops at Vatican II who wanted to maintain the church as it had been from the Council of Trent onward. Nonetheless, the documents of Vatican II offer us a new theology of the church, which is an open church. We can see this openness in the following positions found in the documents of Vatican II.

- A. The Church is a reflection of Jesus, the *Lumen gentium*. This new view of the church began with the naming of the most important conciliar document, namely *Lumen gentium*. In *Lumen gentium*, the theology of chapter one is clear: only when the church people reflect Jesus are

¹⁵ See Kenan Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1999), 209-10.

¹⁶ See Hayes, *op. cit.*, 43-79. In this lengthy section, Hayes points out in a clear way Bonaventure's neo-platonic roots, his Dionysian roots, and his dependence on both Alexander of Hales and Odo Rigaldus. The influence of Richard of St. Victor and Dionysius is spelled out on 56-59. See also K. Osborne, "Trinitarian Doctrine (500 to 1500)," *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, J. R. Strayer, ed. (New York, NY: C. Scribner's Sons, 1989), 189-98.

they really church. If we do not reflect Jesus, we cannot be called “church.”

- B. The Church is the people of God. Secondly, all the people of God are primarily called to reflect Jesus, the *Lumen gentium*. The theme, people of God, was deliberately chosen as the theme for chapter two. The conservative bishops wanted the second chapter to focus on the church’s hierarchy, since in their view they were appointed by Jesus to be the leaders of the church. The majority of bishops at Vatican II, however, believed that the people of God – every Christian man, woman, and child – were called on to reflect Jesus, and thus the people of God, not just the hierarchy, formed the major reflection of Jesus, the Light of the world.
- C. The Church is an open church. In every document of Vatican II, one sees that the bishops wanted to open the church to the world we live in. With this open understanding of church, the bishops moved on to a stronger and more open acceptance of lay women and men. The bishops moved to an ecumenical understanding of church with openness to Anglican and Protestant churches. They moved on to a more open church by welcoming the Orthodox Churches, even those churches Orthodox Churches which do not accept the pope. They moved to a more open church in their understanding of non-Christian religions. The church was more open to mass media, to a computerized world, and to religious liberty.

These documents simply opened doors. It was left to the post-conciliar leadership of the church to allow these open areas to develop and grow. In the first few years after Vatican II, church leaders – bishops, theologians, pastors – began to move the church in an open direction. However, since some highly positioned conservative bishops remained the leaders in the Vatican Curia, they tried to control any and all developments of the church. Slowly but surely, these conservative bishops have made

headway in the Catholic Church. Today, Catholics live in a church which is being pulled into two directions: into an open direction and into a closed direction.

- D. The Catholic Church today is becoming a closed church. The documents of Vatican II speak of openness, which means that the Catholic Church should be positively open to the world in which we live. We see this in the decree on mass media, *Inter Mirifica*, in which technical mass media, by and large, are endorsed by the bishops. We see this in the declaration, *Dignitatis Humanae*, on human freedom (n.2.) This position on freedom is reiterated in *Gaudium et Spes* (n16). In the decree, *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, the term, science, is used favorably four times in one paragraph (n. 34). In the pastoral constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, the bishops focus on contemporary science seven times. In some instances, the theme of science is developed at length (see n. 5; nn. 33 to 36; and nn. 57-59). The bishops at Vatican II composed statements on various topics, and in many of these decrees and constitutions we find a strong openness to contemporary science.

However, in 1994, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was published. Unfortunately, the *Catechism* has turned the Catholic Church backwards. The teachings expressed in the *Catechism* more often than not are a return to a pre-Vatican II expression of Catholic faith. We see this in the *Catechism's* citations of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Augustine is cited eighty-seven times, and Thomas Aquinas is cited sixty times. These are the two theologians who are cited most often. There are only two brief references to Bonaventure. St. Francis of Assisi is also cited two times. John Duns Scotus is not cited at all. Moreover, in the *Catechism*, contemporary science is mentioned briefly. Because of this brief mention of science, there is little affirmation of the benefits of modern science. However, in two places in the *Catechism*, contemporary science is mentioned in some detail. In n. 283, both science itself and contemporary scientists are praised,

but in the following paragraph, n. 284, the “glory” of science is set to one side, and another higher order, in which science plays no role, is praised in an abundant way. In this paragraph, the findings of science are belittled. From page 74 in the *Catechism* to page 478, there is no mention of science. On page 478, medical science is discussed. In this discussion, there is no mention of a dialogue between church leaders and medical experts. Rather, in this latter section, the *Catechism* states that all those in contemporary medical work need to abide by Roman Catholic moral norms. Medical science in his section is tolerated, but only if all medical personnel – not just Catholic men and women – follow the moral teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Today, we find ourselves in a world which faces seven major problematic realities which people in society throughout the world realize, but which the leadership of the Catholic Church at this moment of time seems to be hesitant about making any change. These seven major issues are:

1. Universal Globalization
2. Universal Multi-Culturalism
3. Inter-religious dialogues
4. New approaches to philosophy
5. Quantum physics
6. The contemporary scientific age of the universe
7. The enormous growth in human population today

Let us consider each of these briefly:

Universal Globalization: Throughout East Asia, the world is basically understood as a relational world. We see this in the writings of Confucius, Mo Tzŭ, Mencius, Lao Tzŭ, the *Huai-nan-tzŭ*, and Wang Yang-ming. In the writings of these scholars, relationship not substance or essence is center stage. Deep down Asian people are relational people. The same can be said of the major writings of Indian philosophers and scholars. The same can be said of Islamic

scholars and of Sub-Saharan Africans who are today re-studying their pre-Christian roots. The same can be said of the native populations from Canada to Tierra del Fuego. All of these relational thought patterns are affecting the global world today.

Universal multi-culturalism: We are beginning to know much more about our cultural neighbors. Eventually, human men and women will see the values of cultural diversity. I prefer to and speak of “equi-culturalism” rather than “multi-culturalism,” since each culture has wonderful realities as well as disturbing realities. However, today but some men and women continue to see their culture as superior and all other cultures are secondary or even threatening. When this happens, racism becomes evident.

Inter-religious dialogues: The openness of the Catholic Church to Anglicanism and most forms of Protestantism is something new. The work of the World Council of Churches, which until the Council was reserved for non-Catholic Christian groups, is now open in many ways to Catholic membership. Our relationship – note the word “relationship” – with Orthodox Churches, Anglican and Protestant Churches is becoming more and more a part of our Catholic life. John Paul II called the leaders of all religions to Assisi for a weekend of reflection and prayer. This would have been anathematized prior to Vatican II.

New Approaches to Philosophy: It has become clearer and clearer that the majority of the human race today thinks in terms of relation, not in terms of unchangeable essence. Our Catholic Faith is gradually being expressed by many theologians in a relational way. We see this change in the turn by Catholic theologians to postmodern philosophy. Western philosophers like Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Lacan, and many others have opened up the western world to postmodern philosophy. One of the first pivotal moments of this reorganiza-

tion of Euro-American thought took place at the University of Göttingen in 1907. Edmund Husserl delivered five lectures in which he introduced his celebrated “phenomenological reduction.” His main issue was to express the decisive overcoming of what Alexandre Lowit’s “la situation phénoménale du clivage,” which means an overcoming of the Euro-American split between subject and object.¹⁷ When we realize that all our views on reality are tinged by our own subjectivity, we begin to see the depths of what relational philosophy means. Maurice Merleau-Ponty once said: “I will never know the way you see [the color] red and you will never know the way I see it.”¹⁸ Martin Heidegger also moves in this relational direction. He writes: “By ‘Others,’ we do not mean everyone else but me – those over against whom the ‘I’ stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does not distinguish oneself – those among whom one is too.”¹⁹ Add to this change in Euro-American philosophy to the current interest in Asian, Indian, Native, and African philosophies, and one can only say: our way of thinking has changed. The changes have enhanced a relational way of thinking over an essence or substance dominated way of thinking.

Quantum physics: A little over one hundred years ago, some scientists began to speak about Quantum Theory. By 1920, scientists generally referred to Quantum Physics or Quantum Mechanics. The Quantum approach ceased to be a theory and became a reality. (See Kim Al-Khalili, *Quantum: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 30). Quantum physics focuses extensively on the microcosm of our universe. In this microcosmic world, there are a number of inter-relationships between mesons, electrons, neutrinos, photons, muons. Hadrons, anti-particles, etc. Today, scientists speak of elementary particles

¹⁷ See Kenan Osborne, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1999), 55.

¹⁸ Ibid., 78-79. I am citing Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Le Primat de la perception et ses conséquences philosophiques,” *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie* 41 (1947), 119-35.

¹⁹ Ibid., 77. I am citing Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 154.

as either quarks or leptons. But in all these various species of elementary matter particles, there is no over-arching plan, by which the microcosm is organized. Quantum physics does not offer any indication of a “divine plan of creation.”

The contemporary scientific age of the universe: Contemporary scientists have determined that the age of our universe is roughly between ten-billion-years-old up to twenty-billion-years-old. In our macrocosmic universe there are scores of inter-relational activities, but again there is no indication at all of a “divine plan of creation.” The macro-universe is deeply inter-related. Our planet earth is dependent on the sun, the moon, other stars and asteroids. Our planet earth is an inter-relational planet. When scientists consider the billions of years in which the universe has developed, it is remarkable that they have not found any over-arching plan for the universe. These scientists do not offer any indication of a “divine plan of creation.” We live in an inter-related universe, but we do not scientifically know of any over-arching structure which gives universal meaning to the movement of the universe.

The enormous growth in human population today Finally, in 1900 there were about 1.6 billion people on planet earth. In 2083 – almost the end of this century – there will be ten billion people on planet earth, a growth of 8.5 billion people. Most of these people will not be Christians. East Asian populations will grow; Indian population will grow; Islamic populations will grow. Christians – according to current statistics – will not grow so that the percentage of Christian on our earth will be small and politically, economically, and socially ineffective.

To date, the hierarchical leadership of the Catholic Church has not done very much vis-à-vis most of these topics. The focus of the church leadership is usually on itself rather than outward-looking towards the major problems we have just mentioned. The documents of Vatican II are outward-looking. The statements of today’s Vatican Curia are more

often than not inward-looking. Even the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, mentioned above, presents an inward-looking church, whereas the documents of Vatican II present an outward-looking church.

PART FOUR: THE RELATIONAL TRINITY IN ST. BONAVENTURE

Let us consider the relational theology of Trinity in some detail. One of his major writings on the Trinity is found in his *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences*, written by Peter Lombard 1157-1158. This four-book writing of Peter Lombard became the standard text book for university teaching of theology at the beginning of the thirteenth century. In the medieval universities, every theological professor had to offer a course, commenting on his four-volume text of Peter Lombard. Bonaventure was no exception.²⁰

In Part One of his commentary, Bonaventure focuses on the unity and trinity of God. Bonaventure takes up the initial question: *Utrum sit unus tantum Deus?* – “Is there only one God?” Bonaventure lists six theological statements from earlier theologians which prove that there can only be one God. He then lists four statements from other writers, such as Aristotle and Averroës, which argue that there can be more than one God. After these pro/con positions, Bonaventure states his own view, namely: “It is impossible that there are several Gods” (*Dicendum est quod impossibile est esse plures deos*).

Bonaventure then offers a very short but well-focused explanation why a plurality of Gods is impossible. He writes, “In actuality, all things come from him, are in him, and return to him, and only in him [the one God] do things exist.” The actual world exists in its many forms and dimensions only because there is one God who has created this world. This is his argument from “actuality.”

²⁰ See Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994). This volume is perhaps one of the most substantial studies of Peter Lombard. Her presentation helps scholars understand in a better way why and how the many scholarly commentaries by medieval philosophers developed the Lombard's views.

Bonaventure then argues for one God but from a different standpoint than actuality, namely in one's human way of thinking. In one's human way of thinking about God, there is nothing one can think about which is equal to God.

Thus, he concludes, in actuality and in our thinking, there can only be one God. All of the above is expressed in one paragraph which has only eleven lines. It is a very brief statement by Bonaventure that there is only one God. Bonaventure sees the question of many Gods as a non-question, and therefore he does not go into a long dissertation to prove there is only "one God."

If we turn to St. Thomas Aquinas and his *Summa Theologiae*, which is similar to Bonaventure's book since it follows Peter Lombard's volume, we see a totally different approach. Thomas Aquinas devotes twenty-five questions to the "One God" issue. In one of the volumes of the *Summa*, edited by Peter Caramello, which I used, the twenty-five questions of Thomas Aquinas take up 136 pages of text. Only after these 136 pages, does Thomas Aquinas move from his teaching on "one God" to his teaching on "the Trinity."

What Bonaventure accomplishes in one page, Thomas Aquinas accomplishes in 136 pages. In the number of pages, we see a major difference between Thomas and Bonaventure. For Thomas, a long discussion of "one God" is needed before a theologian can turn to the Trinity. For Bonaventure, the only way to talk about God is to talk about a triune God. In other words, don't waste time talking about "one God."

But what does Trinity mean in Bonaventure's writing? We find Bonaventure's answer in his Second Question II. How Bonaventure words the title for Question Two is important. In Latin, we read: *Utrum in Deo ponenda est personarum pluralitas?* In English: "Whether, in God, one should establish a plurality of persons." Notice that Bonaventure does not use the term, "trinity." Rather, he uses the open-ended word, "plurality." In the very nature of God, Bonaventure asks, is there some form of interacting plurality?

Bonaventure states that inter-relational activity (plurality) is present in God from the start. God is not first of all a monad, and only then can we talk about a Trinitarian God. God is not an absolutely isolated individuality, and only then can we talk about a Trinitarian God. Rather God, from the very beginning of our thinking is one-and-plurality. One-and-plurality is the essence of God.

Ladies and gentlemen, plurality means inter-relationality. This is the uniqueness of Bonaventure, at least for western theologians.

Bonaventure then describes what he means by plurality. His explanation is found in the terminology he uses. He chooses four terms: *Simplicitas*, *Primitas*, *Perfectio*, and *Beatitudo et Caritas* – Simplicity, Primacy, Perfection, and Blessedness-and-Love.

1. *Simplicitas*: In virtue of simplicity (*simplicitas*), he writes, the divine essence is communicable and can exist in multiplicity (*communicabilis et potens esse in pluribus*). Simplicity means communicability and the ability to be in many others.
2. *Primitas*: In virtue of firstness (*primitas*), a person is first-born which means that there can be second-borns, third-borns, etc. And *primitas* therefore suggests plurality. *Persona nata est ex se aliam producere*.
3. *Perfectio*: In virtue of perfection (*perfectio*), Bonaventure writes, plurality is both apt and at hand (*apta et prompta*). Perfect, one asks, in relation to whom and to way? One is perfect when compared to another and this comparison-quality arises immediately (*prompta*) when we use the word perfect, and if something is actually “perfect” then a comparison to something other which is less-perfect is “fitting” or in Latin *apta*.
4. *Beatitudo et caritas*: In virtue of blessedness and love (*beatitudo et caritas*), plurality is voluntary (*voluntaria*). If a person begins to say, “I am loving! I am loving!”, one might ask: “Who” or “What” are you loving? Love implies plurality: I love X. The same relationship belongs to be-

atitudo. When one is happy, one is happy about someone else or something else. There is once again a reference to plurality.

All four of these realities, *simplicitas*, *primitas*, *perfectio* and *beatitudo et caritas*, are based on the very nature of God. The very being of God means: *simplicitas*, *primitas*, *perfectio* and *beatitudo et caritas*. In this plurality-related approach being can only be relational. Zachary Hayes states this same thing in a very clear way: “The mystery of self-diffusiveness must be articulated in terms of a dialectical relationship.”²¹

Clearly in this opening section of Bonaventure’s theology of God, there is much to say about “one God,” and about “a plurality in God.” This oneness and this plurality is part-and-parcel of his definition of “God.” In these pages, the term Trinity has not yet appeared.

It is only in the next question, Question Three, that the idea of plurality – which includes “Trinity – begins to appear. The title of Question Three does not, however, use the word “three.” The title of Question Three uses the word plurality: *Utrum numerus divinarum personarum sit infinitus?* – “Is the number of divine persons infinite?” In this question, Bonaventure asks whether one can speak about an infinity of persons? Bonaventure replies that an infinite number of persons is unthinkable.

Only in Question Four, does Bonaventure center his argument on three persons in God. The title of Question Four reads: *Utrum tres tantum sint divinae personae?* – “Whether there can only be three persons?” Bonaventure remains focused on one God and in this one and the same God, he asks, can a person acknowledge three persons.

What is important here is this: namely, the one God – therefore the very essence of God – is in itself relational in a threesome way.

²¹ Zachary Hayes, “Bonaventure Mystery of the Triune God,” *The History of Franciscan Theology*, ed. Kenan Osborne, (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2007).

For Bonaventure, one does not begin with an essence of God which is fundamentally unified or one, and only then, based on a “unified or one” God, can one begin to construct a Trinity-God. Rather, Bonaventure is saying that the very term God is in itself triune. This is why Question Four is so important.

In the text of Question Four, Bonaventure argues his case as follows.

If we say God is love, then there must be someone who is loved.

If there is a God who is supreme happiness, there must be a supreme happiness over “some thing.”

God is also most perfect, but in perfection there is both nature and freedom.

Nature indicates a “closed unit.”

Freedom indicates an “open unit.”

If perfection includes both nature and freedom, then there is an openness to something else.

If there is a lover then there must be a beloved.

In this we have an “A” who is the lover. We therefore have a “B” who is the beloved. Between the lover and the beloved there must be a mutual union, which we can name “C”.

THE LOVER = A
THE BELOVED = B
THE MUTUAL BOND = C

In this understanding of love, a trinity is formed – a plus b plus c. – I *love you*; *you love me*. That’s two. But, there is also a mutual uniting factor, namely our love for each other, and makes three.

The same holds for nature and freedom. There is a nature – number I – but there is also freedom – number II, but if the one and two are united – in the case of nature united to freedom – then the union factor makes III. Nature is united to freedom and freedom is united to nature. Nature is I, freedom is II, and the mutual interchange is III.

Bonaventure states that lover and beloved have meaning only if the lover loves “this” beloved individual, and the beloved in return loves this individual “lover.” The same argument holds for nature, which is unchangeable, and freedom, which is changeable. You can have one and the other, but if God is both nature and freedom, then there has to be a wedding between nature and freedom, and the wedding of nature to freedom is the third factor.

This is brought out by a metaphor which Christians have used from the early church onward, namely God is the Father, Jesus is God the Son, and the love between Father and Son is God the Holy Spirit. Between father and son there is a physical relationship, but there also needs to be an emotional relationship, namely, that the father loves his son and that the son loves his father.

In reality today, there are some men who do not even know that they are “fathers,” and there are sons who have no idea who their “father” is. In these cases, there is no bonding. Physically, there is a father and there is a son, and there is a genetic connection. In this meager sense of the terms, one can speak about a father-son-genetically correct relationship. Bonaventure does not use this kind of an example. Rather, he asks us to think of a father who truly loves his son and a son who truly loves his father. In this latter situation there are three major factors: first, the father truly loving his son; the son truly loving his father; and the power and depth of their loving each other.

The same kind of argument can be applied to nature and freedom. One can have a human nature but without any freedom; one can have freedom but the freedom is not connected to human nature; and there is the union of freedom and nature in one individual human being that brings about a Trinity. What is important in my view is this: from the very beginning of our understanding of God, relationship is at work. In Bonaventure, God from the very start is relational. There is no way to define God without defining relationality in God and this means “Trinity.” The Franciscan understanding of God is a God who is fundamentally a relational God.

A. Bonaventure uses non-relational and relational words when speaking of God.

In the writings of Bonaventure, we find words and phrases which seemingly are not relational, namely:

One

Only one

One essence

One substance

Immutable

Summe simplex (simple in the highest way)

In each of these words and phrases, there is a focus on oneness rather than openness to plurality. These are also words and phrases about God which were in standard use in the theologies of the thirteenth century. Bonaventure could not have written on God and Trinity without using these words and phrases.

On the other hand, in Bonaventure we find a number of words and phrases which can only be understood as relational:

Ability to produce

Eternal production

Emanation

Communicability

Powerful

Fontal fullness

Infinitely free love

Positive relationship

Primal fountain

Greater than primary/final causality

Non-causal productivity

Highest actuality which includes *summa diffusio et communicatio et caritas*.

Bonaventure argues his case as follows. As regards each of these words and phrases one can ask certain questions.

Let me offer a few examples of his argumentation. In the first phrase above, which Bonaventure uses, we hear: in God there is an “*Ability to produce.*”

One can rightfully ask “Who or what has the ability to produce? and What is produced? The phrase, ability to produce, raises the question: who or what is producing?; and it also asks: what is being produced? Relationship is an essential aspect of the phrase: “Ability to produce.” At all times, therefore eternally, God is producing and what is produced is also infinitely in being. So, too, the inter-connection of producing and being-produced is eternal. God IS eternally inter-relational. We do not have a “one God” first and only then a “Trinity-God.” God, for Bonaventure, is relational always. One cannot understand God if one does not understand a relational God.

Let us take a second example from the list of phrases above. Bonaventure frequently uses the phrase: “*eternal production.*” One can ask two questions:

Number one: “Production by whom or by what?”

Number two: “Production of what?”

Again we can see a similar argument: production is a relational word, since there is someone who produces something, and there is also something which is produced. Eternal Production means that throughout the infinite life of God, the relationship of eternal production means that there is an unending producing in God. There is also an unending production in God. God is always producing, and God is always “in production.”

In each of the above examples, the wording causes us to ask questions such as: of what? or of whom? We are also prompted to ask questions such as: for whom? and for what?

In other words, something relational is taking place.

In the first set of issues used by Bonaventure, there seems to be no issue of relationship. These non-relational terms are the following: one, only one, one essence, one substance, immutable, and *summe simplex* (simple in the highest way).

Can these words and phrases which are basically non-relational be connected to other words and phrases which are relational and which Bonaventure uses to present his theology of God and Trinity?

The words and phrases in the second listing are: Ability to produce, Eternal production, Emanation, Communicability, Powerful, Fontal fullness, Infinitely free love, Positive relationship, Primal fountain, Greater than primary/final causality, Non-causal productivity, and Highest actuality which includes *summa diffusio et communicatio et caritas*. In all of these words and phrase, some sort of question – of what and for whom – arises. All of these words and phrases denote and connote inter-relationship.

These two different sets of terms used for God and Trinity by Bonaventure are not easy to unify. It is my view – and this is only a view – that deep down Bonaventure is trying to say that even the word “being” has a relational meaning. Since such a definition of being would not have been accepted in the thirteenth century, and therefore Bonaventure simply leaves the two aspects – one non-relational and the other highly relational – intact.

However, we today might say that his emphasis on relationship in God’s very nature is what Bonaventure is saying even when he is using the non-relational words and phrases regarding God mentioned above. A relational God is indeed presented by Bonaventure and the issue of relationship seems to reflect his deepest understanding of the nature of God.

B. A key phrase in the theology of Bonaventure is *bonum est sui diffusivum* – *goodness is diffusive of itself*.

There is a key phrase in Bonaventure’s writing which he uses as basic for an understanding of God, namely, *bonum est sui diffusivum* – *goodness is diffusive of itself*. What does this phrase mean?

In his explanation of the theology of Bonaventure, *Homo Viator: Der Mensch im Lichte der Heilsgeschichte*, Johannes

Freyer frequently indicates that God is a relational God.²² The following citation is one example among many.

Since Bonaventure describes God as “The Existing One,” as Personal Being in relationship, as the One who shares his own self and from whose communication creation exists, a relationship and inter-communication of the Highest Being with creation must be presupposed.²³

In his writings, Bonaventure uses a relational phrase again and again, namely, *bonum est sui diffusivum* – goodness is diffusive of itself. Originally, this phrase is found in Dionysius the Great, a Greek-speaking bishop and theologian of Alexandria in Egypt. Jacques Bougerol, a French Franciscan professor, gives us this background:

[Alexander] The Areopagite’s teaching is hard to summarize. We may say, however, that his influence on Bonaventure was three fold: he gave Bonaventure a viewpoint, a method, and a few fundamental themes.²⁴

Goodness, which is diffusive of itself, indicates a “free giving,” not a “necessitated giving.” The creation of the universe is a free gift of God. The creation of humanity is a free gift of God. The incarnation of the Logos in the humanity of Jesus is a free gift of God. The call to the kingdom of God is a free gift of God. No human and no angel can set limits on what God gives and does not give. The grace of God is given in abundance. Not even Church authority can set limits on the forgiving goodness of God. In Freyer’s words, the freely-given goodness of God – *bonum est sui diffusivum* – is the womb of creation. Neither God’s power nor God’s wisdom is the womb of creation; rather, God loved us into existence.

²² Johannes Freyer, *Homo Viator: Der Mensch im Lichte der Heilsgeschichte* (Kvelaer: Verlag Butzon & Bercker, 2001).

²³ *Ibid.*, 48.

²⁴ Jacques Bougerol, *Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure* (Patterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1963), 40.

Bonaventure speaks about three books: the Book of Creation, the Book of the Sacred Scriptures, and the Book of One's Inner Life. In each of these books, God speaks to us in a loving way, that is in a way which indicates *bonum est sui diffusivum* – goodness is diffusive of itself.

In the Book of Creation, Bonaventure teaches us that God is present as vestige (*vestigium*) in every created being. God is truly present in everything and God is not playing hide-and-go-seek. We can see God in the sun and the moon, the stars and the wind. In this same book, Bonaventure teaches us that God is present in every woman and man as an image (*imago*). The image of God is present in every human person, and this means that God is there, for the image God in a person is what this book is all about. In saintly people, so the Book of Creation tells us, God is present as a likeness (*similitudo*).

However, Bonaventure indicates in the second book, especially the gospels, that Jesus has become incarnate and that the Spirit of God is at work throughout the world. The incarnation is a moment when divine goodness is diffusive of God's own self – *bonum est sui diffusivum*. The goodness of God is a gift which we experience in our relationship with Jesus.

In the third book, the Book of the Omnipresent Spirit, we also experience the freely-given goodness of God – *bonum est sui diffusivum* – is the womb of the sending of the Spirit. The Spirit of God is deep within each human being, in our will and in our mind, in our heart and in our feelings. The Spirit of God is also present throughout the created world, beyond the boundaries of the church.

In these books on God's presence to us – a divine presence which is freely-given by God – *bonum est sui diffusivum* – we experience relationship: God relating to us and asking that we relate to God. In some ways there is a new Trinity, namely: God, ourselves, and our interpersonal relationship with God. We live in a Trinitarian way.

**PART FIVE: CONCLUSION: THE RELATIONAL GOD
OF BONAVENTURE IS A MAJOR THEOLOGICAL POSITION
AND IT IS VERY HELPFUL FOR TODAY'S INTER-RELATIONAL
WAY OF THINKING**

The conclusion to this lecture is very short and sweet. You are studying, teaching, working in a university named after St. Bonaventure. You even live in a town called "St. Bonaventure." One could simply say that "Bonaventure" is only a name, such as California. There is a state of California and there is a University of California. California is only a name, just as St. Bonaventure is only a name.

However, you could also say that the University is a Franciscan University but also a Franciscan University which from its very beginnings dedicated itself to the study of Bonaventure: his thought, his teaching, his holiness, his leadership.

In today's twenty-first century world, relationship is a way of life. We are surrounded by persons, things, movements, computers, economic factors, social factors, etc. However, we are not just surrounded by these factors; we are intrinsically related to these factors. Our way of life today is relational, or better stated "inter-relational." People and things continually relate to us and we continually relate to them. Relationship is the air in which we today move and live and have our being.

In the religious world, at least in the way Bonaventure understood it, we also live in a relational world and the God we believe in is a God who is relational. God relates not only to you and me, but to all men and women. In Bonaventure's book of creation, God is related to everything, since everything is a vestige of God. God is also related to each and every human being. God is also deeply related to the innermost parts of our thinking and loving. A relational God – it seems to me – is a God in whom people in the twenty-first century can believe in.

Let the relational air of this university enter into you in a deep and overwhelming way. Read the books in the library.

ies, but also read the book of creation, the book of the gospels, and the book of the inner-life. Let Bonaventure not only be a name you honor because you are part of the University of St. Bonaventure. Rather, let Bonaventure and his way of thinking kindle in each of you a deep understanding of inter-relationship. No one wants to be abandoned and left alone. Each person wants to relate deeply to some other women and men. Relating is a major part of our human life. Bonaventure's spiritual and theological insights help us to see our way deeply into our earthly life, our human life, and our life with God. May this kind of insight be a major part of the depth and breadth of your own presence here at St. Bonaventure University. May each of you be filled with inter-relationships and may you allow a relational God to be a major part of your inter-relational life.

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Franciscan Timeline

- 1181/1182** Giovanni (John) di Pietro di Bernardone (Lady Pica his mother and Pietro his father) is born and baptized in Umbria, in Assisi, Italy; later named by his father, Francesco (Francis' nickname was "Frenchie")
- 1190** Francis attends the parish school at San Giorgio
- 1193/1194** Chiara (Clare) di Favarone di Offreduccio [Lady Ortolana (Ortulana) her mother and Favarone her father] is the first born to a renowned family of nobility in Assisi
- 1198** Innocent III elected Pope; Fourth Crusade announced
- 1199** Civil war rages between the "maiores" and the "minores" in Assisi; nobility including the Offreduccio women and children flee to the city of Perugia, Assisi's archrival
- 1202 – 1209** Intermittent war between Assisi and Perugia
- 1202** (November) Francis fights in a battle between Assisi, a city intent on independence from both papal and imperial power, and Perugia in which Assisi is defeated at Collestrada; Francis spends a year in captivity in a prison in Perugia and falls ill
- 1203 - 1205** Offreduccios are in exile in Perugia along with families from the nobility at war with the Commune of Assisi
- 1203** Francis' father ransoms him; Francis endures a long illness and convalesces at home
- 1204** (Late) Francis sets out to join the army of Walter de Brienne to participate in a crusade; en route in Spoleto, he hears a voice "Who can do more for you, the lord or the servant?" [*The Anonymous of Perugia*, by John of Perugia, p. 36 in Vol. II: *Francis of Assisi ED: The Founder*] and returns home in disgrace
- 1205** (Spring) Francis' gradual conversion begins; he gives generously to the poor and embraces a leper; he is mocked by fellow Assisians and seeks solitude with God in caves and abandoned churches
- 1205** (Fall) While at San Damiano gazing at the image of Christ crucified, Francis sees the lips of Jesus move and hears, "Francis," it said, *calling him by name*, "go rebuild My house; as you see, it is all being destroyed" [*The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, by Thomas of Celano, The First Book, Chapter VI, p. 249 in Vol. II: *Francis of Assisi ED: The Founder*]; he sells cloth from his father's shop and gives money to repair the church building
- 1205/1206** Francis prays *The Prayer before the Crucifix*
- 1206** His enraged father takes Francis to trial before Guido, the bishop of Assisi, demanding repayment for his cloth; Francis strips, returning his clothes and renouncing his inheritance; Francis nurses lepers and begs for stones to repair churches; Francis is officially recognized as a penitent
- 1207** (Summer to January or February of 1208) Francis repairs the churches of *San Damiano*, *San Pietro della Spina* and *Our Lady of the Angels*, a.k.a. "*The Portiuncula*"

- Francis expresses his love for *The Portiuncula*: “See to it, my sons, that you never abandon this place. If you are driven out from one side, go back in from the other, for this *is truly a holy place and the dwelling place of God*. Here the Most High increased our numbers *when we were only a few*; here He *enlightened the hearts* of his poor ones with the light of His wisdom; here He kindled our wills with the fire of His love; here all who pray wholeheartedly will receive what they ask, while offenders will be severely punished. Therefore, my sons, hold this place, *God’s dwelling*, as worthy of all honor and *here praise God in cries of joy and praise with your whole heart*.” [*The Life of Saint Francis* by Thomas of Celano: *The Second Book*, p. 275 in Vol. I: *Francis of Assisi ED: The Saint*]

1208 (February 24) Francis desires to imitate Jesus perfectly; hears the Gospel read on the Feast of St. Matthias and accepts the Gospel as his way of life; replaces the belt on his hermit’s habit with a rough cord and begins to preach penance, repentance and peace; several young men leave their families and possessions to join Francis including Bernard of Quintavalle who was the first follower and the priest Peter di Catani

1209 – 1215 Francis writes the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (The First Version of the *Letter to the Faithful*)

1209 Francis writes a Rule, a.k.a. *The Primitive Rule* (guiding charter) for his new brotherhood; goes to Rome to gain papal approval for the Order and receives oral approval from Pope Innocent III after Innocent’s dream of Francis holding up the Lateran Basilica; settles with his brothers in a place called Rivo Torto near Assisi; possible date for the beginning of the Franciscan Order of Penance, later called the “Third Order”

1209/1210 – 1221 Francis writes *The Earlier Rule (Regula Non Bullata*, the *Rule* without a Papal Seal) of the Lesser Brothers (*fratres minores*) or Friars Minor [First Order]

1210 – 1212 Clare hears Francis preach and meets with him secretly

1211 Francis tries to reach Muslim territory to convert Muslims; heavy winds detour his ship and force his return

1212 (March 18) Palm Sunday, Clare receives her palm from Bishop Guido; she leaves her father’s house by way of the “death door” and receives the religious habit from the hands of Francis at *The Portiuncula*; Clare stays at the monastery of San Paolo delle Abbadesse in Bastia and then moves to Sant’ Angelo of Panzo (April 3 or 4); only 16 days after Clare’s departure from her home, her sister Catherine (Francis later names her Agnes in honor of the youthful virgin martyr of the early Church) joins Clare; in late April or early May, Clare and Agnes settle at San Damiano where Clare’s group is known as the Poor Ladies of San Damiano, Damianites or the Poor Ladies of Assisi [known today as the Poor Clares (Second Order)]



1213 Francis receives from Count Orlando as a gift, La Verna, a mountain in the Tuscan Valley where Francis often seeks solitude

1215 Francis begins his “Eucharistic Crusade,” exhorting people to show reverence for Holy Communion; Francis gives a “*Form of Life*” to Clare and her companions; Clare accepts the title and role as Abbess of San Damiano; Pope Innocent III grants the Privilege of Poverty for San Damiano Monastery; Francis may have met Dominic, future founder of the Order of Friar Preachers

1215 The Fourth Lateran Council is convened where Francis hears about the sign of the Tau (a Hebrew and Greek letter). The origin of its use as a sign is in Ezekiel (9:4) “Pass through the city (Jerusalem) and mark a **T** on the foreheads of those who moan and groan over all the abominations that are practiced within it.” (Not all translations use the word Tau.) Pope Innocent III preaches on this text and Francis is there. The Pope sets forth the Tau as a sign of penance and renewal in Christ. Francis embraces this sign as an expression of Christ’s cross. In hearing the story, Francis experiences a confirmation of the LIFE and MISSION of his new Order. The Tau becomes for him a symbol of exodus and pilgrimage with which he wants his companions signed as “the new and humble people of God.”

1216 (July 16) Pope Innocent III dies and on July 18 Honorius III becomes Pope; Francis receives *The Portiuncula Indulgence* or *Pardon of Assisi* from Pope Honorius III

It is said that Francis chose this date because the feast of the Chains of St. Peter (his release from prison) is celebrated on the first of August and Francis felt that sinners should also be freed from the chains of their sins on the day following this great feast. Furthermore, this date was the anniversary of the consecration of *The Portiuncula* chapel. It is a plenary indulgence (under the usual conditions of prayer for the pope, confession, and reception of the Eucharist) for everyone who visits and prays in this small chapel on the anniversary of its dedication (August 2).

1217 Some 5,000 brothers convene for the first *Chapter of Mats* (*Chapters* still continue to this very day); the Order is divided into Provinces; Francis seeks volunteers to preach in Germany, Tunis and Syria; eventually, brothers reach Spain and England

1219 (May 26) the first friar missionaries leave for Morocco; June 24, Francis sails to the Holy Land; Cardinal Hugolino imposes a *Rule* on Clare and her sisters based on the *Rule* of Benedict, but not including the Privilege of Poverty or ministry by the Friars Minor, Clare struggles with this; during the Fifth Crusade, in November at the Battle of Damietta in Egypt, Francis visits the Sultan, Al-Malik Al-Kamil

1220 Franciscan missionaries in Morocco (Berard and his companions) are killed, becoming the Order’s first martyrs; Cardinal Hugolino, at that time the Bishop of Ostia, is appointed Protector of the Order; Pope Honorius III requires Francis to establish more discipline in his Order; Francis recognizes his own poor administrative skills and appoints Peter di Catani as Minister General; Dominic establishes his Order of Friar Preachers (known today as the Dominican Order)

1220(?) Francis writes the *Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (Second Version of the *Letter to the Faithful*)

1221 – 1222 Francis goes on a preaching tour throughout Italy

1221 Francis writes a letter that becomes the basic *Rule* (*Memoriale Propositi*) of the Third Order, a Franciscan Order for lay men, lay women and diocesan clergy; at the request of church authorities, Francis begins to create a more formal *Rule* for the First Order; Peter di Catani dies and at *Chapter*, Brother Elias becomes the Vicar

1223 Francis goes to Fonte Colombo to write the definitive *Rule* for the Order of Friars Minor, the *Chapter* discusses it and further changes are made until the final revision of the *Rule* (*Regula Bullata/The Later Rule*) is approved by Pope Honorius III on November 29 (which remains the *Rule* of the First Order even to this day)

December 24/25: Exhausted and ill, Francis travels to Greccio; he re-enacts the Christmas story, popularizing the nativity scene, and serves as deacon at the Mass

1224 Marks the beginning of Clare's illness which often confines her to bed; Anthony receives Francis' written permission to teach theology to the brothers; Francis returns to La Verna to pray and fast (August 15 – September 29); he receives the stigmata, marks of Christ's wounds, which is commemorated each September 17; the parchment with *The Praises of God and the Blessing* is given to Brother Leo on La Verna

1225 Nearly blind and possibly suffering from tuberculoid leprosy, Francis returns to San Damiano, where Clare and her sisters care for him; Francis writes *The Canticle of Brother Sun* (also known as *The Canticle of the Creatures*) and *The Canticle of Exhortation for the Ladies of San Damiano*; in late summer, Francis submits to cauterization treatment for his eye maladies

1226 – 1227 Elias serves as Minister General of the Order

(The undated writings of St. Francis:

The Admonitions

Exhortation to the Praise of God

The Office of the Passion

A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father

The Praises to Be Said at All the Hours

A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

A Salutation of the Virtues

True and Perfect Joy)



1226 Francis writes his *Testament*; Clare's mother Ortolana enters San Damiano Monastery; end of September or beginning of October, Francis makes final recommendations to Clare and her sisters concerning their *Rule* of life; Francis asks to be taken back to *The Portiuncula*; he composes a final verse about "Sister Death" for his *Canticle*

+ **1226** (October 3) Francis dies (*Transitus*); October 4, his body is brought to San Damiano and is then buried at the Church of San Giorgio in Assisi

1227 – 1232 John Parenti serves as Minister General of the Order

1227 (March 18) Pope Honorius III dies and on March 19 Cardinal Hugolino, Francis' friend and protector, is elected Pope, taking the name Gregory IX; Pope dispenses Clare and her sisters from the ideals of Poverty and removes Friars Minor as chaplains to the Poor Ladies

1228 – 1229 Thomas of Celano writes *The Life of St. Francis*

1228 (July 16) Francis is canonized in Assisi by Pope Gregory IX

1228 (September 17) Pope Gregory IX restores the Privilege of Poverty and ministry by Friars Minor to the Poor Ladies

1229 Clare's sister Beatrice enters San Damiano Monastery; Anthony teaches theology to the friars in Padua

1230 (May 25) Francis' remains transferred to the new Papal Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi

1232 – 1235 Julian of Speyer writes *The Life of St. Francis*

1232 – 1239 Elias again serves as Minister General of the Order

1234 Lady Agnes, daughter of the king of Bohemia, founds a monastery of Poor Ladies in Prague, and takes the veil there; Clare writes her *First Letter to Agnes of Prague* (not her blood sister)

1235 Clare writes *Second Letter to Agnes of Prague*

1238 Clare writes *Third Letter to Agnes of Prague*



1239 Abeit of Pisa serves as Minister General of the Order

1239 – 1244 Haymo of Faversham serves as Minister General

1240 – 1241 John of Perugia writes *The Anonymous of Perugia*

1240 (September) Attempted Saracen invasion of San Damiano Monastery is repelled by Clare and the Eucharist

1241 – 1246 Bernard of Quintavalle dies sometime during this span and is buried close to Francis' tomb in the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi

1241 – 1247 *The Legend of the Three Companions* is written

1241 Miracle of the liberation of Assisi from Vitale d'Aversa via Clare and her sisters' intercessory prayers; on August 22 Pope Gregory IX dies

1243 (June 25) Innocent IV is elected Pope

1244 – 1260 *The Assisi Compilation* is written

1244 – 1247 Crescentius of Iesi serves as Minister General of the Order

1245 – 1247 Thomas of Celano writes *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* (his Second Life of Saint Francis)

1247 – 1253 Clare writes her *Testament*

1247 – 1257 John of Parma serves Minister General of the Order

1247 The *Rule of Pope Innocent IV* lessens fasting and permits possessions to the Poor Ladies; Clare starts to write her own *Rule*

1250 Clare's illness gets worse; a cat (a symbol of a contemplative life) retrieves yarn for her

1250 – 1252 Thomas of Celano writes *The Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis*

1252 (September 16) Cardinal Raynaldus verbally approves Clare's *Rule*; Clare experiences Christmas Midnight Mass, even though she is physically absent

1253 Clare writes *Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague* and her *Blessing*; Agnes (Clare's sister) returns to San Damiano after 34 years away; in April, Pope Innocent IV visits Clare at San Damiano and approves Clare's *Rule* on August 9 by means of the Papal Bull *Solet Annuere*, the first papally approved *Rule* written by a woman in the history of the Church

+ **1253** (August 11) Clare dies and is buried in the Church of San Giorgio in Assisi, 27 years after Francis' death; Agnes of Assisi (Clare's sister) dies in November

1254 (December 7) Pope Innocent IV dies; on December 12 Cardinal Raynaldus becomes Pope Alexander IV

1255 (August 15) Clare is canonized by Pope Alexander IV

1255 – 1267 Bonaventure writes the *Legends* and many Sermons about St. Francis

1257 – 1273 Bonaventure serves as Minister General of the Order

- 1257** Poor Ladies move from San Damiano to the Proto-Monastery in Assisi, taking the original San Damiano Crucifix with them
- 1260** Clare's body is transferred to the Basilica of Santa Chiara in Assisi
- 1263** The Order of San Damiano takes the name of the Order of St. Clare, "Poor Clares"
- 1289** Pope Nicholas IV, first Franciscan friar elected Pope (February 22, 1288), in the Papal Bull *Supra Montem* recognizes Francis as the founder of the Order of Penitents
- 1318** *The Mirror of the Perfection (The Mirror of Perfection, Smaller Version; and The Mirror of Perfection, Larger Version)* are written
- 1328 – 1337** Ugolino Boniscambi of Montegiorgio writes *The Deeds of Blessed Francis and His Companions*
- After 1337** Anonymous writes *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis (Fioretti)* (a translation and re-editing of *The Deeds of Saint Francis and His Companions*)
- 1569** Construction begins on the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli (St. Mary of the Angels) that surrounds *The Portiuncula* (the hillside city of Assisi has stopped growing geographically and expansion occurs on the plain nearby)
- 1850** (August 30) Sarcophagus and remains of Clare are found
- 1872** (October 3) Clare's body is placed in a crypt in the Basilica of Santa Chiara
- 1883** A revised *Rule of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis* is promulgated by Pope Leo XIII
- 1893** Original Papal Bull *Solet Annuere* containing Clare's *Rule* is found in a fold of her mantle
- 1958** (February 17) Pope Pius XII declares Clare, because of her Christmas Eve vision in 1252, Patroness of all those involved in any way in the production of television
- 1978** (June 24) Pope Paul VI (now Blessed Paul VI) promulgates a revised *Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* (26 articles)
- 1979** Pope John Paul II (now Pope St. John Paul II) declares Francis the Patron of the environment and ecological concerns
- 1986** (October 27) Pope John Paul II (now Pope St. John Paul II) and 235 leaders of the world's major religions begin their Day of Prayer for World Peace with a prayer service in front of the tiny chapel, *The Portiuncula*. (Every year thousands of pilgrims come to the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli to pray for their own intentions, for family needs, and for reconciliation throughout the world.)

[This *Timeline* is a compilation from many sources. If some of the sources were not in agreement with specific dates, the compilers did their best to reflect accurate information. Sources Consulted: Christian Today/Christian History Magazine, Joanne Schatzlein, O.S.F., 1994; *Clare of Assisi: A Biographical Study*, Ingrid J. Peterson, O.S.F., 1993; *Clare of Assisi: The Lady: Early Documents*, Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap., 2006; *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* (Vol. 1: *The Saint*; Vol. II: *The Founder*; Vol. III: *The Prophet*), Editors: Regis Armstrong, O.F.M. Cap.; J.A. Wayne Hellmann, O.F.M. Conv.; and William J. Short, O.F.M., 1999 – 2001; and www.franciscanfriarstor.com]

