
GANZ NOTES – ST. BONAVENTURE – THE “SERAPHIC DOCTOR” (1217-1274 CE)

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QUOTATIONS

St. Bonaventure – “To know much but to taste nothing – of what use is that?”

Whoever, therefore, is not enlightened by such splendor of created things is blind; whoever is not awakened by such outcries is deaf; whoever does not praise God because of all these effects is dumb; whoever does not discover the First Principle from such clear signs is a fool. Therefore, open your eyes, alert the ears of your spirit, open your lips and apply your heart so that in all creatures you may see, hear, praise, love and worship, glorify and honor your God lest the whole world rise against you.^{53 1}

Bonaventure influenced and foreshadowed the great period of mysticism during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which produced such individuals as Meister Eckhart, John Tauler and Thomas à Kempis (see *Imitation of Christ). The

⁵³ I, 15, pp. 67–68. [From *The Soul's Journey into God*]

¹ Ewert H. Cousins, “[Introduction](#),” in *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), 30.

* A reference in brackets in the body of an article such as speaks for itself.

*Augustinianism and individual devotion that he emphasized helped to prepare the way for the Protestant Reformation.²

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.³

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.**⁴

He died while trying to mend the Roman church's schism with the Greek church a year later. He might have been poisoned.⁵

In the history of Western spirituality, Bonaventure holds a central and pivotal position. The 13th-century friar, professor at the University of Paris, minister general of the Franciscan Order, cardinal and adviser to popes, played a major role in the spiritual ferment of the high Middle Ages. Viewed within the religious context of the Middle Ages as a whole – when Islamic, Jewish and Christian spirituality were flourishing – he produced one of the richest syntheses of Christian spirituality. Although cosmic in its scope, it was distinctively Christian in its content, grounded on the doctrine of the Trinity and devotion to the humanity of Christ. Within Christianity he achieved a striking integration of Eastern and Western elements. **Living at a time when the rift between the Greek East and the Latin West was not yet so radical, he integrated the distinctively Greek spirituality of the Pseudo-Dionysius with the**

* The form of the word asterisked will not always be precisely the same as that of the article to which the asterisk refers

² R. G. Clouse, "[Bonaventura \(1221–74\)](#)," ed. Martin Davie et al., *New Dictionary of Theology: Historical and Systematic* (London; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press; InterVarsity Press, 2016), 128.

³ Stephen E. Lahey, "[Gallery: Scholastic Superstars](#)," *Christian History Magazine-Issue 73: Thomas Aquinas: Greatest Medieval Theologian* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002).

⁴ Stephen E. Lahey, "[Gallery: Scholastic Superstars](#)," *Christian History Magazine-Issue 73: Thomas Aquinas: Greatest Medieval Theologian* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002).

⁵ Stephen E. Lahey, "[Gallery: Scholastic Superstars](#)," *Christian History Magazine-Issue 73: Thomas Aquinas: Greatest Medieval Theologian* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002).

emerging Franciscan devotion to the humanity and passion of Christ, which was to give a decisive direction to the spirituality of Western Europe for centuries.⁶

Within the Franciscan Order, Bonaventure is considered its second founder and the chief architect of its spirituality. As minister general of the Friars Minor for seventeen years at a crucial period in their history, he attempted to integrate the ideal of Francis of Assisi into the cumulative traditions of Christian spirituality and to shape that ideal into institutional forms which have survived to this day.⁷

With 13th-century genius for speculative synthesis, he produced a type of spiritual *summa* that integrates psychology, philosophy and theology. Grounding himself in Augustine and drawing from Anselm, he brought together the cosmic vision of the Pseudo-Dionysius with the psychological acumen of Bernard of Clairvaux and Richard of St. Victor. And he balanced a richness of Biblical symbolism with abstract philosophical speculation. In no other medieval Christian spiritual writer were such diverse elements present in such depth and abundance and within such an organic systematic structure. In a certain sense, Bonaventure achieved for spirituality what Thomas did for theology and Dante for medieval culture as a whole.⁸

TIMELINE

Prepared by Deacon Dave & Thérèse Ream, OFS; version July 2017.

1181/1182 CE – Giovanni (John) di Pietro [his dad’s first name] di Bernardone is born. His dad later gave him the nickname “Frenchie”; i.e., Francesco (Francis).

1193/1194 CE – Chiara (Clare) di Favarone di Offreduccio, firstborn of a renowned family of Assisi.

⁶ Ewert H. Cousins, [“Introduction,”](#) in *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), 1.

⁷ Ewert H. Cousins, [“Introduction,”](#) in *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), 1.

⁸ Ewert H. Cousins, [“Introduction,”](#) in *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), 2.

1202-1203 CE – Francis fights on losing side in war with neighboring Perugia and spends a year in prison in Perugia and fall seriously ill.

1203 CE – Francis' father ransoms his son and brings him home to Assisi for a year-long convalescence.

1205 CE (23-years old) – Francis' gradual conversion begins: giving to the poor of Assisi; embracing a leper of Assisi; mocked by fellow citizens of Assisi; leaves town and seeks solitude in the wilderness.

1205 CE, in the Autumn – “Francis while praying before a crucifix at the chapel of San Damiano hears Christ calling him by name, “Francis, go rebuild my house; as you see, it is all being destroyed.” He steals his dad's expensive cloth, sells it, and begins to rebuild/renovate the Chapel of San Damiano.

1206 CE – Francis' dad “sues” his son for repayment of the cloth that he stole. Francis responds by taking off all of his clothes in front of everyone, renounces his inheritance. He become a Penitent and continues to work on repairing San Damiano.

1208 CE – Francis sets out to imitate Christ perfectly; begins to preach penance, repentance, and peace; fellow citizens begin to leave their families and to go with Francis.

1210-1212 CE (17-19-years old) – Clare hears Francis preach and begins to meet secretly with him.

1211 CE – Francis sets out by ship to reach Muslim territories, for the purpose of converting them or dying in the effort; heavy storms defeat his going.

1212 CE, in March (19-years old) – Clare formally leaves her family to begin to live a religious life; attracts other women her age and founds the Poor Ladies of Assisi (the Poor Clares; the Second Order of the Franciscans)

1217 CE (Francis is 35-years old) – The *Chapter of the Mats* with 5,000 Franciscan brothers in attendance.

1217 CE – Giovanni di Fidanza is born; eventually named Bonaventure of Bagnoregio.

1223 CE – Francis goes to Fonte Colombo to write the definitive *Rule* for the Order of Friars Minor, which receives Papal approval on 29 November 1223.

1225 CE – Francis has to return to San Damiano to be cared for by Clare and the Sisters. He is nearly blind and is suffering from tuberculoid leprosy.

1226 CE – Francis writes his *Testament*.

1226 October 3rd – Francis dies; on October 4th he is buried in Assisi.

1228 CE, on July 16th – Francis is canonized a Saint by Pope Gregory IX.

1247-1257 CE – John of Parma serves as Minister General of the Order; eventually has to be removed because of his attachment to the mysticism of Joachim of Fiore.

In 1248 **Bonaventure** was licensed as a bachelor of Scripture and lectured on the Bible for the next two years; from 1250 to 1252 he lectured on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and produced his *Commentary on the Sentences*. In 1253 or 1254 he became a Master in Theology, taking over the leadership of the Franciscan school in Paris, where he taught until 1257, when he was elected minister general of the Order.⁹

1253 CE – Clare writes the *Rule* for the Poor Clares and has it formally approved by the Pope in August 1253 CE. Clare then dies (27-years after the death of Francis).

1255 CE, August 15th – Clare is canonized by Pope Alexander IV.

1255-1267 CE – Bonaventure writes his official biographies (Longer and Shorter) of St. Francis of Assisi and preaches many Sermons about St. Francis

1257 (40-years old)-1273 CE – Bonaventure, Minister General of the Order.

1979 CE – Pope St. John Paul II declares St. Francis the Patron of the environment and ecological concerns

2013 CE, in March – Pope Francis I indicates his choice of Francis as his papal name.

BIOGRAPHICAL #1

However, he does give clear testimony of having been cured of a serious illness through Francis while still a boy. In his major biography of Francis, he states: “When I was a boy, as I still vividly remember, I was snatched from the jaws of death by his [Francis’s] invocation and merits. So, if I remained silent and did not sing his praises, I fear that I

⁹ Ewert H. Cousins, [“Introduction,”](#) in *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), 6.

would be rightly accused of the crime of ingratitude. I recognize that God saved my life through him, and I realize that I have experienced his power in my very person.”^{5 10}

Shortly after Bonaventure’s arrival in Paris, the most illustrious professor of the university, the Englishman Alexander of Hales¹¹, entered the Franciscan Order. This was a decisive event in Franciscan history, for Alexander brought his doctoral chair to the Franciscan house, thus establishing the school of the Friars Minor as officially part of the University of Paris and launching the great Franciscan intellectual tradition, which would stand in tension with the simplicity of Assisi.¹²

In 1243 Bonaventure entered the Franciscan Order and studied theology under Alexander of Hales and John of La Rochelle until their deaths in 1245, when he continued under Eudes Rigaud and William of Middleton. Bonaventure was greatly devoted to and much influenced by Alexander, who recognized his talent and admired his virtue, as is attested to by the following statement of Sixtus IV in his bull of canonization: “Bonaventure was great in learning, but no less great in humility and holiness. His innocence and dove-like simplicity were such that Alexander of Hales, the renowned doctor whose disciple Saint Bonaventure became, used to say of him that it seemed as though Adam had never sinned in him.”^{10 13}

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⁵ *Legenda maior*, prol., 3 cf. our translation, p. 182.

¹⁰ Ewert H. Cousins, [“Introduction,”](#) in *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), 3–4.

¹¹ *Britannica* - **Alexander of Hales, (born c. 1170/85, Hales, Gloucestershire, Eng. – died 1245, Paris)**, theologian and philosopher whose doctrines influenced the teachings of such thinkers as St. Bonaventure and John of La Rochelle. Alexander studied and taught in Paris, receiving the degrees of Master of Arts (before 1210) and Theology (1220). He was archdeacon of Coventry in 1235 and became a Franciscan (c. 1236). In Paris he founded the *Schola Fratrum Minorum*, where he was the first holder, possibly until his death, of the Franciscan chair.”

¹² Ewert H. Cousins, [“Introduction,”](#) in *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), 5.

^{*10} Sixtus IV, Bull of Canonization, in *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, vol. I, xl (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882); for sources of the remark of Alexander, cf. the chronicle attributed to Bernard of Bessa, Bonaventure’s secretary, in *Analecta franciscana*, III, 699; also *Chronica XXIV generalium*, *ibid.*, 324.

¹³ Ewert H. Cousins, [“Introduction,”](#) in *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), 5.

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Not long after its founding, tensions arose in the Order between those who wanted to follow the ideals of Francis in stark simplicity and those who favored adaptation as the Order expanded. The situation became complicated by the fact that the **Spirituals**, as the first group was called, began to interpret their position in the light of the eschatology of **Joachim of Fiore**¹⁵, who had prophesied that an age of the Spirit would begin in 1260 and last until the end of the world.¹³ **As some interpreted Joachim, in this age Church institutions would be superseded by a free life in the Spirit. Joachim further prophesied that this age would be ushered in by a new religious order of contemplative and spiritual men. The Spirituals saw the fulfillment of this prophecy in Francis and in themselves.** In 1257 the situation reached a head when John of Parma, the minister general of the Order, was secretly ordered by Pope Alexander IV to resign because of his leanings toward Joachimism. At the suggestion of John, Bonaventure was chosen as his successor by a general chapter held in Rome.¹⁴ This inaugurated for Bonaventure an intense and fruitful career as minister general that lasted for seventeen years.¹⁶

An intellectual himself and a trained theologian of the University of Paris, **he saw no radical conflict between learning and Franciscan simplicity**; hence he encouraged learning and cultivated centers of study. Through his personal holiness, the respect he

¹⁴ Ewert H. Cousins, "[Introduction](#)," in *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), 6.

¹⁵ *Britannica* on **Joachim of Fiore (or Floris)** – "Joachim of Fiore, Fiore also spelled Floris, Italian Gioacchino Da Fiore, (born c. 1130, /35, Celico, Kingdom of Naples [Italy] – died 1201/02, Fiore), Italian mystic, theologian, biblical commentator, philosopher of history, and founder of the monastic order of San Giovanni in Fiore. He developed a philosophy of history according to which history develops in three ages of increasing spirituality: the ages of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

^{*13} On Joachim and his influence, cf. Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study of Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 3–228.

^{*14} Cf. Salimbene, *Cronica fratris Salimbene de Adam ordinis minorum*, in *Monumenta Germaniae historica: Scriptorum*, vol. XXXII, ed. O. Holder-Egger (Hanoverae et Lipsiae: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1905–1913), pp. 309–310; cf. Quinn, "Chronology of St. Bonaventure (1217–1257)," pp. 174–176.

¹⁶ Ewert H. Cousins, "[Introduction](#)," in *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), 6–7.

commanded and his gifts of reconciliation, he was able to give form and direction to the moderate position, **thus meriting to be called the Second Founder of the Order.**¹⁷

In this busy time as general of the Order, he did not cease to write, but managed to produce a number of spiritual treatises, two biographies of Francis and three extended lecture series, as well as numerous sermons and other works. **In 1273 he was named cardinal bishop of Albano by Pope Gregory X and spent the following year assisting him in preparations for the Second Council of Lyons. He played a major role in the council's reform of the Church, reconciling the secular clergy with the mendicant orders; he also was involved in the reconciliation of the Greek Church with Rome.** He died at the council on July 15, 1274, and he was buried the same day at the Franciscan church in Lyons, in a solemn ceremony in the presence of the pope, the cardinals and the prelates of the council.¹⁸

Two hundred years later Bonaventure was canonized on April 14, 1482, by Pope Sixtus IV; and on March 14, 1588, he was declared a Doctor of the Universal Church by Pope Sixtus V, with the title "Doctor Seraphicus."^{17 19}

ON IMITATION

James Corkery in *The Way*, "On the Communion of Saints" – "Since, however, there is no direct, unmediated access to the mystery of God - no one sees the face of God and lives - people have to put a face on God, as it were, in indirect ways. I wish to argue here that **the saints, individually and as a communion, can be of invaluable help in making the invisible God visible. In other words, they can play an important role in our naming of the holy mystery and of its significance for people's lives today....**

¹⁷ Ewert H. Cousins, "[Introduction](#)," in *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), 7.

¹⁸ Ewert H. Cousins, "[Introduction](#)," in *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), 7-8.

^{*17} Cf. the bulls of Sixtus IV and Sixtus V, printed in the Quaracchi critical edition (I, xxxix-lii).

¹⁹ Ewert H. Cousins, "[Introduction](#)," in *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), 8.

It means that **concrete holiness** - and therefore the saints, not just saintliness itself - is part of the Church's unique history of salvation. **The Church could not call itself holy were it not for these in whom it knows infallibly that grace has triumphed.** The **Canonized saints mean that the Church's holiness - even amid all its imperfections - is real; it exists; God has gifted the Church with it in the concrete lives of these exemplary men and women.** And their sacramentality is not fragile or threatened, because the Church knows in faith that they no longer stand under the dialectic of sin and grace but that, by the mysterious mercy of God, the latter has triumphed in them.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the 16th century verb “**to imitate**” - “*transitive*. To do or try to do after the manner of; to follow the example of; to copy in action.” Also, “To make or produce a copy or representation of; to copy, reproduce.” Also, “To be, become, or make oneself like; to assume the aspect or semblance of; to simulate: (a) intentionally or consciously; (b) unintentionally or unconsciously.” From the Latin deponent verb *imitari* - “to copy, to represent, to portray”.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* at the 16th century verb “**to emulate**” - “*transitive*. Of persons: To strive to equal or rival (a person, his achievements or qualities); to copy or imitate with the object of equalling or excelling.” Also, “Implying some degree of success: To vie with, rival, attain or approach to equality with.”

To “imitate” in the sense of the imitation of Christ, or the imitation of St. Francis of Assisi, does not mean to “a clone”; it does not mean to “a copy”; it does not mean “to counterfeit”.

The official *Life* (Legend) of St. Francis of Assisi that St. Bonaventure wrote.

THE POINT: What God expects of us is to become fully ourselves, discovering the unique person God intends us each to become (He is patient; the gift of Time), taking hold of our talents/gifts and getting good at them. In this way we “imitate” Christ or St. Francis of Assisi.

TRIVIUM & QUADRIVIUM

Dr. Jeffrey Lehman of Hillsdale College, as written by Finn Cleary²⁰ - “[The trivium and quadrivium] lead us to speak with clarity and see the relations between things,” Dr. Lehman says. “Keeping that in mind, it helps to overcome

²⁰ See: <https://www.hillsdale.edu/hillsdale-blog/academics/understanding-trivium-quadrivium/>.

the old opposition between humanities and sciences. You can understand how a university is a university when you understand those basic concepts.”

The trivium consists of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, while the quadrivium consists of arithmetic, astronomy, music, and geometry. Together, Dr. Lehman says they lead students to see a “unified idea of reality.”

“The trivium was always pursued first,” Dr. Lehman says. “It’s commonly called the ‘Arts of the Word’ and focuses on different ways you can attend to words. Grammar is used in logic, which is used in rhetoric, for example. All of them move toward a proper presentation of the truth, which speaks to the mind and to the passions.”

Next, students of the liberal arts traditionally move to the quadrivium, or the ‘Arts of Number or Quantity.’

“Humans communicate with each other using words. Humans communicate with the natural order in numbers and in quantities. By discerning those natural relationships, we come to better understand the cosmos. It speaks to us, and we can talk to the greater universe. “

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; syllogisms²¹; formal and informal fallacies²² of thought

²¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* at “**syllogism**” – “*Logic*. An argument expressed or claimed to be expressible in the form of two propositions called the premises, containing a common or middle term, with a third proposition called the conclusion, resulting *necessarily* from the other two.”

²² For example, at the Purdue University Writing Lab: “**Fallacies** are common errors in reasoning that will undermine the logic of your argument. Fallacies can be either illegitimate arguments or irrelevant points and are often identified because they lack evidence that supports their claim. Avoid these common fallacies in your own arguments and watch for them in the arguments of others.” And at

(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): 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.

the same location, an description of the more common logical fallacies:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/logic_in_argumentative_writing/fallacies.html.

THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE (THE VULGATE (I.E. LATIN) TRANSLATION) - GRADUATE SCHOOL

Notice how a person being educated at this advanced, university level was not given access to the Scriptures (the Bible) until he or she was a Master of Arts – knew himself or herself in their central powers; had begun to learn how to train those powers and to be responsible for exercising those powers responsibly; had studied deeply in the Book of Nature (how God makes things, sustains things, relates things to each other, etc.). It was *only then* that a person was judged ready to take up the sacred Scriptures with now a credible chance to understand what the sacred Word meant.

As a Bachelor of Scripture (still considered an Undergraduate), he taught for two years, producing biblical commentaries, becoming thoroughly conversant in the entire Scriptures. These Commentaries were the basis of his biblical Examinations. Successful completion of his biblical teaching and his Commentaries was what made it possible for him to proceed to Graduate School: Theology and Philosophy.

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PETER ABELARD (1079-1142 CE) - *THE SENTENCES*

Britannica on “**Peter Abelard**” – At Saint-Denis Abelard extended his reading in theology and tirelessly criticized the way of life followed by his fellow monks. His reading of the Bible and of the Fathers of the Church led him to make a collection of quotations that seemed to represent inconsistencies of teaching by the Christian church. He arranged his findings in a compilation entitled *Sic et non* (“Yes and No”); and for it he wrote a preface in which, as a logician and as a keen student of language, **he formulated basic rules with which students might reconcile apparent contradictions of meaning and distinguish the various senses in which words had been used over the course of many centuries.**

²³ Ewert H. Cousins, “[Introduction](#),” in *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), 6.

Wikipedia – Lombard arranged his material from the Bible and the Church Fathers in four books [The Book of *Sentences*], then subdivided this material further into chapters. Probably between 1223 and 1227, Alexander of Hales grouped the many chapters of the four books into a smaller number of "distinctions". In this form, the book was widely adopted as a theological textbook in the high and late Middle Ages (the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries). **A commentary on the *Sentences* was required of every Master of Theology and was part of the examination system. At the end of lectures on Lombard's work, a student could apply for bachelor status within the theology faculty.... The importance of the *Sentences* to medieval theology and philosophy lies to a significant extent in the overall framework they provide to theological and philosophical discussion.** All the great scholastic thinkers, such as Aquinas, Ockham, Bonaventure, Aureolus, Holcot, and Scotus, wrote commentaries on the *Sentences*. But these works were not exactly commentaries, **for the *Sentences* was really a compilation of sources, and Peter Lombard left many questions open, giving later scholars an opportunity to provide their own answers.**

SCHOOL OF THE AFFECTIONS

Robert M. Doran, SJ on "Affect, Affections" - Bernard Lonergan distinguishes *nonintentional* from *intentional* feelings. Nonintentional feelings correspond to what some psychologies call *affects*, as distinct from feelings, while the term *feelings* is used by these psychologies to refer to what Lonergan calls intentional feelings.

Affectivity is used here to cover both realities, and for the sake of clarity we will employ Lonergan's distinction....

Nonintentional feelings include such states as anxiety and fatigue, which have causes, and such trends as hunger and thirst, which have goals, but they are nonintentional, inasmuch as they do not arise out of an apprehension or representation of their causes or goals or of any object. **They occur, and from their occurrence one diagnoses the cause or goal.**

Intentional feelings, though, are responses to apprehended objects. The major classes of objects to which they respond are, on the one hand, *the satisfying or dissatisfying*, and, on the other hand, *values*. The two classes of objects are not mutually exclusive, for what is satisfying may also be truly worthwhile; but they are also not mutually inclusive, for what is genuinely worthwhile may also be disagreeable. **What distinguishes value from the merely satisfying is that value**

carries us to transcend ourselves, and on that basis Lonergan distinguishes vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values in an ascending order.²⁴

Such a link between feelings and values renders feelings of crucial importance in discernment and decision-making. Ignatius of Loyola speaks of three times or moments of election or decision. **The “times” [or “moments” of Election or Decision] reflect different affective states of the subject,** and in each instance, affectivity is a criterion of both the method to be employed and of the course of action to be chosen. In one of these times (the second), one is agitated and experiences alternations of consolation and desolation; a decision is reached precisely by monitoring these experiences in the practice of what Ignatius calls *the discernment of spirits*. In another time (the first), one has been so moved by God as to have no doubt concerning what one is to do. And in the third time, one already is tranquil and so is antecedently disposed to employ more rational means, such as weighing the pros and cons of the various alternatives.²⁵

Such an equilibrium is constituted by the creative tension or functional interdependence of **the linked but potentially opposed principles of (1) limitation rooted in the body and (2) transcendence rooted in the spirit.** The human person is an incarnate spirit, and the authenticity of the person is a function of one’s perseverance in **the tension of matter and spirit. That tension is felt in the sensitive psyche,** and these feelings are ciphers, indeed criteria, of one’s genuineness. What the tradition has called *concupiscence* is our tendency to distort the tension of matter and spirit in either direction. Sin is capitulation to that tendency. Grace is needed to preserve us in the inner harmony felt in the psyche as equanimity or equilibrium.²⁶

THE JOURNEY OF THE SOUL INTO GOD

From the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. The article on “**Saint Bonaventure**” by Tim Noone and R.E. Houser – “A master of the memorable phrase, Bonaventure held that

²⁴ Michael Downey, [*The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*](#) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 12-13.

²⁵ Michael Downey, [*The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*](#) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 13.

²⁶ Michael Downey, [*The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*](#) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 13.

philosophy opens the mind to at least **three different routes humans can take on their journey to God**. [1] Non-intellectual material creatures he conceived as shadows and **vestiges** (literally, footprints) of God, understood as the ultimate cause of a world philosophical reason can prove was created at a first moment in time. [2] Intellectual creatures he conceived of as images and likenesses of God, the workings of the human mind and will leading us to God understood as illuminator of knowledge and donor of grace and virtue. [3] The final route to God is the route of being, in which Bonaventure brought Anselm's argument together with Aristotelian and Neoplatonic metaphysics to view God as the absolutely perfect being whose essence entails its existence, an absolutely simple being that causes all other, composite beings to exist."

PRAYER TO OBTAIN THE SEVENFOLD GIFTS

PRAYER

To Obtain the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit

49. We, therefore, pray
to the most kind Father
through you, his only-begotten Son,
who for us became man, was crucified and glorified,
that he send us
out of his treasures
the Spirit of sevenfold grace
who rested upon you in all fulness:
the Spirit, I say, of WISDOM,
that we may taste the life-giving flavors
of the fruit of the tree of life,
which you truly are;
the gift also of UNDERSTANDING,
by which the intentions of our mind are illumined;
the gift of COUNSEL,
by which we may follow in your footsteps
on the right paths;
the gift of FORTITUDE,
by which we may be able to weaken the violence
of our enemies' attacks;
the gift of KNOWLEDGE,
by which we may be filled with the brilliant light
of your sacred teaching
to distinguish good and evil;
the gift of PIETY,
by which we may acquire a merciful heart;

the gift of FEAR,
by which we may draw away from all evil
and be set at peace
by submitting in awe to your eternal majesty.
For you have wished
that we ask for these things
in that sacred prayer which you have taught us;
and now we ask to obtain them,
through your cross,
for the praise of your most holy name.
To you,
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory,
thanksgiving, beauty and power,
forever and ever.
Amen.

HERE ENDS THE TREE OF LIFE²⁷

²⁷ 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), 174–175.

Saint Bonaventure

Saint Bonaventure, Italian **San Bonaventura**, original name **Giovanni Di Fidanza**, (born *c.* 1217, Bagnoregio, Papal States—died July 15, 1274, Lyon; canonized April 14, 1482; feast day July 15), leading medieval theologian, minister general of the Franciscan order, and cardinal bishop of Albano. He wrote several works on the spiritual life and recodified the constitution of his order (1260). He was declared a doctor (teacher) of the church in 1587.



St. Bonaventure

St. Bonaventure, detail of a fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli; in the church of San Francesco, Montefalco, Italy.
Alinari/Art Resource, New York

He was a son of Giovanni of Fidanza, a physician, and Maria of Ritella. He fell ill while a boy and, according to his own words, was saved from death by the intercession of St. Francis of Assisi. Entering the University of Paris in 1235, he received the master of arts degree in 1243 and then joined the Franciscan order, which named him Bonaventure in 1244.

He studied theology in the Franciscan school at Paris from 1243 to 1248. His masters, especially Alexander of Hales, recognized in him a student with a keen memory and unusual intelligence. He was also under the tutelage of John of La Rochelle. After their deaths (1245) he studied further under Eudes Rigauld and William of Meliton. He was later probably influenced by the Dominican Gueric of Saint-Quentin.

By turning the pursuit of truth into a form of divine worship, he integrated his study of theology with the Franciscan mode of the mendicant life. In 1248, he began to teach the Bible; from 1251 to 1253 he lectured on the *Sentences*, a medieval theology textbook by Peter Lombard, an Italian theologian of the 12th century, and he became a master of theology in 1254, when he assumed control of the Franciscan school in Paris. He taught there until 1257, producing many works, notably commentaries on the Bible and the *Sentences* and the *Breviloquium* (“Summary”), which presented a summary of his theology. These works showed his deep understanding of Scripture and the Fathers of the early church—principally St. Augustine—and a wide knowledge of the philosophers, particularly Aristotle.

Bonaventure was particularly noted in his day as a man with the rare ability to reconcile diverse traditions in theology and philosophy. He united different doctrines in a synthesis containing his personal conception of truth as a road to the love of God. In 1256 he defended the Franciscan ideal of the Christian life against William of Saint-Amour, a university teacher who accused the mendicants (friars who wandered about and begged for a living) of defaming the Gospel by their practice of poverty and who wanted to prevent the Franciscans and their fellow mendicants, the Dominicans, from attaining teaching positions. Bonaventure’s defense of the Franciscans and his personal probity as a member of his religious order led to his election as minister general of the Franciscans on Feb. 2, 1257.

Founded by St. Francis according to strict views about poverty, the Franciscan

order was at that time undergoing internal discord. One group, the Spirituals, disrupted the order by a rigorous view of poverty; another, the Relaxati, disturbed it by a laxity of life. Bonaventure used his authority so prudently that, placating the first group and reproofing the second, he preserved the unity of the order and reformed it in the spirit of St. Francis. The work of restoration and reconciliation owed its success to Bonaventure's tireless visits, despite delicate health, to each province of the order and to his own personal realization of the Franciscan ideal. In his travels, he preached the Gospel constantly and so elegantly that he was recognized everywhere as a most eloquent preacher. As a theologian, he based the revival of the order on his conception of the spiritual life, which he expounded in mystical treatises manifesting his Franciscan experience of contemplation as a perfection of the Christian life. His *Journey of the Mind to God* (1259) was a masterpiece showing the way by which man as a creature ought to love and contemplate God through Christ after the example of St. Francis. Revered by his order, Bonaventure recodified its constitutions (1260), wrote for it a new *Life of St. Francis of Assisi* (1263), and protected it (1269) from an assault by Gerard of Abbeville, a teacher of theology at Paris, who renewed the charge of William of Saint-Amour. He also protected the church during the period 1267–73 by upholding the Christian faith while denouncing the views of unorthodox masters at Paris who contradicted revelation in their philosophy.

Bonaventure's wisdom and ability to reconcile opposing views moved Pope Gregory X to name him cardinal bishop of Albano, Italy, in May 1273, though Bonaventure had declined to accept appointment to the see of York, England, from

Pope Clement IV in 1265. Gregory consecrated him in November at Lyon, where he resigned as minister general of the Franciscans in May 1274. At the second Council of Lyon he was the leading figure in the reform of the church, reconciling the secular (parish) clergy with the mendicant orders. He also had a part in restoring the Greek church to union with Rome. His death, at the council, was viewed as the loss of a wise and holy man, full of compassion and virtue, captivating with love all who knew him. He was buried the same day in a Franciscan church with the pope in attendance. The respect and love that was held for Bonaventure is exemplified in the formal announcement of the council: "At the funeral there was much sorrow and tears; for the Lord has given him this grace, that all who saw him were filled with an immense love for him." His exemplary life as a Franciscan and the continual influence of his doctrine on the life and devotion of the Western church won for him a declaration of sanctity by Pope Sixtus IV; he was designated a doctor of the church by Sixtus V.

Modern scholars consider him to have been one of the foremost men of his age, an intrepid defender of human and divine truth, and an outstanding exponent of a mystical and Christian wisdom.

The critical edition of St. Bonaventure's works is *Opera omnia*, 10 vol. (1882–1902). Translations of his works by Jose de Vinck are "The Journey of the Mind to God," in vol. 1 of *The Works of Bonaventure* (1960); and vol. 2, *Breviloquium* (1963).

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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.

St. Bonaventure (1217-1274 CE) - The Tree of Life - the Chapter Headings

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), 123–125.

ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS ORIGIN

First Fruit: His Distinguished Origin

Jesus Begotten of God

Jesus Prefigured

Jesus Sent from Heaven

Jesus Born of Mary

Second Fruit: The Humility of His Mode of Life

Jesus Conformed to His Forefathers

Jesus Shown to the Magi

Jesus Submissive to the Law

Jesus Exiled from His Kingdom

Third Fruit: The Loftiness of His Power

Jesus, Heavenly Baptist

Jesus Tempted by the Enemy

Jesus Wonderful in His Miracles

Jesus Transfigured

Fourth Fruit: The Plenitude of His Piety

Jesus, the Solicitous Shepherd

Jesus Bathed with Tears

Jesus Acclaimed King of the World

Jesus, Consecrated Bread

ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS PASSION

Fifth Fruit: His Confidence In Trials

Jesus Sold through Guile
Jesus Prostrate in Prayer
Jesus Surrounded by the Mob
Jesus Bound with Chains

Sixth Fruit: His Patience in Maltreatment

Jesus Denied by His Own
Jesus Blindfolded
Jesus Handed Over to Pilate
Jesus Condemned to Death

Seventh Fruit: His Constancy Under Torture

Jesus Scorned by All
Jesus Nailed to the Cross
Jesus Linked with Thieves
Jesus Given Gall to Drink

Eighth Fruit: Victory in the Conflict of Death

Jesus, Sun Dimmed in Death
Jesus Pierced with a Lance
Jesus Dripping with Blood
Jesus Laid in the Tomb

ON THE MYSTERY OF HIS GLORIFICATION

Ninth Fruit: The Novelty of His Resurrection

Jesus Triumphant in Death
Jesus Rising in Blessedness
Jesus, Extraordinary Beauty
Jesus Given Dominion over the Earth

Tenth Fruit: The Sublimity of His Ascension

Jesus, Leader of His Army

Jesus Lifted Up to Heaven
Jesus, Giver of the Spirit
Jesus Freeing from Guilt

Eleventh Fruit: The Equity of His Judgment

Jesus, Truthful Witness
Jesus, Wrathful Judge
Jesus, Glorious Conqueror
Jesus, Adorned Spouse

Twelfth Fruit: The Eternity of His Kingdom

Jesus, King, Son of the King
Jesus, Inscribed Book
Jesus, Fountain-Ray of Light
Jesus, Desired End



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. I: *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]

