

Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church

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The *Sacrum Commercium*

The ancient Franciscan text, *Sacrum Commercium*, written soon after the passing of the founder yet almost simultaneously with the struggle of Clare with some of the forces of the institutional Church, begins with Francis of Assisi [and in our imaginations we will add Clare herself, and all the penitents to our scene] scurrying about the streets and piazzas of central Italy seeking for “her whom his soul loved.” Echoing the *Canticle of Canticles*, the love song of the relationship between soul and God, God and Israel, the believer and the Church, Francis poses the question at every turn: “*Have you seen her whom my soul loves?*” (Sg. 3.3.) He cannot find her; she is too elusive. And yet he is lost without her. “*Where does she eat? Where does she rest at noon, for I languish with love of her.*” (Sg. 1.6, 2.5, 5.8) As the story goes on, Francis decides to seek the advice of the oldest and the wisest; they fail him, trapped as they are in the pride of their own riches. He eventually comes across two elderly people, “wasted away from great sorrow.” (Lam. 1.13) “Brother,” they tell him, “we have sat here *for a time and for times and for half a time.*” (Dt. 7.25, 12.7; Rev. 12.14) We have frequently seen her pass by, and she has even gathered some companions; but she would always return, “weep bitterly and say, ‘*The children of my mother have fought against me.*’” (Sg. 1.5, Mt. 18.26, Sg.

1.3) And we said to her: *“Be patient, for the upright love you.”* *“Brother, she has now gone up to a great and high mountain where God has placed her.”* (Rev. 21.10, Mt. 28.16) And so Francis set off on his journey up a very high and very difficult mountain in hopes of reaching a resting place from which he could see the whole world and everyone who is in it through the eyes of a God who is good. He was in search of peace; and a banquet will await him.¹

In today’s Church we have our own story to tell, we who seek for the one whom our hearts love. We have our own pilgrimage to undertake, our own high mountains to climb, our own obstacles to overcome. They are both similar and different to those of our founding generation. The letter I received one year ago identified some current concerns: *“Especially reflect on the life of Francis and Clare pondering how they ‘obeyed the Pope’.”* Many founders and foundresses experienced conflict with the bishop (s). *“ what are the deeper foundational faith dimensions that give these persons the tenacity to stay in the Church?”* When you see things differently from the *“prelate,”* how *“might we discern true obedience.”*² A later communication pinpointed the topic more succinctly in a very beautiful title: *Releasing Energies to Love: Creative Fidelity in the Church.* When the letter was written I am certain we did not foresee how timely the topic might be, and how nerve wracking. We all know that! As I try to explore these very difficult topics, let me try to do so in two major sections: First a little history; then some reflections, more extensive on how we might approach this from the viewpoint of our evangelical life.

History

Historical reflection thrives on metaphors, pictures if you like that can give us an insight into who we are and where we come from. They exist so that we can imagine a path for our freedom to shape the future in a way that acknowledges that God works through time. In the present context, the metaphors I have chosen to capture the historical experience of our relationship with the Church come purposely from one of the classics of the American civil rights movement, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, published in April 1952.³ In this work, the narrator describes his journey into his own identity from growing up in the south to coming to full maturity in the north. The novel begins:

I am an invisible man. No. I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me.⁴

The story, set a few years before the key phase of the civil rights movement, goes on to clarify two elements that I think are part of our own personal experience today: *Invisibility* and the ambiguities we inherit from our own past, what I will call, historically, *Vitamin Deficiencies*. “Invisibility”, I hope, will be self-explanatory. “Vitamin deficiencies” simply refers to

weaknesses our collective social and ecclesial body inherits from its own participation in the history of our times. Let me take them in order and relate them to the notion of reform in the Church.

Invisibility and Reform

After I was elected provincial minister in June of 1988 I was asked to serve on the Priestly Life & Ministry Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. At that time, the previous committee had worked in the mid-1980s on two major reflections. First, from 1983-1985 it embarked on a joint study of “women religious and priests” developed through consultation with a representative group of people from the Bishops’ Committee, women in pastoral leadership, LCWR leadership, and others. The areas of tension had been identified as touching different patterns of decision making and authority, depth of commitment to institutions, and ambiguous role expectations. “Human emotions,” the *report* noted, “repressed for so long by structures—social and ecclesial—surfaced in uncomfortable, sometimes uncontrollable and on occasion even destructive ways.” “The systemic inequality for the religious women—ritual, financial, ... and jurisdictional—impact at the local level.”⁵ This study was followed by a pamphlet in 1988 on *The Morale of Priests*. It publicly identified the following litany of concerns: a feeling of being trapped, overworked and frustrated because of role expectations; the declining number of active priests; loneliness; issues of sexuality, sexual orientation, intimacy; differing ecclesiologies in which some felt the acute need for faster renewal, others were disillusioned and had begun to migrate, and still others mounted the “well organized opposition of the self-styled orthodox.”⁶ [As an aside, I might add that the

general description embedded in these two studies which deal with the situation of Church in the 1980s and its experiences of anger, loneliness, frustration, alienation, failures to communicate, mistrust—in short, the splitting of relationships—can now, some twenty years later through the progress of the abuse crisis, be applied to how many people view the hierarchy and perhaps to how some of them feel. But I digress.]

In this tense context, at one of our meetings, the members of the committee composed of seven or eight bishops and about nine consulters (non-voting members), of which I was one, sought the advice of a very well trained and extremely competent religious sister. She had worked with priests and women religious for many years. How could some of these issues be addressed so as to avoid an ecclesial civil war, we asked? The sister gave us a very fine overview of the situation, its social and psychological roots, and several practical ways to address the divisions. At the end of her speech, the group politely thanked her and then went onto the next item on the agenda. There was no discussion. Towards the end of the meeting, the chair asked if there were any ideas which people wanted to bring up. I decided I would try an experiment. “Yes, I said, a few ideas have occurred to me.” I then repeated, at times verbatim, five or six points which the sister had articulated in the morning session. The response I got has stuck in my mind ever since: “Those are really good ideas; we have never heard them before. Let’s spend some time discussing them.”

This is a difficult story, but I think it illustrates in a very sharp way the reality of *invisibility as a systemic and personal issue of great importance*. Here was a case of the invisibility caused by gender. We may be present at something; we may speak and contribute;

but other people may not see, hear, or listen to us because of gender. We are silenced partners in our own demise. Many people I have talked to have told me that this is a common experience for women, either in the society or in the Church. For women religious this experience of **gender invisibility**, on the level of participation and organization, is even more pronounced because you dedicate your lives to the Gospel and the Church.

There are also many other areas in education, in ecclesiastical administration, and in society, where this **experience of invisibility** surfaces repeatedly. A few examples will communicate the reality and its pervasiveness.

There is such a thing as **status invisibility**: Analogous to gender invisibility, this operates in the experience of lay, i.e. non-ordained friars in a male fraternity. For example, I remember one experience of working on our leadership team where there were seven clerics and one lay brother. The secretary of the council was a priest. Every time the lay brother spoke, the secretary put down his pen. The brother, a good friend of mine, pointed this out to me after several years on the council. I had never noticed it. So we worked out a deal. Every time he really wanted to contribute, he would call for a break, we would speak in the corridor, and when we returned I would come to the meeting and present his ideas—and the secretary would write them down! Not really satisfactory, but necessary—and at least we had each other. Lay friars, as you know, suffer from **status invisibility**, even while they share the same gender, as the Order continues to fight the imposition by the canonists of a clerical identity on the Order of Friars Minor. It becomes particularly difficult when the lay friar is trained at the same level as the priest and yet is forbidden to preach at a public eucharist. I got into an

argument with a local ordinary over this one. I mentioned to him that he had the jurisdictional power to give permission for our lay friar to preach. “This will never happen in my diocese,” he argued. I stormed out of his office, slamming the door behind me. The status of the poor lay brother was once again reinforced. We obeyed the bishop and the friars made peace by inviting him to dinner. Storming out of an office and slamming a door is also not an action that I recommend! As another example, and speaking more generally, in this age of the laity, our own public status as religious is often invisible.

At times **gender invisibility** and **status invisibility** converge to make any situation even more painful. For women religious in the Church, this experience can come quite frequently. Even as a priest, I have experienced their convergence as, for example, when conducting a Christian Catholic liturgy in the midst of an overwhelmingly unchurched congregation. I can only imagine how it feels as a more consistent experience. In our present context and in the wake of the abuse scandal, as we reflect on so much ink spilled in a media which has its own agenda, we might ask if the bishops themselves do not feel in the public forum both **gender** and **status invisibility**?

There is also **positional invisibility**. This, oddly enough, cuts in multiple directions. As a leader in a religious community, we may find that our responsibilities often elude the grasp of many in the community. Our concerns are different than theirs—sometimes wider, sometimes more fiduciary, sometimes more juridical. In many instances, we may have more confidential information. On the one hand, our own position isolates us from their sympathies, making us present but in some measure invisible to them. On the other hand, they themselves

in many cases become invisible to us. But this is only one venue for positional invisibility. After I ceased to have the office of provincial, I returned to higher education and was asked to serve on multiple boards simply as a participant. Here, I found that even though I had experience, administrative history, and respect, I now had no classified position, no real “administrative or positional juice.” My position had changed to that of a subordinate—and public invisibility followed as night follows day. People would just not listen: they had position and I now did not. Often religious who serve on lay boards—and sisters have many experiences on the boards of hospitals, schools, and social service institutions—the “keepers of the charism” feel invisible as they try to communicate the incommunicable heart of their vision.

Cultural invisibility also occurs. Here the issue of race and ethnicity is very painful in our history. But let me expand the problem by simply asking a question. Isn’t it our experience at times that the culture of religious life is in some measure invisible to the culture of married life? I have often wondered why amongst the friars, it is often the religious who are asked to take care of ageing parents. Is it because we are classified automatically as more compassionate, or because, we are seen as having more free time with fewer responsibilities? Certainly, one of the most intense experiences of cultural invisibility occurs when the spiritual culture of the Church and a religious order—focused on peace making, forgiveness, and restorative justice—comes face to face with a civil juridical culture focused on justice produced through litigation, fault finding, and criminal classification. They have public power, we do not. Reciprocal cultural invisibilities confront all of us in multiple dimensions of our life.

As a last example, I would like to mention **personhood invisibility** that occurs when the

spiritual individual depths of a person, his or her wholeness, is swallowed up or subordinated to the communal mind and action of a group. A personal example: When I entered the Order of Friars Minor, Province of Saint Barbara, I was asked to put on “the mind of the province.” The only difficulty I had was that I could never locate this “mind”; its contours were elusive and seemed to change in some hidden way which I could not discern. I would zig and the collective mind would zag! Eventually, I came to the conclusion that the Province really was “mindless”—well, until I became provincial, and then the mind of the province once again became clear, at least to me! It was my turn to make others invisible. What I am trying to convey here is that when we join a group, any group—an ecclesial gathering, a professional group, an affinity cohort, a single gender association, or an organization shaped by what Mary Douglas calls a coherent “thought style,” we can at times experience **personhood invisibility**.⁷

We live easily within the group that gives us life; we sit uneasily with its penchant for a “collective thought style,” its monochromatic demands. Public organizational consensus is often built on hidden presuppositions, established pathways, inherited prejudices, juridical classifications, cohorts of private people who control public speech, ways of feeling and behaving that are allowed or disallowed. And they make parts of our person invisible to the whole of our person. When we fall prey to this collective tendency to divide what for us is a living whole, we can even become invisible to ourselves. This is a particularly acute problem for practitioners of the evangelical life as we try to negotiate our identity in the contemporary world of market values and in a public Church which of necessity must emphasize its canonical structures.

Gender invisibility, status invisibility, positional invisibility, cultural invisibility, personhood invisibility—there are many other *dimensions of invisibility* beyond these that affect our lives, but you get the idea, I hope. None of these necessarily involve personal sin; they are simply embedded in the concrete patterns which shape our personal and collective relationships. All of these invisibilities are not particular to the Church but part of the fractured world in which we live.⁸ Yet, the truth is, we long with all our hearts to live and breathe where the whole of us is loved.

Paradoxically, as we shall see, the experience itself is a an opportunity. It is the contemporary doorway into a few of the great insights of our evangelical spiritual, pastoral, and theological tradition. Coming as we did from a pre-conciliar Church that was settled in law and practice, we must learn from ecclesial experience Augustine’s famous dictum at the heart of our own tradition: “Our hearts are restless, and restless ever shall they be until they rest in Thee.”⁹ Our Lord Jesus knew invisibility himself: He came “unto his own and his own did not receive him.” (Jn. 1.10) “The foxes have dens, He says, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man, Christ, has nowhere to lay His head.”¹⁰ Invisibility also forces us to come to grips on a spiritual level with Chapter VII of *Lumen Gentium*, the Church’s pilgrim nature: “...the Church on earth is endowed already with a sanctity that is real though imperfect. However, until there be realized new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells, the pilgrim Church, in its sacraments and institutions, which belong to this present age, carries the mark of this world which will pass, and she herself takes her place among the creatures which groan and travail yet and await the revelation of the sons and daughters of God.” (LG 48) We agree in our way of life to follow Christ. Where does his human journey end? As Clare interprets

it, "Bowing His head, he gave up his spirit." (Jn. 19.30) Were it not for invisibility, how else would we completely learn that ecclesial rest can occur only when God is "all in all." (1 Cor. 15.28). Lastly, our experiences of invisibility enable us to share the lot of the poor. It is from within this complete evangelical truth that we are now called to release our energies to love.¹¹

Vitamin Deficiencies and Reform

Ralph Ellison describes how the Invisible Man carries around within himself the contradictions of his own history and the history of the African American community in the United States. Caught between the great promise of the Declaration of Independence and the collective experience of unfreedom, both before and after the civil war, the protagonist lives in a state of ambivalence. He feels within himself the "yes" and the "no" engendered by both the long history of slavery, the larger society, and even his own community. At one point he cries out: "I was caught between guilt and innocence, so that now they seemed one and the same." He must squeeze from this experience a "lyricism of the blues."¹² We too inherit in our social body elements which are products of our own history that shape our current situation. The great historian of antiquity, Peter Brown, writes most insightfully: "The effect of a major breakthrough in the history of ideas is to block all alternative visions of the world. Thoughts that had been thought with dignity and profit for many centuries become unthinkable. ...*And thus each epoch passes on to the next the intellectual and religious vitamin deficiencies created by its own, most distinctive achievements.*"¹³ Vitamin deficiencies, that is inherent weaknesses we carry around in our own social and ecclesial body simply because we are alive can only be understood when we begin with an act of thanksgiving.

(1) An Act of Thanksgiving

We live in a religious world which has experienced a “major breakthrough in the history of ideas” and, I might add, in the history of organizational arrangements and daily practice. We conveniently date this from the Second Vatican Council, and we are familiar in our language and experience with some of its major elements: full participation in the liturgy, the centrality of Scripture, the Church as the people of God, the *sensus fidelium*, collegiality, engagement with the world, the commitment to justice, the dignity of the person, the turn towards human rights, the liberation of those who are poor. And we know, as the Synod of 1971 put it, “while the Church is bound to give witness to justice, she recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes.” In our own experience, this truth has been particularly applicable to the position of women in the Church: “We also urge,” the Synod put it, “that women should have their own share of the responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church.”¹⁴

As an historian and a religious I believe that a concrete experience of this “breakthrough in the history of ideas” also occurred in the charge by the Church to recover the vision of our founders. So many people pioneered a return to the sources in Francis, Clare, and our nineteenth century forebearers. Together we engaged in this rediscovery of the evangelical life. This twenty-five year process which began in 1967 came to a somewhat coherent organizational consensus in 1993 in preparation for the Synod on religious life. The Sisters and Brothers of the T.O.R. published “Response to the *Lineamenta*,” and noted that in contrast to the monastic and apostolic gift, our own tradition could be termed “evangelical, ”

albeit with reservations.¹⁵ Since that time many sisters and brothers have developed the theological and intellectual underpinnings of this tradition. Governmentally, during the same time, we were called upon to write our own constitutions, a task which took almost twenty years to complete: We learned self-governance. In ministry we pioneered work with the poor and mainstreamed the commitment to rights. We focused on personal dignity, participation, collegiality—and many of us experienced these breakthroughs as a liberation from the past, a prophetic anticipation of the future, a new way of being Church. And I believe it has touched the experience, place, and contribution of women most directly, encouraging something parallel to and in reciprocal relationship to the women’s movement of our times.¹⁶ It is analogous to the rediscovery of fraternity and the turn towards solidarity and justice amongst the friars. Can we not say that all of this was a movement of the Holy Spirit?

I hope we can remember that this process has not stopped. Despite short-term appearances, we as a whole Church are still “on pilgrimage,” moving from God and towards God. The Holy Spirit is still working. This is the long view of the history of reform, and one of the first and most important steps is not to allow the Spirit to slip into the cracks caused by short term difficulties. In a culture where memory is at a premium, we need to appropriate our own development of the evangelical life even more deeply. We can do this, I think, by practicing a prophetic action that I would like to name: *the prophetic action of the affirmation of the good*. We have all been participants in something very good and we can for ourselves recite what has, in fact, been accomplished and where in fact it came from. In this way, our memory, the doorway to identity, constructs a truthful world of gratitude which stands unique in a culture of forgetfulness. This starting point of gratitude is a sign of the Holy Spirit. The

issue here is not what we would like to see happen, but how, within the context of our ecclesial communion and in obedience to Church teaching, the whole people of God and we ourselves have in fact moved forward.¹⁷

We know our deficiencies only because we have already tasted the Holy Spirit. This is a good Augustinian principle. Yet I know from my own experience that so often I cannot take this prophetic action of the affirmation of the good, this stance of gratitude, simply because I have allowed the “cares and concerns of this world” to blot out the fact that breakthroughs themselves and my own dear life are always subject to the “law of the incarnation” and “law of the redemption.”¹⁸ Let me say a word about each.

(2) The Law of the Incarnation

Every great breakthrough moves beyond the past; in fact, it makes the thinking and acting of the past “impossible.” Yet, at the same time, the breakthrough carries the past with it and if it is really to establish a “handing on” a “tradition” it must establish continuity with this inheritance. Breakthroughs-become-tradition must receive the past’s wisdom, integrate themselves into a larger institutional whole, and develop ever so slowly a new, more penetrating but still recognizable form of human, Christian, Catholic, and Franciscan life. This organic process is like a new seed planted in a larger forest, taking nutrients from all the soil and the air, and then breaking through hard crust to sprout above the ground. To find the light and fully blossom the new saplings will have to seek the openings in the canopy of the larger trees that give them protection, shade, and moisture.¹⁹ At times, those openings can be very small. Yet without the canopy the sapling will not survive nor last through the winter. This

was the life of Francis with Bishop Guido, Cardinal Huglonio, the canonists, the difficult hierarchy of his day, and the Church of his time; it was the life of Clare with Pope Gregory IX; it was the life of Bonaventure with the secular masters and bishops who wished to dissolve the Order.

In finding a way that made room for the concrete expression of their evangelical life, our founders and foundresses entered into public obedience to the Roman Church and injected into this situation the new life of the Spirit. They established a very difficult religious tradition within the Great Tradition.²⁰ All of them knew well a disjunction between the sacramental and communal-hierarchical structure of the Church and the sanctity of the members who made up the whole Body of Christ. This Body of Christ in their minds and spirits was always in need of healing.²¹ They also knew that the Church was the “custodian of the Incarnation”: in the sacraments, the creed, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the priesthood of all believers, authoritative teaching, ecclesiastical office, the Word of God. Their task, they discovered, in their pilgrimage through time was to make abundantly clear and visible to others that the mystery of Christ and the bond of charity was the heart of the matter. “Enter through the narrow gate,”²² the Scriptures told them. At the time, it was a very narrow gate indeed, one that passed between the gaze of those who made them invisible and the assertion of their own dignity. They chose to go public with a triadic formula: Gospel-Tradition-Catholicity.

We have in our own iconography a beautiful symbol of this process: The Portiuncula is a very small church that engendered a whole new revitalization of the Christian Catholic community. Originally, it was an abandoned Church that still housed the mystery of the

Incarnation. We visit it on pilgrimage, we pray in its small space, we experience its peace, we pray before its eucharist, we see the dying Francis whom it sheltered and the brothers and sisters who gathered around it. We know the story of the fire set by Francis and Clare that could be seen throughout the countryside. Yet, the Portiuncula survives the ravages of time and we are able to draw strength from it only because it is protected, encompassed, stabilized, and to some extent even shaped and shadowed by the larger Basilica of the Great Church. This is the reality of an ecclesial community in time subject to the law of the Incarnation.

(3) The Law of the Redemption

The new spiritual growth receives both vitality and also vitamin deficiencies from the ground in which it is planted and the environment in which it grows. Organic Gospel growth is also a process of supplementing our deficiencies. For two reasons. First, tradition-making is challenging because the breakthroughs, born of the Spirit and fueled by love, as we have seen, always produce for those who carry them experiences of invisibility. In fact, only those who love greatly in word and deed can experience invisibility so deeply, especially from the eyes of those who cannot see their persons. This experience itself is accompanied by internal and external struggles over power and control between the world people have received and the world they wish to create. Second, the breakthroughs themselves, no matter how lofty or intentionally pure, because of their incarnation in time and culture carry within their own bodies hidden forces for invisibility, vitamin deficiencies, that poison the roots of a living Tradition and push it towards its own self-destruction. For example, planted in the soil of a post-conciliar American Church, our breakthroughs at times have forgotten how actions in our

own Church can influence communities of belief in other local churches. Yet we live in a global world. Evangelical breakthroughs, unless they practice poverty and humility, make other people invisible. They must follow not only the Law of the Incarnation but also the Law of the Redemption.²³ They must recognize their own poverty; they must become brothers and sisters of penance.

The real deficiencies that such a situation produces play out not simply in the realm of ideas—theoretically everything can fit together, either on the right or on the left: hierarchy and community, personal integrity and positional authority, individual rights and collective duties, new breakthroughs and continuity with the tradition. Just make your choice: to the right or to the left, please. The more intractable poverties play out on another level. Why is it that the studies I mentioned above, those dealing with the relationships between men and women in the Church, those dealing with the priests, and now our observations and felt knowledge about the hierarchy and perhaps their's about us, all point to an emotional fracturing at a very deep level of the forces for communion between brothers and sisters of the same Body of Christ? We need not judge it; we need just to see it. It parallels the weaknesses found in our society. As James Davison Hunter describes, we live in a culture that reduces public life to political life, privileges grievances, speaks in negations, works by action groups, and legitimates the will to power.²⁴ Reflecting as an historian who is a Franciscan, I think the real danger in this situation is to leave the analysis at the level of an intellectual argument—resolution will occur then only in a struggle over whose public power can make the other most invisible. The real vitamin deficiencies instead lay in the realm of the affections.²⁵ All we need do is look at our own experience.

The forces that make me invisible leave their mark; they wound in all directions and admitting them makes me vulnerable. These forces derail my energies to love by tempting them to settle with disappointment, frustration, isolation, suspicion, anger, the hubris of control, totalism²⁶; once settled, even institutionalized in patterns of organizational rhetoric, my affective home builds its foundation on apathy, indifference, withdrawal, subversion, migration into an enclave of self-reference; finally, a violent wind comes that reduces others to invisibility and my own home to rubble. The result: A loss of the pearl of great price: my stance of the prophetic affirmation of the good; my very self made in the image of God, male and female in the image of God; my internal catholicity or wholeness completely filled with dignity and energies to love; my identity as a human being amongst human beings called to communion with my-self, my neighbor, my present, my past, my future, all creatures, great and small, my God who became a human being for me and who looks on all things and says that they are “very good”, communion within my very human Church. Our vitamin deficiencies affect our ability to sing our collective *Canticle of Creatures*.

Theologically, vitamin deficiencies create bodily openings for the denial of the Incarnation and the Redemption. Once recognized, however, they can be turned towards the good. Crucified wounds become openings in resurrected bodies. In this situation, I am very hopeful. Why?

The Evangelical Life Engages Invisibility and Creates A Living Tradition

In Ralph Ellison’s novel, the *Invisible Man*, we could say the modern man or woman, emerges from the trap of his or her own invisibility and becomes free only when he or she

recognizes it, not as the whole but as part of the human experience. In the embrace of this necessity, a person discovers the possibility of action. “I condemn and affirm,” the protagonist proclaims at the end. “say no and say yes, say yes and say no. I denounce because though implicated and partially responsible, I have been hurt to the point of abysmal pain, hurt to the point of invisibility. And I defend because in spite of all I find that I love. In order to get some of it down I have to love.” And so, in the recognition of the human condition, the energies for life and social responsibility are released. What emerges from the mouth is a lyricism of the blues that creates a new song for the world.²⁷ Beauty enters the stage; I have to love if I am to be free.

For ourselves, we have a tradition very akin to this “lyricism of the blues” when it comes to the institutional Church. Embracing the Gospel and rooted deeply in the vitality of an evangelical reform, we experience ambivalence and are aware of the people of God’s complicity in the patterns that create invisibility. This knowledge “begets sorrow,” as Bonaventure writes.²⁸ Yet in our tradition it is the grace of a sorrow that produces not sadness or laziness but hopeful action and ends in a “yes” to the Church and the world. It issues in beatitude.²⁹ Love not loved cries over the loss of salvation; and the tears wash away the anger and produce the freedom to love again in the pilgrimage of life in the Church. Let me identify, in complement to Sister Marlene’s presentation, how this process works in the evangelical life and how, when embraced, it acts for change. In this year of her centenary I will use St. Clare as a prime example, simply summarizing the major points: **vision, task, temptations, method.**

Vision

The *Legend of Saint Clare* contains two stories of the confrontation between Clare and the “angel of darkness,” “the devil.”

Once in the depth of night, while she was sleeping, an angel of darkness stood by her in the form of a black child and warned her, saying: “You should not cry so much because you will become blind. But when she replied immediately: “Whoever sees God will not be blind,” he departed confused. That same night, after Matins, while Clare was praying, bathed as usual in a stream [of tears], the deceitful admonisher approached. “You should not cry so much,” he said, “otherwise your brain will dissolve and flow through your nose because you will have a crooked nose.” To which she responded quickly: “Whoever knows the Lord suffers nothing that is twisted.” Immediately he fled and vanished.

One time in fact, while she was praying None in her little cell, the devil struck her on the cheek, filled her eye with blood and her cheek with a bruise.³⁰

The first temptation occurs in the night, when all is dark; it reappears again at cock-crow, just before the dawn; the second, during the heat of the day. In both passages, Clare is crying. In fact, tears run throughout her *Legend*. Clare spills “torrents of tears” after Compline; she “taught the novices to weep”; she wept herself during the hours of Sext and None, the hours of the Lord’s crucifixion and death. She “sorrowed” at the sufferings of others. In this context she learned “the Office of the Cross” as Francis “had established it.”³¹ We have to ask: why was she weeping all the time? Is this simply affective prayer hidden from the public

because she so strongly identified with the crucified Christ? I think not. We need to understand her vision of the Church.

Clare is too much a student of the Gospels and St. Paul, she has too great a grasp of the Incarnation and Redemption, not to know that the dwelling place of Christ crucified is his mystical Body on earth. The foundational ecclesiological reality for Clare is not the famous texts of Acts (AA. 2.42-47, 4.32-37), nor the giving of the keys to Peter (Mt. 16.18), nor the contemporary "binding and loosening" given to all (Mt. 18.18), passages that are certainly important but that history has shown are easily capable of politicization.³² Her key passage, as for Francis, was the Lord extending his hands to all of his disciples, despite their roles and different gifts, saying: "There are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is brother and sister and mother to me." (Mt. 12.46-50, Mk. 3.31-35, Lk. 8.19-21) The Word dwells in the hearts of individuals making them members of the same family of God, creating amongst them a familial exchange capable of birthing Christ. In the Gospels, the same reality is captured by other phrases: "He who welcomes you welcomes me, and he who welcomes me welcomes him who sent me." (Mt. 10.40) "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers [or sisters] of mine, you did for me." (Mt. 25.40) "'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' 'Who are you, sir?' 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'" (AA. 9.5-6) Underneath Clare's ecclesiological vision lies a focus on the Pauline metaphors of the Body of Christ in time (Eph. 4.1-16, 1 Cor. 12-4-31): "If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be...can the head say to the feet I do not need you?...You then are the Body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it." (1 Cor. 12.17-27) She writes to Agnes: "I

consider you a co-worker of God Himself and a support of the weak members of His ineffable Body.”³³ \

Clare’s ecclesiological gaze informed by faith is horizontal towards brothers and sisters in all directions. She has actually seen Christ suffering and being persecuted in the Body of His members. (*Legend*, 21; *Process of Canonization*, III.7) She has experienced the “detraction and murmuring, dissension and division” within her own community. (*Rule*, 10.6) She has in fact been kicked in the mouth in her own monastery. (*Process*, II.3) In herself, she has known fear, anger, disturbance, bitterness, care and anxiety. (*Rule*, 9.5, 10.6) She has observed the friars in their internal divisions and escapes from their vocation. Her life has bled in the wake of Francis’ lonely plea for her fidelity. (*Last Will*) She has sorrowed at the news that Agnes of Prague has been in a “yes” and “no” relationship with the papacy.³⁴ She has been made to bear a title she did not want (abbess, *Process* I.6 *Legend* 12) and her own fragility has frustrated her desires for martyrdom (*Process* VI.6, VII.2). She in her God-given personhood has been made “invisible” by the actions of the pope and his curia, by bishops and friars, not once, not twice, but for almost the entire lifetime of her journey.³⁵ The Christ crucified she embraced was not the cloistered one in San Damiano but the one living in herself and in her sisters and brothers in the Church and in the world. She knew the poverty of Christ’s ecclesial body first hand.

Task

Both Clare and Francis intuited that they were called to heal the Church’s disordered affectivities. Their task became the injection into the stable and warring structures of the Body of Christ the way of life and concrete practice of *a medicinal ecclesiology of sororal and*

fraternal affectivity.³⁶ And lest this project be identified as one without intellectual content (as has been done so consistently in our tradition) we must remember that Francis, Clare, Bonaventure and others used all the powers of their minds, all the theological resources available to them, and all of their knowledge of spiritual practices and judicial interpretation to argue publicly for this *medicinal ecclesiology of sororal and fraternal affectivity*. Its technical ascetic pathway was “living without anything of one’s own” and it needed to penetrate every dimension of the Church: its style of leadership, its mode of decision making, its exercise of power, its patterns of relationships, its public presence to the world.³⁷ We can see this work of her life unfolding as she argued and pleaded for her *Rule of Life*, creatively filling old monastic and canonical categories with the new wine of poverty and humility, ministerial service, sororal and fraternal care, and charity. Bonaventure will later note that when the Vicar of Christ “accepted with joy as a gift from heaven this state of life of the poor who preach the Gospel and were to care for the salvation of souls [..], he favored it with kindness...Thus he mercifully provided for the salvation of souls, and, without prejudice to the authority of the popes, he adorned the hierarchy of the Church without disorganizing it.”³⁸

And lest this project be confined to the realm of sentimentality, the heart, and a “soft asceticism”—as Gregory IX once labeled Clare’s *forma vitae* “a milk drink” rather than “solid food”³⁹-- we might recall that precisely because an ecclesial vision of the whole Body of Christ—a grace from above--burned in Clare’s heart, she loved more deeply, knew invisibility more profoundly, and wept more profusely. The humiliating temptations came perhaps, as the *Legend* coded it, from the “angel of darkness” and the “devil”, but the abetting instruments and the occasions were the patterns of invisibility which marked the human beings, the pope,

the bishops, the priests, the men and women who were co-members of Christ's Body. She could not be dissuaded from communion with this whole body.

Temptations

In the *Legend* these experiences of invisibility came so strongly that blood filled Clare's eyes. That is, she could no longer see. But sight and faith were deeply related in her world and in the world of her teacher. Could she see the image of God in the disfigured Body of her Lord? Could she see its disfigurement and still believe in God's presence among men and women in the Church?⁴⁰ She learned to come to the Church through faith in God's creative, incarnate and redemptive love. She learned to see the Church in faith through the energy-light radiating from God's loving gaze. It is no wonder that just a few decades later in more technical language Bonaventure would argue that faith in the crucified, the disfigured body of the Word become flesh, stabilizes the affections enabling us to see with the eye of the heart.⁴¹ Clare also feared her brain would turn to mush and run out her nose: that is, in her confusion, clarity, that wonderful gift of the intellect that is able to distinguish the angel of light from the angel of darkness and perform a prophetic action to affirm the good was in danger of dissolving.⁴² Struck on the cheek, her face became wounded; that is, shame and guilt entered into her heart when she looked in the mirror. And if she stayed on this journey of the evangelical life, the devil argued, in her dear self she would no longer be beautiful but ugly. She would be reduced to "nothing."⁴³ On a very practical level Clare's task became not simply to injection into the Church a form of life that was medicinal for the affections but also to resist the temptations that accompanied her journey.

Such was the ecclesiological vision, its historical task, and its temptations that played out in Francis and Clare. I might add that this same vision, task, and accompanying temptations have been handed down to us, if we read them in their “lower frequencies” (as Ellison would say)⁴⁴, not just in the lives of the founding generation but also in the lives and faith of our own mothers, Angela of Foligno (1248-1309), Margaret of Cortona (1247-1297), Francis Bachmann (1824-1863), Ignatius Hayes (1823-1894), Alfred Moes (1828-1898), Maddelena Bentivoglio (1834-1905), and countless others.

Method

It is important to recognize at this point that the clarity of this vision and the demands it makes on contemporary believers is even more difficult perhaps than it was for Francis, Clare of Assisi, and our nineteenth century predecessors. Yves Congar pointed out over eighty years ago that the institutional Church itself in its bearing and actions in the modern world could easily become one of the great causes of unbelief: “It was clear to me that, insofar as it depended on us, the cause of unbelief was largely related to a poor presentation of the church, to a not very attractive, even repulsive, appearance, one that was wholly juridico-hierarchical. Something would have to change.”⁴⁵ Even since he wrote these words, the situation has become more complex, the power of organizational life more pronounced. We now know more about the politics of the Church—its patronage system, its economic entanglements, its bureaucratic tendencies-- than did Francis and Clare; we see with more acute eyes the long tradition of invisibility, particularly for women. Today, our communications networks and the culture of images intensify our knowledge of the Church’s faults and feed our intuitive

negation; the focus on the following of Christ becomes lost in the very evident fog of ecclesial culture wars; and the truth is we no longer possess the institutional supports the saints enjoyed. And still it is our turn. How then can we become visible? How can we use our freedom to employ the tools Sr. Marlene is giving us and become a living tradition within a Great Tradition. We must act. As the protagonist in *Invisible Man* proclaims” “Without the possibility of action, all knowledge comes to one labeled ‘file and forget,’ and I can neither file nor forget.”⁴⁶

I have already noted the importance of framing exactly what our vision is and the very substantial advances that have been made. While being clear-sighted about the problems, we must commit ourselves to the **prophetic action of the affirmation of the good**. We need to begin by answering the question: What do we receive from the Church, the “custodian of the Incarnation.” We need each other to do that; and we need to appropriate with clarity the breakthroughs mentioned above. I want to conclude with two more suggestions.

My second suggestion is truly a small seed planted in the current desert—but it is an evangelical seed which contains great and long-lasting power because it comes from the Spirit, who is the gift between the Father and the Son. We must never be afraid of small actions done through faith in union with our God. “I am the vine, you are the branches...My Father has been glorified in your bearing much fruit and becoming my disciples.” (Jn. 15.5, 8) The ecclesiology of sororal and fraternal affectivity necessitates a concerted effort to establish mediating structures where bishops, priests, religious, and laity can begin to see each other. Sisters and brothers, we are meant to be saved by each other. Our ecclesiology necessitates

becoming “subject to all creatures” through actions filled with charity. A confrere of mine once defined the Franciscan life in these terms: It is not a Franciscan action if you cannot perform it over lunch with your friends and your enemies. These actions can range all the way from an invitation to or from a local deanery, a spontaneous invitation to a bishop, an offer of a free space for conflict resolution, a catechetical program, a personal visit, a conversation with someone injured—all of which you already do; to an invitation to someone more powerful than us to accompany us and intercede for us in our present circumstances. Let me tell you a story... The moral: In the Church, find your friends above you who can help you. They are there.

Thirdly, the ecclesiology of sororal and fraternal affectivity presupposes the daily practice of personal and communal lamentation through which the tears of our prayers and the intercession of the passion of Christ act as medicine for the healing of our hearts.⁴⁷ In retrospect, we must seriously ask why Francis and then Clare adopted the *Office of the Passion* as a daily prayer—was it not to handle the daily invisibilities inflicted on their souls and bodies? Let’s drop in on *Sext* and *None*, listening not to the words of Francis and Clare but, as they did, to the words of Jesus himself in the time of his passion⁴⁸:

On the path where I walked/the proud hid a trap for me.

I have no means of escape/there is no one who cares for my life.

I have born abuse because of you/and confusion covers my face.

I have become an outcast to my brothers/a stranger to the children of my mother.

Holy Father, zeal for your house has consumed me...

They rejoiced and united together against me,

Blows were heaped on me and I knew not why.

They looked and stared at me/they divided my garments among them/they cast lots for my tunic

In the last analysis, it is the passion of Christ himself that releases our energies to love. The prayer of *None* (vs. 11-13) ends with Jesus proclaiming: "I have slept and risen, and my most holy Father has received me with glory. Holy Father, you held my right hand, led me with your counsel, and have taken me up with glory. For what is there in heaven for me and what do I want on earth besides you." Through Christ's intercession, through he who "in the days when he was in the flesh, offered prayers and supplications with loud tears to God, who was able to save him from death," (Heb. 5.7) we hear again the voice of the beloved, we see again the presence of our God in the condition of being human. He has poured his Spirit into our hearts. (Rom. 5.5) We do belong to God, to ourselves, to each other. Love is with us. Our own history is not lost in the fog of war.

It is true. The actions may appear to be simple: the prophetic affirmation of the good; the small gesture of affectivity; the daily lamentation. But in them, moving forward, we climb the mountain, we share the banquet, we accompany brothers and sisters. And in the presence

of Christ we survey the world and our tiny little Church in it. “They showed her all the world they could see,” the early text reads, and as the brothers and sisters surrounded Lady Poverty, they looked out upon all that is, including the Church, and said: “This, Lady, is our cloister.” It is the *sacrum commercium* and we are free to love again.

¹ “The Sacred Exchange between Saint Francis and Lady Poverty,” in Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., J.A. Wayne Hellman, O.F.M.Conv., William J. Short, O.F.M., eds., *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: I: The Saint* (New York: New City Press, 1999), #s 5-13, 59-62, pp. 530-532., 551-552.

² Letter of August 5, 2011, to Joe Chinnici, OFM, Marlene Weisenbeck, FSPA.

³The civil rights movement lies at the base of all contemporary American liberationist identity movements. See Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left, An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005); for the women’s movement in particular, Sara Evans, *Personal Politics, The Roots of Women’s Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement & the New Left* (New York: Random House, 1979).

⁴ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (London: Penguin Group, 2001), 3. In the introduction to this edition (xvii-xviii) John Callahan indicates the complex relationship Ellison identifies between “history and consciousness” as he links the Invisible Man’s contemporary experience with that of the total chronology of American history. One of the key symbols in the book is the oily iron link from the chain of imprisonment that the man Tarp gives to the Invisible Man.

⁵ Bishops’ Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, “Women Religious and Priests: A Brief Reflection,” November 1, 1985, mss. in author’s possession.

⁶ “Reflection on the Morale of Priests,” *Origins* 18.31 (January 12, 1989), 497-495-505.

⁷ Confer Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986).

⁸ The situation here is well described, although not in this way, in several recent studies. An early exposition may be found in Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974). Most recently see the brilliant description of “fracturing” in Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); and Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive, The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

⁹ Augustine, *Confessions* I.1.

¹⁰ *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents*, “First Letter to Agnes of Prague,” 18, citing Mt. 8.20 and combining it with Jn. 19.30.

¹¹ Cf. the suggestive remarks of Yves Congar, O.P., "Moving Towards a Pilgrim Church," in Alberic Stacpoole, ed., *Vatican II Revisited by those who were there* (Minneapolis, MN: Winston Press, 1986), 129-152.

¹² *Ibid.*, 419, xv.

¹³ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo, A Biography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000 edition with an Epilogue) 505.

¹⁴ Synod of Bishops, *The Ministerial Priesthood, Justice in the World* (Washington D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, United States Catholic Conference, 1972), "Justice in the World," III, p. 44. *Confer Gaudium et Spes*, #29;

¹⁵ Cf. *The Cord* 44 (November 1994), 289-291, and the renewal process itself is described in the same issue, Joseph P. Chinnici, O.F.M., "The Prophetic Heart: The Evangelical Form of Religious Life in the Contemporary United States," *Ibid.*, 292-306. For the historical experience of religious in the United States see Chinnici, "Hierarchy, Power, and the Franciscan Family in the American Church: A Dialogue with Saint Bonaventure," *The Cord* 54 September/October 2004), 222-262.

¹⁶ See for some examples, Mary Ellen Sheehan, "Vatican II and the Ministry of Women in the church, selected North American Episcopal Statements and Diocesan Practice," in M. Lambergits & L. Kenis, *Vatican II and Its Legacy* (Leuven: University Press, 2002), 469-486; National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Co-workers in the Vineyard of the Lord," *Origins* 35 (December 1, 2005), 405-427; Anne Munley, IHM, Rosemary Smith, SC, Helen Maher Garvey, BVM, Lois MacGillivray, SNJM, Mary Milligan, RSHM, *Women and Jurisdiction, An Unfolding Reality, the LCWR Study of Selected Church Leadership Roles* (Silver Spring, MD: Leadership Conference of Women Religious, 2001).

¹⁷ A good example of the approach which is necessary is that of Gregory Baum, *Amazing church, a Catholic Theologian Remembers a Half-Century of Change* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005).

¹⁸ The anthropology here is that of Francis of Assisi, "Earlier Rule," XXII in *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents*, 79-81.

¹⁹ The whole process, often using Francis of Assisi as guide, is wonderfully described in Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011). Cf. also his classic work Yves M. J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966).

²⁰ The tension in this type of situation comes through clearly in the theological framework that Bonaventure establishes. See, for example, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, VII.16-18; or *Breviloquium, Works of St. Bonaventure* IX, edited by Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute 2005), X, where in dealing with the power of jurisdiction he first calls attention to the mystery of Christ's mercy, prudence, and true justice which shape this jurisdiction. The ecclesiology is well explained in Peter D. Fehlner, *The Role of Charity in the Ecclesiology of St. Bonaventure* (Rome: Miscellanea Franciscana, 1965), 160-171.

²¹ *Breviloquium*, VI.6.3: "For diseases can vary, be driven out and recur, but he grades of the Church must remain firm, solid and unshaken." Cf. *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum, Words of St. Bonaventure* II (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2002), IV.5: "As the supreme hierarch, it is he who purges, illumines and perfects his spouse, namely the entire church and each sanctified soul."

²² Mt. 7.14; see *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents, Testament*, 71.

²³ One of the clearest explanations of the theology of history behind the Law of the Incarnation and the Law of the Redemption is Henri Irénée Marrou, *Teologia della Storia* (Milano: Jaca Books, 2008, third edition).

²⁴ James Davison Hunger, *To Change the World, The Irony, Tragedy, & Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). For the comments on human rights see Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

²⁵ This is the difference between the affective orientation of Bonaventure and the intellectualist orientation of Thomas. See the very interesting analysis of the differences between the methodology of affective persuasion and the methodology of intellectual argumentation described in Scott Matthews, *Reason, Community and Religious Tradition, Anselm's Argument and the Friars* (Burlington, U.S.A.: Ashgate, 2001).

²⁶ I am indebted for this term to Robert Jay Lifton, *Witness to an Extreme Century, A Memoir* (New York: Free Press, 2011). The term refers to any political, religious, I might add cultural, environment which manifests “eight deadly sins”: milieu control, mystical manipulations, the demand for purity, the cult of confession, the sacred science, loading the language, doctrine over person, the dispensing of existence 67-68. A critic might say this is characteristic of the institutional Church. I do not believe so. There are plenty of checks and balances to prevent this. I am applying the term to the temptations and threads of totalism which occur across the board in a contemporary environment spawning fundamentalisms.

²⁷ Ellison, *The Invisible Man*, 579-581.

²⁸ Bonaventure, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Works of St. Bonaventure*, XIV, introduction and translation by Zachary Hayes, O.F.M., notes by Robert J. Karris, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, New York: The Franciscan Institute, 2008), IV.22-23 (pp. 101-104). Bonaventure’s evangelical reforming impulse comes out in the following passage: “if the foundation of the Church consists in the knowledge of Sacred Scripture, anyone who is ignorant of Sacred Scripture should be kept from office and ecclesiastical dignity.” (IV.18, p. 97)

²⁹ Cf. II Cor. 7.10. For background on this “grace of sorrow” in the evangelical life see Irénée Hausherr, SJ, *Penthos, the Doctrine of Compunction in the Christian East* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1982), VIII-IX; Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1978).

³⁰ *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents, The Legend of Saint Clare*, #s 19, 30.

³¹ *Ibid.*, #s 19, 21, 29, 30, 31.

³² The absence in Francis and Clare of the monastic model of Acts cannot be overemphasized. It entails a whole different vision of how community and structure fit together. See Giovanni Miccoli, *Chiesa Gregoriana, Ricerche Sulla Riforma de secolo XI* (Firenze, 1966), 255-299.

³³ *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents, “Third Letter to Agnes of Prague,”* 8 (p. 44) for anthropology. See also the important articles by Carolyn Walker Bynum on the eucharist and “body”: “Women mystics and eucharistic devotion in the thirteenth century,” *Women’s Studies* 11 (1984), 179-214; “The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages,” in *Fragmentation and Redemption* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 181-238. For the rise of Pauline metaphors and the importance of corporate models see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother, Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1982), 93-94. The best theological exposition of Francis’ vision of Church remains Thadée Matura, O.F.M., “The Church in the Writings of St. Francis of Assisi,” *Greyfriars Review* 12.1 (1998), 15-33, where he addresses the “mystery of the Church.”

³⁴ Cf. Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.Cap., ed., *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents, The Lady* (New York: New City Press, 2006), 344-464.

³⁵ The best contemporary analysis of Clare’s relationship with the institutional Church is Maria Pia Alberzoni, *Clare of Assisi and the Poor Sisters in the Thirteenth Century* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2004). See the updated summary that also addresses the wider field of the “lesser sisters”: Alberzoni, “Clare of Assisi and Women’s Franciscanism,” *Greyfriars Review* (17.1 (2003), 5-38.

³⁶ See for contemporary reflections Gabriel Flynn, *Yves Congar’s Vision of the Church in A World of Unbelief* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004) on “ecclesiology and affectivity.”

³⁷ For a contemporary application see the wonderful reflection of Yves Congar, *Power and Poverty in the Church* (Baltimore, MD: Helicon, 1965). Written during the Council this book used the mendicant paradigm to argue for a different presence of the Church in the world.

³⁸ *Apologia Pauperum*, XII.8, in Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., translated by José de Vinck and Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., *Defense of the Mendicants, Works of St. Bonaventure* XV (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2010), 331. We can also see this process at work in the *Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection, Works of St. Bonaventure* XIII, QIV,a1, conclusion, QIV, a2, conclusion: pp. 215-219, 231-236. I have tried to deal with some of Bonaventure’s strategies in the Church of his time in “The Impact of Clericalization on Franciscan Evangelization,”

in Elise Saggau, OSF, ed., *Franciscan Evangelization, Striving to Preach the Gospel, Washington Theological Union, Symposium Papers 2007* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 2007), 79-122. See also for the contemporary theology Johannes B. Freyer, "Bonaventure's Anthropology and Ecclesiology as a Universal Approach Towards A Vision of a Globalized World," in Daria Mitchell, O.S.F., Joseph Chinnici, O.F.M., eds., *Words Made Flesh: Essays Honoring Kenan B Osborne, O.F.M., Spirit and Life, Essays on Contemporary Franciscanism* 16 (2011), 123-149.

³⁹ Gregory IX, "Angelis gaudium," May 11, 1238, in *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents, The Lady*, pp.360-362.

⁴⁰ Cf. the very insightful comments of Pietro Maranesi, *L'Eredità di Frate Francisco, Lettura storico-critico del Testamento* (Porziuncula, Assisi: S. Maria degli Angeli, 2009) where Francis' journey of faith involves the discovery of the pluriform presence of God in lepers, priests, brothers.

⁴¹ This is a difference, once again, between Bonaventure and Thomas, with the former relating faith to both the intellect and the affections. See A. Menard, "L'intelligence exhaussée par la lumière de la foi," *Études Franciscaines* XXIII (1973), 227-296; G. H. Tavard, *Transiency and Permanence: The Nature of Theology According to St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1954), 31-55. Cf. for an initial text *Intinerarum Mentis in Deum* 1.10-13.

⁴² Cf. Jesús María Bezunarte, O.F.M.Cap., "Clare of Assisi and the Discernment of Spirits," *Greyfriars Review* 8 (1994, Supplement) for Clare's view of *discretio*.

⁴³ *Clare of Assisi, Early Documents*, "Third Letter to Agnes," 20.

⁴⁴ Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 581.

⁴⁵ "Letter from Father Yves Congar, O.P., *Theology Digest* 32.3 (Fall, 1985), 213-216, with citation form 213. He refers here to his work in 1935 well covered in Flynn, *Yves Congar*.

⁴⁶ Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 579.

⁴⁷ There is a good deal being written about this as an essential form of Christian prayer in today's Church. Cf. Bradford E. Hinze, "Ecclesial Impasse: What Can We Learn from Our Laments?," *Theological Studies* 72.3 (September 2011), 470-495; Michael C. McCarthy, S.J., "An Ecclesiology of Groaning: Augustine, the Psalms, and the Making of a Church," *Ibid.* 66 (2005), 23-48. Our own Franciscan sources build lament in from the beginning. Timothy J. Johnson, Introduction, Translation and Notes, *The Sunday Sermons of St. Bonaventure, Works of St. Bonaventure* XII (St. Bonaventure, NY; Franciscan Institute, 2008), pp. 25-26, 432, has recently called attention to this passage from the scholastic teacher: "For once, when the devil grasped me by the throat and tried to strangle me with such a tight grip of the throat, that I was unable to call out to the friars for help, I began to breath out with unimaginable pain; suddenly overcome by the memory of the Lord's passion, I multiplied my gasps out of compassion for his suffering. As I surrendered, feverish groans began to replace the sound of my voice. By virtue of what took place through the passion of the Lord, I, a servant of the cross, composed this present collection of sermons to praise the name of Christ and to honor his sacred cross, and testify that I was freed from such a cruel death." One can also read in this context Diane V. Tomkinson's fine study, "Angela of Foligno's Spiral Pattern of Prayer," in Timothy J. Johnson, ed., *Franciscans at Prayer* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007), 195-219.

⁴⁸ Taken from *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents*, "The Office of the Passion," 145-146. For commentary and interpretation see Dominique Gagnan, O.F.M.Cap., *The Office of the Passion, the Daily Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi*, *Greyfriars Review* 7 (1993, Supplement); Leonard Lehmann, O.F.M.Cap., "Francis's Office of the Passion," *Ibid.*, 12.2 (1998), 143-168; Laurent Gallant, OFM, André Cirino, OFM, *Office of the Passtion of St. Francis of Assisi, The Geste of the Great King* (Phoenix, AZ: Tau Publishing, 2010).