

Pax et Bonum

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PAX ET BONUM
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Editors: Terry Rogers, TSSF
The Rev. Arthur Wolsoncroft, TSSF

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

All through 1989, as I waited for enough material to come in for us to publish the second issue of **Pax et Bonum**, I found my thoughts turning to a phrase in our profession vow: *I give myself to our Lord Jesus Christ to serve him for the rest of my life in company with my brothers and sisters in the Third Order.....* and I would relax, and remember that we have many, many years to be together. And we don't have to be in a hurry for things to happen. So here, in 1990, is our second issue, almost two years after the first.

Now that all these pieces are here in one place, the images dance before me: The tomatoes and earthworms that guide our thoughts on ministry; William Penn's sword, that could be set aside when it grew too heavy; a desert journey of silence, salt, sun and sand; cleaning out closets as a sign of preparing for death; our selves as locks that God must break open; heartbeats, and the ocean's quiet laughter.

I look forward to the next issue, the next harvest of images and thoughts, whenever, in God's good time, it all comes together. But we don't have to wait for two years. We welcome essays, poems, meditations, stories, drawings and letters that comment on what has been published. As the Third Order in this province will be sending **Pax et Bonum** to tertiaries in Africa, we would be delighted to hear from our brothers and sisters that live there as well.

While our primary purpose is to print the work of members of the Third Order, we are glad to offer in this issue the addresses given by Sister Catherine Joy, CSF, for the Third Order Chapter at Little Portion in October of 1989. Her words remind us of the purpose and the destination of our life-long journey together - the heart-breakingly beautiful vision of the glory of God.

Terry Rogers
Member of Chapter, Area Chaplain

TOMATO SEEDS, EARTHWORMS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Around about March in Newfoundland we start day-dreaming about summer. Balmy thoughts of sun-kissed days and golden fruitfulness help us cope with the blustering chill that is the reality of the season. I found myself borrowing several gardening books this year as if to give some flesh to the hope of summer. One of these books was called How to Have a Green Thumb Without an Aching Back, written by Ruth Stout. Little did I realize when I opened this book on mulch gardening that I would find so much to help me grow in God's garden, the Kingdom!

In her first chapter Ruth speaks about the "reliable mystery" of growth. I tend to take physical growth very much for granted. Growth is an integral part of the natural order of life. But for Ruth growth is something awesome. She asks her readers to consider the tiny tomato seed and then the large, full-grown plant heavy with green, pink and red tomatoes that develops. Ruth helped me become more aware of the sacred in my backyard. The tomato seed got me thinking about the mustard seed and God's Kingdom. How ready I am to accept the "reliable mystery" of growth in the natural world. How much harder that step of faith is in the life of the Spirit. In thinking of the tiny tomato seed and the bright red fruit of fulfillment, I found Jesus at my side asking me to trust the "reliable mystery" of his love, that my little life may bear fruit according to his desire.

One of Ruth's passions is manure. On an Easter Sunday two friends turned up to visit her. One came with a lovely yellow rose, the other with a load of manure. Ruth found it difficult to say which pleased her more! Each gift was so different, yet both were so desirable. Linked with her devotion to manure is her admiration for earthworms. She places the lowly earthworm above the beauty of the sunset or the sweetness of the lilacs or the grace of deer.

As a gardener one can understand her reasons. The humble earthworm is the servant of the garden, quietly keeping the earth in good condition so that the plants may flourish, bloom, and bear fruit. As I thought about Ruth's appreciation of the humble earthworm, it came to me in a flash: What a wonderful picture of ministry is the work of the earthworm.

First, the earthworm is an enabler. It is through the earthworm's activity that the plants are encouraged to be healthy and fulfill their promise. It is as the lay and ordained leadership of the church quietly go about the work of praying, preaching, teaching, caring, encouraging, and administering the sacraments that the people of God are prepared to receive the growth that comes from our Creator, to bear the fruit of Jesus in the power of the Spirit to the glory of God. Like the earthworm, the task of Christians is to keep the soil in which we grow as God's people healthy.

Second, the earthworm goes about her work unseen for the most part. It is often the quiet, faithful work done behind the scenes that prepares the Lord's way in a parish. The quiet, diligent earthworm reminds all who exercise their ministry as baptized persons of the importance of the "unseen" work that they do. As Ruth writes, "You touch the warm, moist earth and it feels so good - so good. You want to be - you hope you are - one half so useful as an earthworm".

Third, when we walk into a beautiful garden we don't think of the earthworms at all. We look at the full blooms and the ripe-round fruit and think "What a glorious garden!" When the people of God fulfill God's desire and love God and their neighbors with the love of Jesus, no one necessarily thinks about those who have worked faithfully behind the scenes. It is the praise and glory of God that captures the attention. "Oh what a glorious Kingdom!" are the words you might hear. Like the earthworm and her

work in the garden, we have done our work well when the beauty of God's glory is recognized in the Church.

Ruth has some interesting things to say on simplicity and on growing old which you may like to read about in her book. I would like to close, however, by sharing her thoughts on acceptance:

"Working in the garden gives me something beyond enjoyment of the senses. I am not prepared to say whether it gives this same thing to farmers and other gardeners, but I am inclined to believe that it does. It gives me a profound feeling of inner accomplishment, no blowing of trumpets. Here is the great mystery of life and growth. Everything is changing, growing, aiming at something, but silently, unboastfully, taking its time.

There is no competition, no criticism in the garden, and yet where, in so small and crowded a space, could you find so many different things, looking, seeming, behaving so differently?

The carrots and parsnips modestly hide the most important part of themselves under the ground. The cabbage becomes a big green ball, the tomato plants make smaller balls which turn red. The corn, it would seem, might frighten the gentle parsley by shooting away up in the air. But the parsley is not afraid.

The corn is not arrogant about its superior height: It doesn't shout, 'Do as I do, you little runts. Be somebody!' Peppers do not ridicule the carrots for hiding in the ground, calling them cowards. The parsnips don't accuse the gay red-and-green peppers and tomatoes of showing off.

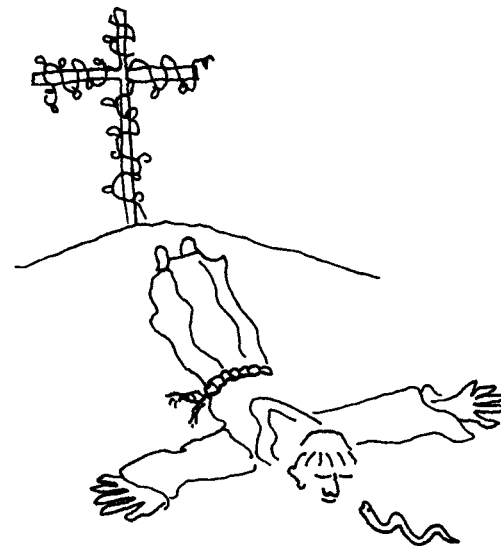
The asparagus doesn't form an organization to fight unasparagus vegetables. It has been in the garden many, many years longer than any of the others, but it doesn't tell a single one of them to go back where it came from. Live and

let live is the motto. Each one does the best it can, unobtrusively, uncritically, and so there is peace in the garden. Peace and the results."

Peace and results.

The story of the garden points me to God's garden, the Kingdom, where love and acceptance are the order of the day. I now pray that I may grow to be as gentle as parsley, as modest as a parsnip, as accepting as a pepper and as useful as an earthworm. In the end, it's not really surprising that a book on gardening should stimulate thoughts of God. After all, Jesus used seed, earth, flower and fruit to do just that.

The Rev. Christina Oosthuizen



Our Mother Jesus
pinioned to the Cross;
back arched in pain,
her blood and sweat dripping
in pulsing rivulets of agony.
This was no easy birth,
"Are you not the Christ?
Save yourself and us as well."
He does not understand
the contractions that contort.
A deep sigh,
"It is finished."
The moment has come -
earth splits, tombs burst,
the curtain is ripped in two.
From her side
water and blood,
new heralds of a birth
that crushes the serpent's head in its coming.
And in the hush angel voices sing:
"Glory to God in the highest
and peace to God's people on earth."

The Rev. Christina Oosthuizen

TALK ONE

The question is - what is it that you and I want to say to the world with our lives?

As Franciscans, vowed to simplicity, chastity, and obedience, what is it that we want to tell people? Why are we doing this - or being this?

Do we want to tell people that it's great to be a Franciscan - that to live simply is a very good thing because then others can simply live?

Or does it mean that we want to say that being obedient to God is a good and proper way to be? Or that chastity is a noble thing, a wholesome way of life?

Are we Franciscans because Francis was a neat and lovable guy, full of joy and song - and the world needs lots of that?

What is it that we want the world to know?

When we think about St. Francis, with his extraordinary asceticism, his miracles, his almost neurotic obsession with poverty; his wild nights and days locked in prayer, hiding in caves and blown about on mountain tops; his passionate absorption with God.....does it tell us only of St. Francis, or do we catch something of the passionate love relationship that God desires to have with each one of us?

Is Francis' remarkable single-mindedness a characteristic of a certain type of personality or a mirroring of the image of our God's own covenant of faithfulness to us?

Is Francis' ability to be so attuned to the created order that he could tame the wolf and silence the birds and cause the

skylarks to soar into the blue sky, their feathers filled with joy, a special gift of an extraordinary man, or do we catch a glimpse of our Creator's spirit that moves through all creation?

Is the daily self-giving of Francis, through bodily suffering and emotional anguish, an indication of a centered, tough psyche - or the face of God's incarnate, sacrificial love?

Is the fact that the world, 800 years later, is filled with women and men who are the little brothers and sisters of this man from Assisi; that the spirit of Francis still calls and inspires - a witness to an unusually charismatic saint or to the mighty power of God's resurrection, alive and active in our world?

We talk much about Franciscan spirituality. More books have probably been written about Francis than about any other saint. Does our talking and writing reflect the man, or his God and our God?

Why have we chosen a vowed life, a Franciscan life? To say something about ourselves or something about God?

I want to share with you a Hasidic story that I first heard Thomas Merton using for one of his talks with novices at Gethsemani Abbey:

"Every lock has its key which fits into and opens its.
But there are strong thieves who know how to break open locks without keys.
They break the lock.

So, every mystery in the world can be unriddled by the particular kind of meditation fitted to it.
But God loves the thief who breaks the lock open.
I mean, the one who breaks his or her heart for God."

Our life is about breaking our hearts for God.....and the vows and promises we made help us to do this;
they help us break the lock;
they help us break our hearts;
they help us break open our souls
and transform our hearts of stone
into hearts of flesh;
the vows help us to let go, to let love, to let God.

It would be a strange answer to give someone who asked you, "What is your life all about?" if we were to reply, "It's about breaking my heart for God.
Curious response."

But it's true, true for Jesus, for Francis, and for us.
The heart has its reasons which reason cannot understand.
That heart wound is what lies at the center of the Gospel.
It's the paradox of the Christian life.
It's the mystery of God, unlocked, broken open.

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TALK TWO

So the journey of our lives is about breaking our hearts for God.
We are people who must break the lock, because God loves the one who breaks the lock.
We reach that point of breaking the lock because we can't find true joy in anything but God.
We are painfully aware, deep down in our bowels, that nothing will satisfy us but God.
We are restless until we rest in God and it break our hearts when we reach that point - because we live in the midst of a world that is unable to satisfy that longing. There is no substitute; indeed, there must not be.
There is only one place to go, only one direction in which to travel.

We have no other choice to make but God, and it breaks our hearts because it is so costly and so desirous.

The Hasidic story has layers of meaning to it; it has a kind of twist to it, because the lock is, of course, ourselves. That which is to be broken open is you and me. The only way to let God in is to break open the door.

Now, if the vows are used only as keys to unlock the door, then we've missed the point.

Remember, God loves the one who breaks open the lock, without keys.

Keys are external things.

We use them, we can manipulate with them, we control them, we refuse to use them and keep things closed just as we choose, while WE remain unchanged, in here, in our hearts.

Vows can be deceptive and artificial.

We can use them to help us to be good Franciscans; to keep our rule of life; to obey the rules; but if our hearts remain unbroken, then the vows are superficial, of no use to us.

Simplicity must be a recognition of our profound poverty in the light of the Source of All.

Our outer simplicity of life style, a reflection of that inner truth.

Poverty means letting go of false images of self;

giving up self-sufficiency;

handing over defences that we cling to and that are obsolete and do nothing but distance us from one another.

Poverty must mean getting rid of all the things, clutter, and excess baggage that we think we need in order to be who we think we are.

Poverty must be standing empty before God in the abyss of our own truth.

Lady Poverty must break our hearts.

Chastity must be the recognition of our own profound self-concern in the light of crucified love.

Chastity means to love transparently;

to ache so much for the good of another that it tears at our hearts;

chastity is to love non-selectively;

to risk unconditional openness;

chastity is to know the pain of Jesus' commitment to love;

to know the loneliness of non-possessiveness, the loving and letting go.

Chastity means to enter into the single-minded passion for God.

It is to be seared with the fire of God's love that burns away all our selfish unlove.

Chastity is the purity of divine desire that breaks our hearts open to respond with love.

Chastity means loving till we stand open before God in the depth of our own crucifixion.

Obedience must be the recognition of our own profound sense of not knowing; of continual discovery in the light of our final destination, which is God.

It is a commitment to live with an unsettling sense of not having arrived yet.

Obedience is to join with God in the dance of our own creation, as together with our Creator we move nearer to the divine image of ourselves.

It is to be broken and reformed.

It is to be clay in the potter's hands.

It is to be fashioned, molded, melted, made anew.

It is to discover who we are - a reflection of God's own being.

Our choice to live more intentionally those evangelical counsels says something to the world about the truth of ourselves in the light of God's relationship with us. And learning the truth about ourselves is usually costly.

To break our hearts for God, then, is really to talk about truth.

The degree of intimacy of our relationship with God is the degree of the truthfulness of ourselves that we bring into that covenant relationship.

To break our hearts for God is to allow ourselves to be known as we really are.

That means that we have to be willing to break the lock.

The vows help us break the lock of our hearts so that we can open the door into God.

The vows help us to let go, until we stand empty; to let love, until we become open, to let God, until we are fashioned in God's image.

This implies conversion, change of heart.

This call to change means grief; it means repentance, compunction, truth.

To break open the lock is to pass through woundedness into healing;

to experience fragmentation that moves into wholeness.

The vows help us to keep faithful to the faithfulness of God's grace at work to strike and heal us.

So we move nearer to answering the opening question: What is it that I want the story of my life to say to the world?

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TALK THREE

What do we want to say to the world with our vowed Franciscan lives?

We live with broken hearts, but more than that.

Our hearts are broken FOR GOD, for God's glory.

We break our hearts to say something about God.

It's the seed lying in the cold earth that brings forth green shoots for an abundant harvest.

It's the bug in its casing, curled up, inert, that flutters forth the butterfly.

It's the sun coming up each new day that pierces the darkness.

It's the deep poignancy of Francis as he severs ties with his mother and father to bring into being a new kind of family.

It's the anguish of Francis living through another's interpretation of his own tremendous vision as he lets go the leadership of his brothers.

It's the heart that breaks to the point of bleeding into stigmatized hands, feet, and side, inspiring a million brothers and sisters into being down the ages.

It's the life-blood of God, pulsing the life-blood of love into all creation.

It's the faithfulness of God, bringing all from death to new life.

It's resurrection, it's glory, it's God.

What we are about, with our lives and our broken hearts, is the glory of God.....the very meaning of human life, that which sets ablaze the heart of Francis and kindles a fire in our own souls.

Our lives, our vows, must be prophetic witnesses to God's glory.

They signify the commitment of our lives to the praise of that glory.

They declare that we have entrusted our lives to the God of Jesus Christ.

They proclaim to the world that God has committed God's very self to us in life and through death.

All that calls forth grace, praise, and thanksgiving, and gives purpose to human lives, becomes a living reality, embodied in our vowed response to God's glorious faithfulness.

Your vows are renewed annually, but profession in vows has nothing to do with chronological time. Life profession is just that. It is the commitment of a LIFE, in all its totality, and the vows provide a framework on which to hang that commitment. The vows help us proclaim that God is worth all the love we have to give and all the risk we have to dare; that we will not be disappointed in our deepest longings in this one and only life we have to live.

Our Franciscan way of life is a profound witness to the way God means it to be. Our vows and promises are not merely part of the package of belonging to an Order but are themselves prophetic, public statements about God.

Thus, poverty must be a way of living which proclaims that God suffices for us and has provided all we need. I believe this was Francis' own understanding of poverty as he embraced Lady Poverty in his own extravagant, literal way. He wanted to make this point about the utter dependability of God.

Chastity must be a way of living which proclaims God's single-minded desire for us. It must proclaim our belief that GOD LOVES US. God is my lover and I am God's. My future and the future of the world lies in God, for when we embrace, God and I, God brings new life to birth in me, which spills out into the world, for love, for harmony, for sacrifice, for new creation.

Obedience must be a way of living which proclaims that God is in charge. God is my frame of reference.

God has hold of my life and wants to form me in the divine image. Obedience is saying "yes" to the person God wants me to be.

In a world of false securities and shallow meanings, such as prestige, material wealth, and power over others, the very insecurity and risk, the breaking of the heart that living of these vows entails, witnesses to God as the one and only true source of meaning; the only one in whom is to be found the ultimately dependable and unquenchable resource.

What then do we want to say to the world with our lives? We want to say GLORY; we want to shout that God is Faithful; With Francis we want to proclaim: My God and My All.

Sister Catherine Joy
Minister Provincial, Community of St. Francis

HYMN OF THE DESERT

Now there is only emptiness for a guide.
The unbroken land gives up no place to hide
All long and wandering shadows on the sand
Which, silent, find their circumscribal end.
The broad and listless journey has begun:
Blank rocks wink at each other and at the sun -
Rocks that will not surrender to this trial
Of silence, salt, sun, sand or serpent's guile.

Such journeying can never navigate
This desert with its circle absolute
Where paths and purposes cannot be found.
The devil leaps up swirling from the ground
To cloud the face from the unmoving sun
Which marks all movement, ended as begun.
This pointless land I cannot penetrate;
Where is the point that sets the compass straight?

Our fathers' law stood rooted in this stone
And never was a varying of them;
They built thick walls in stone to hedge around
Both fear and hope in comfortable bounds
Until the flame leaped from the mountain's peak:
From the rattled stone, we heard the shadow speak
Behind the occult sun's riddle of dread
In shadow's shadow, where mystery is hid.

Where is the power that makes me to stand
A silhouette on the uneasy sand?
Something holds up my spine against its will,
For love or pity, that I may not fall
Into my shadow. What is it that governs
This severe realm whose coiling sands and caverns
Like serpents hungry mouths will never name
Themselves? Are sun and shadow both the same?

The mystery, true enough, is dwelling here,
Whether for good or ill is not so clear;
And this, with all the riddling in my brain
And the seasick choices of this lengthening plain
Has wrapped around all choosing, to embrace
The dizziness of this endless time and space.
This self-contented power has overtaken
The way, and will not stand to see me shaken.

Davis Horner

FIRST STEPS IN SIMPLICITY

When St. Francis was just beginning his ministry, he went with two of his friends, Bernard of Quintavalle and Peter of Catanii, to the local priest to ascertain what the will of God was for them. The priest opened the gospels three times at random and read the following passages:

If you wish to go the whole way, go, sell your possessions, and give to the poor, and then you will have riches in heaven; and come, follow me. (Matt. 19:21)

Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money, nor are you each to have a second coat. (Luke 9:3)

If any man wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; day after day he must take up his cross and come with me. (Luke 9:21)

The first two of these readings inspired in Francis his love for poverty; the third for self-denial. As Third Order members we are not required to take a vow of poverty, like the First Order. Instead, we promise a life of simplicity, so that we may follow Francis while still living and working in the world. Our Rule states: *Simplicity: This is an entire attitude of life that gradually leads to a type of freedom from self and being owned by things. Essentially, it is doing away with whatever is superfluous.*

As a novice, I cannot say that I fully understand what this means yet, or that I am perfect in putting it into practice (far from it), but I will say that after over two years of working with my Rule of Life I am just beginning to get an idea of what "Simplicity" means. And I have been able to formulate two lessons that I have learned so far. The first is: Once we start thinking about simplicity and applying it to one area of our lives, it often starts spilling over and applying itself to other areas of our lives as well.

(And, of course, we can't be sincere in our thinking about simplicity unless we follow it in action.)

Secondly, simplicity isn't the same for everyone - each has to choose his own path, and no one can legislate it for another. Acknowledging that I'm still a beginner on the journey in learning about simplicity, I would like to begin by illustrating how simplicity can be applied to different areas of our lives. And I want to start with material possessions because when most people mention "Simplicity" this is what they mean.

I don't have to tell you, do I, that many of us have more than enough? The United States is the richest country on earth. I teach public speaking at the local college. When I assign a demonstration speech, my 19-year old students may bring in thousands of dollars' worth of equipment to demonstrate: Their personal computers, samples from their antique gun collection, expensive photo and video equipment, electric instruments, and even mixing and recording consoles! Or take the example of clothes. Some years ago I worked at an historic pioneer village set in the Revolutionary War period. In doing research on the lifestyles of the typical citizen of that day, I found out that the average pioneer was lucky to have three outfits. Today the creation of synthetic fabrics has given us more clothing than even our parents were lucky enough to own. Just look at the growth in the size of closets put into homes today. Our family once lived in a house originally built in the 1860s. The original house had no closets. Eventually, a few smaller ones were put in the corners of the larger bedrooms. In a later period, dividers were put into two of the upstairs bedrooms dividing each large room into two smaller ones with a wall for closets. Finally, windows were closed off and hallways split down the middle to put in really enormous closets.

And it is obvious, isn't it, that most North Americans are richer than even those in other countries that consider themselves well-to-do? Living Overseas, a book to help North Americans prepare themselves for an extended stay in a foreign country, states that the typical

American lives like only the wealthy elite can afford to do in other countries. An English family visiting us recently was aghast at the way we waste land - especially at the huge parking lots surrounding our malls and the "unnecessary" lawns surrounding our homes. The majority of people in many foreign countries live in apartments or row houses. Land is simply too precious for any but the aristocracy to enjoy the luxury of a private lawn around their homes.

Now possessing riches is not necessarily bad in itself, nor does it need to be a barrier to simplicity of life. Many modern machines, as we know, are intended to make life more simple for us. It is a good deal easier to throw the dirty clothes in the washing machine than to beat them with stones on the river bank - or even to use the scrub boards our grandmothers had. We must not over-romanticize primitive conditions or confuse modern progress with a lack of simplicity. The truth is that today's conveniences have taken much of the drudgery of life out of our hands. What does this mean to us as Franciscans? Now we are more free than ever to engage in God's service. Our lives have been simplified so that we can do his work.

However, it is true that our possessions can become a barrier to God. When does this happen? When we hoard them, make idols of them, and refuse to share them with others. A wool sweater when we are cold is a good thing to have. Possession of 25 wool sweaters when others are going without is stealing from them. An old Indian belief says that if we both need \$5.00 while I have \$10.00 and you have none, then I must give half of my abundance to you, for to keep it would be stealing.

Let's look at the Hebrew Scriptures, for example. In Genesis we see that God created the world and called it "good". Throughout the Old Testament we see that God gives those who are faithful material possessions to enjoy. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were given cattle, sheep, grain, silver, gold, oil, and wine because they were faithful and obedient. This shows that the material things of this world are good and that God wants us to enjoy them. But there is something else we must not forget. The Patriarches were

given these things not for their own self-aggrandizement, **but so they could benefit the community of which they were the head.** Coupled with these material blessings were laws that told one how to use them: Laws of tithing, laws of hospitality, laws that said one must not forget the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the stranger. These blessings were not given to an individual, but to the community so they could be shared. In the early Christian era (see 2 Corinthians, Chapter 8, for example) we hear of communities of Christians who gave out of their own resources when they heard of the needs of other Christian communities. So wealth is not necessarily a barrier to a Godly life - it means we have been given our possessions as an opportunity to enrich others and as an opportunity for service. Our Principles say: *All will accept that they are bound to avoid luxury and waste, and regarding their possessions as a trust from God, whose stewards they are, will limit their personal expenditure to what is proper to the health and true being of themselves and those dependent on them. They will aim at being free from all attachment to wealth, keeping themselves constantly aware of the poverty in the world and its claim upon them.*

However, most of us have to admit that we don't live up to this ideal. When John D. Rockefeller was asked how much he needed to be satisfied, he said, "Just a little bit more". Are we more often like Rockefeller than like the ideal of our Principles? All too often we buy, not because we need, but because it is desirable and available. The stores hold more items than our ancestors dreamed of. And we buy out of pride and a desire to show off. I remember reading a book when I was an undergraduate that explained why clothing and fashion has developed as it has. We buy clothes to keep ourselves warm and modest. But what happens when these two reasons are absent? The book showed a tribe of aborigines who lived in a tropical climate and had little modesty, so these two reasons were non-existent. What did they wear? They adorned themselves with jewelry and had complex laws about who could wear the brightest beads. Their "clothing" - such as it

was - was simply to show rank. Witness the laws that existed in England and Europe for hundreds of years that specified that only the nobility could wear the gold, jewelry, and rich fabrics and colors. Are we still like this? Of course. I am shocked when my high-school age daughter refuses to wear a perfectly good pair of jeans just because they don't have a designer label. And I must, myself, admit to a fondness for wearing T-shirts that tell where I've been on my vacation. Most of us find it easy to fall into the trap of the advertisements, book and record clubs, TV sales channels, credit cards, clearance sales, magazine subscriptions, etc., all of which tempt us to purchase more than we really need. When will it end? Only when we cease to be tempted by it. G.K. Chesterton once said, "There are two ways to get enough. One is to accumulate more and more. The other is to desire less."

Now our attitude toward simplicity is not restricted to material possessions, but can be applied to other aspects of life as well. How about our use of time? Working women today tend to be over-extended. When we are working, we feel guilty about neglecting our homes; when we are at home, we worry about our careers. I myself am one of the worst offenders. Every time I am asked to contribute my efforts to some organizations, I am so flattered to be asked that I accept. (And isn't this an example of personal pride?) Then I tend to have too many responsibilities and I get frazzled dashing from activity to activity. Yet I don't feel I can drop them because each is worthwhile and I feel I will let people down if I do so. Consequently, I don't seem to have enough time for myself and for my personal and spiritual needs. I wrote to my novice counsellor about this and she sent me a very helpful quotation from a book called In Search of the Spirit by Mary McDermott Shideler: "*We can refuse to interrupt the work we have been called to do when others are imploring us to serve their particular projects - which may be important and urgent, but are not ours.*" In other words, we need to learn to say "no" when people ask us, even though their projects

are worthwhile, if it means taking time away from ministries which are truly ours.

How do we know which projects are truly ours? One way is to ask ourselves whether God or our own self-interest is at the center of them. Remember the story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10? Mary sat at Jesus' feet to hear his words while Martha fussed about the housework and complained that Mary wasn't doing her share. And Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you are fretting and fussing about so many things; but one thing is necessary. The part that Mary has chosen is best; and it shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42). What Mary had done was to put Christ first, at the center of her life. Jesus didn't mean to say that housework is bad, but that God must be first. Perhaps Martha felt that her guest's appreciation of her housekeeping should be first? Perhaps she was trying to impress Jesus? Of course we can never know. (And I must say it's a trap I could easily fall into.) But that is putting ourselves at the center, not God.

When I look at this story I see that it follows immediately the story of the Good Samaritan and the scholar who asked Jesus how he could inherit eternal life. The Samaritan answered the question by right actions. Mary answered it by contemplation - showing that both are necessary. But what we need to do is not simply add devotions on to the top of an already busy schedule, but to schedule God first at the center of our lives, and then let this direct the scheduling of the rest of our activities. Richard J. Foster, the author of Freedom of Simplicity, says:

"For years I loved God and sought to obey him, but he remained on the periphery of my life. God and Christ were extremely important to me but certainly not the Center. After all, I had many tasks and aspirations that did not relate to God in the least. What, for heaven's sake, did swimming and gardening have to do with God? I was deeply committed, but I was not integrated or unified. I thought that serving God was another duty to be added onto an already busy schedule.

But slowly I came to see that God desired to be not on the outskirts, but at the heart of my experience. Gardening was no longer an experience outside of my relationship with God - I discovered God in the gardening. Swimming was no longer just good exercise - it became an opportunity for communion with God. God in Christ had become the Center."

I remember reading the story of a clergyman who said he was too busy to pray until he had his secretary put "Appointment with J.C." every day on his appointment calendar from 1 to 2 p.m. You have to schedule time for yourself and for God as carefully as you schedule your other more obvious demands. And I know how hard this is to do. I find the simultaneous demands of a job and a family to be very taxing. And I know how much easier it is to simply mollify the wheel that squeaks the loudest rather than to tear yourself away for your own spiritual renewal.

There can also be an aspect of simplicity in our relations to other people. I think this means that in our speech and in our relating to others we should be straightforward and direct, without any duplicity. We should not seek to manipulate others or have any selfish underlying motives. We need to learn to accept others as they are; whether man or woman, Christian, Jew, Buddhist, or Muslim, Black, White, yellow or red, heterosexual or homosexual, in jail or free, introvert or extrovert, rich or poor, messy or neat, educated or not. We all have prejudices of this sort. We need to try to identify them and overcome them.

There can also be simplicity in relation to the environment. We are called to be good stewards of the earth, yet the ozone layer is being depleted, we are cutting down the rain forests, acid rain threatens the crops, animals are becoming extinct, and we are surrounded by tons of non-biodegradable waste. Is this the way to live in harmony with all creation?

There are other applications of simplicity as well. What about our eating habits? We can have a healthy diet without it being an expensive one. We can maintain

simplicity in our exercise. Some choices necessitate purchasing expensive equipment. Others - just as healthy - don't. We can maintain simplicity in relation to our entertainment. Do we want the TV to rule our lives? Or can we become more selective? We can maintain simplicity in regard to our work. Are you a workaholic? Or are you lazy? Both extremes put self-gratification first. We need to maintain a balance between work and relaxation.

Although I have pointed out simplicity's application to many aspects of our lives, yet I have not really suggested any too specific means to achieve it. And the reason is that I cannot tell anyone how to achieve simplicity in their life. I can describe what I have done, but you must find the path that is the best reflection of your own experience and life surroundings. People in different occupations and circumstances have different requirements, and the rest of us have to be flexible and understanding towards them. A farmer might need several pairs of work cloths, but could do with one good suit. An executive, however, would certainly need several good business suits for his work. Some couples have large families, others a child with a disability, and others no children at all. A different way of allotting money is necessary in each case. And different people may be ready for a different level of simplicity depending on where they are in their lives and in their spiritual journeys. A retired couple has different needs than a newly-married couple. Each must work out his own approach at his own rate and consider her calling in the world. (You can't even legislate simplicity for your own family, I've found.)

As the Shaker song says, "'Tis a gift to be simple..." I do think it is a gift of God's grace to desire to be simple, and it's something we have to grow into. We can't achieve it all at once. Francis took several years to grow to the point where he could throw off his family (and his clothes) in front of the bishop. We tend to think a child is simple when it is born, but it grows into the complexity of our culture very quickly. It isn't long before we are utterly encrusted with the superfluity of our possessions,

prejudices, and self-interests. It takes real maturity to begin to step back and start to peel it off, layer by layer. Pope John the XXIII declared: *"The older I grow, the more clearly I perceive the dignity and winning beauty of simplicity in thought, conduct, and speech: A desire to simplify all that is complicated and to treat everything with the greatest naturalness and clarity."*

I would like to close by recalling a story about the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania, William Penn. As you may remember, the King of England honored William Penn and his father by giving them land in America. The king also gave the senior Penn a ceremonial sword. When his father died, William Penn inherited the sword which he wore because of the rank and position it accorded him. But at the age of 23 he became a convinced Quaker and a pacifist. It bothered him to wear any kind of sword, even though it was merely for ceremony and wasn't designed for battle at all. So he asked one of the meeting elders if he should continue wearing it. The answer was: "Wear it as long as thou canst, William." I think simplicity is like this. We wear the heavy burden of our superfluity as long as we can, and then we find we are relieved to simply start stripping it off. Remembering the pearl of great price as our goal, we can strip away the selfishness, the possessiveness, the status-seeking, the busyness, the prejudices, the manipulativeness, and grow into a spirit of contentment that results only when God is at the center of our lives.

Barbara Mackey

CLOSETS, PICTURES, AND FOOD FOR THE JOURNEY

It must have been an incredibly difficult and discouraging thing to hear Jesus' words: "Whoever wants to come with me must forget self, take up his cross every day and follow me. For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."

After all, hadn't this band of faithful followers already given up so much to follow him? And now he tells them to take up their cross, a symbol of suffering, pain, and death, and follow Him. To lose their life in order to save it? What did he mean?

In Luke's chronology this is the beginning of a transition in Jesus' ministry. Jesus, who has primarily been teacher up to this point, now turns prophet and begins to speak about his own death.

John the Baptist had already been put to death by King Herod, Jesus had faced death and conquered it by restoring the life of Jairus' daughter, he had fed the 5,000, and had prompted Peter to acknowledge and name Him the Messiah.

It was time, if His destiny was to become actualized, that He needed to start dealing with His own death, and in this I believe we find the core of what we must learn and accept in our own lives today.

I seriously doubt that anyone would have followed Jesus when He first called if He had extended the invitation that we heard in today's Gospel: "Whoever wants to come with me must forget self, take up his cross every day, and follow me."

None of us, I imagine, wants to look toward our own suffering and even death. But this is exactly what Jesus invites us to do - insists that we must do. Because as teacher, He knew that to fully gain life, to live in freedom, we must be willing to lose our life.

Isn't that what it's like with our children? We have to come to the place where we let them go to walk, or run, or play, or have the car, or date, or to go on a trip without us - knowing full well that they could fall, or get hurt, or have a wreck, or even die. But if they are ever to be free, we have to let them go, and if they are ever to return to us, then too, we have to let them go.

At this particular time in my life, I find myself acutely aware of crosses, and maybe you do, too.

I'm beginning to experience the cross of letting children go - the cross of some physical functions beginning to weaken and deteriorate - the cross of ethical questions involving my finances, my wants, my work, and my future - the cross of broken relationships and unreconciled situations - the cross of selfishness and self-interest. (Jesus said, "If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self...")

I don't look forward to picking up my crosses and marching off into the brightness of day with them, but rather would prefer to drag them quietly into the darkness of my hiding places - but Jesus says I must take up my crosses daily and follow Him.

During the past week, I was attending a conference on praying with the sick and the dying. It was a good conference and I think most of us were led to a new and greater appreciation of life. But it wasn't a week without some pain and darkness. For some there were still fresh memories that were difficult to bear, and for others memories that were re-kindled and re-awakened and were still difficult to bear, and for still others there were fears of memories yet to be made, already difficult to bear.

What did shine through all of this brightly was our calling: That if we are to find God's brightness, we have to walk "into the Light", the name of our conference - "Into the Light". We must be willing to face and be responsible for our own journey.

In recognizing the uncertainty and fragility of our life we give thanks to God. We recognize and acknowledge our total dependence on God, and our total responsibility

for our selves. We do, in fact, have to take up our cross and follow.

The Good News is that we are able to do that through the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. These words from Galatians instruct us well: "And so the law was in charge of us until Christ came it is through faith that all are God's children Jew or Gentile, slave or free, man or woman all one in union with Christ Jesus descendants of Abraham, and will receive what God has promised." And what God has promised is that if we take up our cross and follow Jesus, if we lose our life for His sake and the sake of the Gospel message, we will gain life. In the words of a familiar prayer: "It is in giving that we receive, in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

So the question remains: How do we take up our cross and follow Jesus? One way is in our willingness to begin to clean out our own closets. In both a literal and a symbolic way we need to get our own house in order - we need to remove the plank from our own eye before we can help remove the splinter from another's eye.

In the same way that we start cleaning up the environment by cleaning up our own yard first, and by not continuing to contribute to the causes of pollution, we need to begin to simplify our lives from the clutter and the clamor or unnecessary possessions and activities.

We can begin to drag out those pictures that have been piled up in a drawer and start putting them in order and write on the back who they are of and when they were taken - we can start now to pass on some of those special things that we want others to have and to enjoy, while we can watch and appreciate - we can write our will so that those things we need to keep can be disposed of in a peaceful way - we can, more often, tell those we love that we love them - we can say good-bye to people every day in a way that if we never see them again we will know that we really said good-bye - we can simplify our lives and spend more time doing those things that we say are really important to us, and less time with the things that we say

are unimportant to us - we can begin to say "I'm sorry" or "I forgive you" to those people who have hurt us, and to those whom we have hurt, because tomorrow may not come, and then it will be too late, or tomorrow may, indeed, come and we will have blessed time to enjoy our new freedom.

It's interesting to note that if we were to continue our reading in Luke's Gospel that we would next read the account of the Transfiguration. I suspect that the chronology is not by accident, but, in fact, if we are able to pick up our cross and follow Him, to forget self, and to be willing to lose our life for His sake and the sake of the Gospel message, then in a special way we, too, will be transfigured. We will change in appearance and deed, and become dazzling, and will be more worthy to be called God's children, whom God has chosen, and with whom God is well pleased.

So as you prepare yourself to receive the holy food and drink at the altar, think of it as bread and wine for the journey.

I ask you to reflect on your life - to begin to clean out your closets and to pick up your crosses and follow Him who came to free you from the restraints of the law, even at the cost of His own life.

The Rev. David Nard
Member of Chapter, Area Chaplain, Novice Counsellor

AS THE SPIRIT BREATHE

Joy is
a bird soaring upon the wind,
a song borne aloft on a breath,
a leap suspended between now and eternity,
speckles of brilliance on an autumn hillside,
the ocean's quiet laughter,
creation ever moving as the Spirit breathes.

Adrienne Dillon
Novice Counsellor

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SALVATION

If you would cling to Jesus,
There are two times
You must consider:
Your next heartbeat
And all eternity.

Every moment, a new decision:
Eternity is forever.

Salvation is not for the dilettante.

HUMILITAS

Pride hurries, for it has many important things to do.
Humility goes more slowly, for it has much to learn
And God's creatures are very fragile.

Dixie Anne Mosier-Greene

CONTRIBUTORS

ADRIENNE DILLON works as a secretary at a medical school in Boston. She is a member of the Commission on Wider Mission of the Diocese of Massachusetts and is active in the Boston Computer Society.

RIK FITCH lives in Vermont and is a full-time painter and maker of stained glass. His recent paintings have centered on the life and images in the works of Vincent Van Gogh.

DAVIS HORNER works as a clinical counsellor for the chronically mentally ill in Greenville, South Carolina, and is a church musician.

SISTER CATHERINE JOY, Minister Provincial of the Community of St. Francis, was born in London and studied piano there. She was ordained to the priesthood in this country and lives with three other sisters in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, where she serves as an interim priest in a local parish and helps support the community by cleaning houses.

BARBARA MACKEY teaches speech courses at the Penn State Branch Campus in York, Pennsylvania. She was recently an exchange teacher in Southeast Asia. She plays the flute, performs with a local community theater, and volunteers for a listening ministry.

DIXIE ANNE MOSIER-GREENE works as a secretary and teaches freshman philosophy in Stillwater, Oklahoma. She is working towards a Masters in Philosophy and Religion.

THE REV. DAVID NARD, a deacon, works as a chaplain in a critical care unit in Asheville, North Carolina. He plays the guitar and enjoys cooking and researching his Italian and English heritage.

THE REV. CHRISTINA OOSTHUIZEN was born in South Africa and studied for the priesthood in England. She works for the Diocese of Newfoundland in Canada in youth work and Christian education. In the summer of 1989 she was in Namibia as part of a team of international observers for the preparation for the Namibian elections.

Please send material for **Pax et Bonum** to:

Terry Rogers
54 East First Street, #2A
New York, NY 10003