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HERE ENDS THE PROLOGUE

³². This account of miracles is not included in the present volume.

HERE BEGINS THE LIFE OF BLESSED FRANCIS

CHAPTER ONE

ON
SAINT FRANCIS'S
MANNER OF LIFE
WHILE IN SECULAR ATTIRE

1. *There was a man*
in the town of Assisi,

*Francis by name,*¹

*whose memory is held in benediction*²

because God in his generosity

*foreordained goodly blessings for him,*³

mercifully snatching him from the dangers of the present life
and richly filling him with gifts of heavenly grace.

As a young boy,

*he lived among worldly sons of men*⁴

and was brought up in worldly ways.

After acquiring

a little knowledge of reading and writing,

he was assigned

to work in a lucrative merchant's business.

Yet with God's protection,

even among wanton youths,

he did not give himself over

to the drives of the flesh,

although he indulged himself in pleasures;

1. Job. 1:1.

2. Eccles. 45:1.

3. Ps. 20:4.

4. *Ibid.* 61:10.

nor even among greedy merchants
*did he place his hope in money or treasures*⁵
 although he was intent
 on making a profit.⁶

God implanted in the heart of the youthful Francis a certain openhanded compassion for the poor. *Growing from his infancy* (Job 31:18), this compassion had so filled his heart with generosity that even at that time he determined not to be deaf to the Gospel but *to give to everyone who begged* (Luke 6:30), especially if he asked "for the love of God." On one occasion when Francis was distracted by the press of business, contrary to his custom, he sent away empty-handed a certain poor man who had begged alms for the love of God. As soon as he came to his senses, he ran after the man and gave him a generous alms, promising God that from that moment onward, while he had the means, he would never refuse those who begged from him for the love of God. He kept this promise with untiring fidelity until his death and merited an abundant increase of grace and love for God. Afterwards, when he had perfectly *put on Christ* (Gal. 3:27), he used to say that even while he was in secular attire, he could scarcely ever hear any mention of the love of God without being deeply moved in his heart.⁷

His gentleness, his refined manners, his patience, his superhuman affability, his generosity beyond his means, marked him as a young man of flourishing natural disposition. This seemed to be a prelude to the even greater abundance of God's blessings that would be showered on him in the future. Indeed a certain man of Assisi, an exceptionally simple fellow

who, it is believed, was inspired by God, whenever he chanced to meet Francis going through the town, used to take off his cloak and spread it under his feet saying that Francis deserved every sign of respect since he was destined to do great things in the near future and would be magnificently honored by the entire body of the faithful.⁸

2. Up to this time, however, Francis was ignorant of God's plan for him. He was distracted by the external affairs of his father's business and drawn down toward earthly things by the corruption of human nature. As a result, he had not yet learned how to contemplate the things of heaven nor had he acquired a taste for the things of God. Since *affliction can enlighten our spiritual awareness* (Isa. 28:19), *the hand of the Lord came upon him* (Ezech. 1:3), and *the right hand of God effected a change in him* (Ps. 76:11). God afflicted his body with a prolonged illness in order to prepare his soul for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. After his strength was restored, when he had dressed as usual in his fine clothes, he met a certain knight who was of noble birth, but poor and badly clothed. Moved to compassion for his poverty, Francis took off his own garments and clothed the man on the spot. At one and the same time he fulfilled the two-fold duty of covering over the embarrassment of a noble knight and relieving the poverty of a poor man.⁹

3. The following night, when he had fallen asleep, God in his goodness showed him a large and splendid palace full of military weapons emblazoned with the insignia of Christ's cross. Thus God vividly indicated that the compassion he had exhibited toward the poor knight for love of the supreme King would be repaid with an incomparable reward. And so when Francis asked to whom these belonged, he received an answer from heaven that all these things were for him and his knights. When he awoke in the morning, he judged the strange vision to be an indication that he would have great prosperity; for he had

5. *Eccles.* 31:8.

6. The major source of this paragraph is the *Vita prima S. Francisci* of Thomas of Celano, 1, with phrases taken also from 3 and *Celano's Vita secunda S. Francisci*, 7. Throughout we will indicate the major and minor sources of Bonaventure's text with the abbreviations: I C, II C, III C and Jul. for respectively Celano's *Vita prima*, *Vita secunda* and *Tractatus de miraculis*, and the *Vita S. Francisci* of Julian of Speyer. Related sources from which Bonaventure did not draw verbatim are indicated by *cf.*; for example, *cf.* here I C 23; II C 102.

7. Major sources: I C 17; II C 196; minor sources: I C 22; II C 5.

8. This incident is not found in Celano or Julian.

9. Major source: II C 3; minor sources: II C 4; I C 2; Jul. 2; I C 3.

no experience in interpreting divine mysteries nor did he know how to pass through visible images to grasp the invisible truth beyond. Therefore, still ignorant of God's plan, he decided to join a certain count in Apulia, hoping in his service to obtain the glory of knighthood, as his vision seemed to foretell.

He set out on his journey shortly afterwards; but when he had gone as far as the next town, he heard during the night the Lord address him in a familiar way, saying: "Francis, who can do more for you, a lord or a servant, a rich man or a poor man?" When Francis replied that a lord and a rich man could do more, he was at once asked: "Why, then, are you abandoning the Lord for a servant and the rich God for a poor man?" And Francis replied: "Lord, what will you have me do?" (Acts 9:6). And the Lord answered him: "Return to your own land (Gen. 32:9), because the vision which you have seen foretells a spiritual outcome which will be accomplished in you not by human but by divine planning." In the morning (John 21:4), then, he returned in haste to Assisi, joyous and free of care; already a model of obedience, he awaited the Lord's will.¹⁰

4. From that time on he withdrew from the bustle of public business and devoutly begged God in his goodness to show him what he should do. The flame of heavenly desire was fanned in him by his frequent prayer, and his desire for his heavenly home led him to *despise as nothing* (Cant. 8:7) all earthly things. He realized that he had found a *hidden treasure*, and like the wise merchant he planned to *sell all he had* and to buy the *pearl he had found* (Matt. 13:44-46). Nevertheless, how he should do this, he did not yet know; but it was being suggested to him inwardly that to be a spiritual merchant one must begin with contempt for the world and to be a knight of Christ one must begin with victory over one's self.¹¹

5. One day while he was riding on horseback through the plain that lies below the town of Assisi, he came upon a leper.

This unforeseen encounter struck him with horror. But he recalled his resolution to be perfect and remembered that he must first conquer himself if he wanted to become a knight of Christ.¹² He slipped off his horse and ran to kiss the man. When the leper put out his hand as if to receive some alms, Francis gave him money and a kiss. Immediately mounting his horse, Francis looked all around; but although the open plain stretched clear in all directions, he could not see the leper anywhere. Filled with wonder and joy, he began devoutly to sing God's praises, resolving from this always to strive to do greater things in the future.¹³

After that he began to seek out solitary places, well suited for sorrow; and there he prayed incessantly with *unutterable groanings* (Rom. 8:26). After long and urgent prayer, he merited to be heard by the Lord. One day while he was praying in such a secluded spot and became totally absorbed in God through his extreme fervor, Jesus Christ appeared to him fastened to the cross. Francis's *soul melted* (Cant. 5:6) at the sight, and the memory of Christ's passion was so impressed on the innermost recesses of his heart that from that hour, whenever Christ's crucifixion came to his mind, he could scarcely contain his tears and sighs, as he later revealed to his companions when he was approaching the end of his life. Through this the man of God understood as addressed to himself the Gospel text: *If you wish to come after me, deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me* (Matt. 16:24).¹⁴

6. From that time on he clothed himself with a spirit of poverty, a sense of humility and a feeling of intimate devotion. Formerly he used to be horrified not only by close dealing with lepers but by their very sight, even from a distance; but now he

12. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:3.

13. Major source: II C 9; minor source: I C 16.

14. Major source II C 10-11; minor sources: II C 9; III C 2. In the present account Bonaventure uses phrases from Celano's version of the vision at San Damiano, II C 10-11, although this is a different incident. Cf. II, 1, p. 191.

10. Major sources: I C 5; II C 6; minor sources: I C 17; Jul. 3.

11. Major source: I C 6; minor source: Jul. 3.

rendered humble service to the lepers with human concern and devoted kindness in order that he might completely despise himself, because of Christ crucified, who according to the text of the prophet was despised *as a leper* (Isa. 53:3). He visited their houses frequently, generously distributed alms to them and with great compassion kissed their hands and their mouths.¹⁵

To beggars he wished to give not only his possessions but his very self. At times he took off his clothes, at times unstitched them, at times ripped them in pieces, in order to give them to beggars, when he had nothing else at hand. He came to the assistance of poor priests, reverently and devoutly, especially in adorning the altar. In this way he became a participant in the divine worship, while supplying the needs of its celebrants. During this period of time he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Peter, where he saw a large number of the poor before the entrance of the church. Led partly by the sweetness of his devotion, partly by the love of poverty, he gave his own clothes to one of the neediest among them. Then he dressed in the poor man's rags and spent that day in the midst of the poor with an unaccustomed joy of spirit. This he did in order to spurn worldly glory and, by ascending in stages, to arrive at the perfection of the Gospel.¹⁶

He paid great attention
to the mortification of the flesh
so that he might carry externally in his body
the cross of Christ
which he carried internally in his heart.
Francis, the man of God,
did all these things
when he was not yet withdrawn
from the dress and life of the world.

15. Major sources: I C 17; II C 9; minor source: Jul. 12.

16. Major source: II C 8; minor source: I C 16.

CHAPTER TWO

ON HIS PERFECT CONVERSION TO GOD

AND HIS RESTORATION OF THREE CHURCHES

1. Francis,
the servant of the Most High,
had no other teacher in these matters
except Christ,
whose kindness was shown once more
by visiting him with the sweetness of grace.

One day when Francis *went out to meditate in the fields* (Gen. 24:63), he walked beside the church of San Damiano which was threatening to collapse because of extreme age. Inspired by the Spirit, he went inside to pray. Prostrate before an image of the Crucified, he was filled with no little consolation as he prayed. While his tear-filled eyes were gazing at the Lord's cross, he heard with his bodily ears a voice coming from the cross, telling him three times: "Francis, go and repair my house which, as you see, is falling completely into ruin."

Trembling with fear, Francis was amazed at the sound of this astonishing voice, since he was alone in the church; and as he received in his heart the power of the divine words, he fell into a state of ecstasy. Returning finally to his senses, he prepared to obey, gathering himself together to carry out the command of repairing the church materially, although the principal intention of the words referred to that Church which *Christ purchased with his own blood* (Acts 20:28), as the Holy

Spirit taught him and as he himself later disclosed to the friars.¹

He rose then, made the sign of the cross, and taking some cloth to sell, hurried off to the town called Foligno. There he sold all he had brought with him, and, lucky merchant that he was, even sold the horse he was riding. Returning to Assisi, he reverently entered the church which he had been commanded to repair. When he found the poor priest there, he greeted him with fitting reverence, offered him money for the repairs on the church and for the poor, and humbly requested that the priest allow him to stay with him for a time. The priest agreed to his staying there but would not accept the money out of fear of his parents. True despiser of money that he was, Francis threw it on a window sill, valuing it no more than if it were dust.²

2. When his father learned that the servant of God was staying with this priest, he was greatly disturbed and ran to the place. But Francis, upon hearing about the threats of those who were pursuing him and having a premonition that they were approaching, wished to *give place to wrath* (Rom. 12:19), and hid himself—being still untrained as an athlete of Christ—in a secret pit. There he remained in hiding for some days, imploring the Lord incessantly with a flood of tears to *deliver him from the hands of those who were persecuting his soul* (Ps. 30:16; 108:31; 141:7) and in his kindness to bring to realization the pious desires he had inspired. He was then filled with excessive joy and began to accuse himself of cowardice. He cast aside his fear, left the pit and took the road to the town of Assisi. When the townspeople saw his unkempt face and his changed mentality, they thought that he had gone out of his senses. They threw filth from the streets and stones at him, shouting insults at him, as if he were insane and out of his mind. But the Lord's servant passed through it as if he were deaf to it all, unbroken and unchanged by any of these insults. When his father heard

1. Major source: II C 10; minor sources: I C 8; II C 9; III C 2; II C 11.

2. Major source: I C 8-9; minor source: Jul. 6.

the shouting, he ran to him at once, not to save him but to destroy him. Casting aside all compassion, he dragged him home, tormenting him first with words, then with blows and chains. But this made Francis all the more eager and stronger to carry out what he had begun, as he recalled the words of the Gospel: *Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. 5:10).³

3. After a little while, when his father went out of the country, his mother, who did not approve what her husband had done and had no hope of being able to soften her son's inflexible constancy, released him from his chains and permitted him to go away. He gave thanks to Almighty God and went back to the place where he had been before. Returning and not finding him at home, his father violently reproached his wife and in rage ran to that place. If he could not bring Francis back home, he would at least drive him out of the district. But strengthened by God, Francis went out on his own accord to meet his furious father, calling out in a clear voice that he cared nothing for his chains and blows. Besides, he stated that he would gladly undergo any evil for the name of Christ. When his father, therefore, saw that he could not bring him around, he turned his attention to getting his money back. When he finally found it thrown on the window sill, his rage was mitigated a little, and the thirst of his avarice was somewhat alleviated by the draught of money.⁴

4. Thereupon his carnally minded father led this child of grace, now stripped of his money, before the bishop of the town. He wanted to have Francis renounce into his hands his family possessions and return everything he had. A true lover of poverty, Francis showed himself eager to comply; he went before the bishop without delaying or hesitating. He did not wait for any words nor did he speak any, but immediately took off his clothes and gave them back to his father. Then it was

3. Major source: I C 10-12; minor source: Jul. 8.

4. Major source: I C 13-14; minor source: Jul. 8.

discovered that the man of God had a hairshirt next to his skin under his fine clothes. Moreover, drunk with remarkable fervor, he even took off his underwear, stripping himself completely naked before all. He said to his father: "Until now I have called you father here on earth, but now I can say without reservation, *Our Father who art in heaven* (Matt. 6:9), since I have placed all my treasure and all my hope in him." When the bishop saw this, he was amazed at such intense fervor in the man of God. He immediately stood up and in tears drew Francis into his arms, covering him with the mantle he was wearing, like the pious and good man that he was. He bade his servants give Francis something to cover his body. They brought him a poor, cheap cloak of a farmer who worked for the bishop. Francis accepted it gratefully and with his own hand marked a cross on it with a piece of chalk, thus designating it as the covering of a crucified man and a half-naked beggar.

Thus the servant of the Most High King

was left naked

so that he might follow

his naked crucified Lord, whom he loved.

Thus the cross strengthened him

to entrust his soul

to the wood of salvation

that would save him from the shipwreck of the world.⁵

5. Released now from the chains of all earthly desires, this despiser of the world left the town and in a carefree mood sought out a hidden place of solitude where alone and in silence he could hear the secrets God would convey to him. While Francis, the man of God, was making his way through a certain forest, merrily singing praises to the Lord in the French lan-

5. Cf. *Wisd.* 14:1-7. Major sources: I C 15; II C 12; minor sources: I C 13; II C 3; *Jul.* 10. Cf. II C 214; on the theme of nakedness, cf. XIV, 3-4, pp. 317-318.

guage, robbers suddenly rushed upon him from an ambush. When they asked in a brutal way who he was, the man of God, filled with confidence, replied with these prophetic words: "I am the herald of the great King." But they struck him and hurled him into a ditch filled with snow, saying: "Lie there, you hick herald of God!" When they went away, he jumped out of the ditch, and brimming over with joy, in a loud voice began to make the forest resound with the praises of the Creator of all.⁶

6. Coming to a certain neighboring monastery, he asked for alms like a beggar and received it—unrecognized and subjected to contempt. Setting out from there, he came to Gubbio, where he was recognized and welcomed by a former friend and given a poor little tunic, like one of Christ's little poor. From there the lover of complete humility went to the lepers and lived with them, serving them all most diligently for God's sake. He washed their feet, bandaged their ulcers, drew the pus from their wounds and washed out the diseased matter; he even kissed their ulcerous wounds out of his remarkable devotion, he who was soon to be a physician of the Gospel.⁷ As a result, he received such power from the Lord that he had miraculous effectiveness in healing spiritual and physical illnesses. I will cite one case among many, which occurred after the fame of the man of God became more widely known. There was a man in the vicinity of Spoleto whose mouth and cheek were being eaten away by a certain horrible disease. He could not be helped by any medical treatment and went on a pilgrimage to implore the intercession of the holy apostles. On his way back from visiting their shrines, he happened to meet God's servant. When out of devotion he wanted to kiss Francis's footprints, that humble man, refusing to allow it, kissed the mouth of the one who wished to kiss his feet. In his remarkable compassion Francis, the servant of lepers, touched

6. Major source: I C 16; minor source: I C 91.

7. Cf. *Luke* 10:30-37. Major source: I C 16-17.

that horrible sore with his holy mouth, and suddenly every sign of the disease vanished and the sick man recovered the health he longed for. I do not know which of these we should admire more: the depth of his humility in such a compassionate kiss or his extraordinary power in such an amazing miracle.⁸

7. Grounded now in the humility of Christ, Francis recalled to mind the command enjoined upon him from the cross, to repair the church of San Damiano. As a truly obedient man, he returned to Assisi to obey the divine command at least by begging aid. Putting aside all embarrassment out of love of Christ poor and crucified, he begged from those among whom he used to show his wealth, and he loaded stones upon his body that was weakened by fasting. With God's help and the devoted assistance of the citizens, he completed repairs on the church. After this work, to prevent his body from becoming sluggish with laziness, he set himself to repair a certain church of St. Peter some distance from the town, because of the special devotion which, in his pure and sincere faith, he bore to the prince of the apostles.⁹

8. When he finally completed this church, he came to a place called the Portiuncula where there was a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mother of God, built in ancient times but now deserted and cared for by no one. When the man of God saw how it was abandoned, he began to live there in order to repair it, moved by the fervent devotion he had toward the Lady of the world. According to the name of the church, which since ancient times was called St. Mary of the Angels, he felt that angels often visited there. So he took up residence there out of his reverence for the angels and his special love for the mother of Christ. The holy man loved this spot more than any other in the world. For here he began humbly, here he progressed steadily, here he ended happily. At his death he commended it to the friars as a place most dear to the Virgin.

8. This incident is not found in Celano or Julian.

9. Major sources: II C 13-14; I C 21.

Before his conversion, a certain friar, devoted to God, had a vision about this church which is worth relating. He saw a large group of men who had been struck blind, kneeling in a circle about this church, their faces turned to heaven. With uplifted hands and tearful voices, they were crying out to God, begging that he have pity on them and grant them sight. And behold, a splendrous light came down from heaven and spread over them all, giving to each his sight and the health they had longed for.

This is the place where the Order of Friars Minor was begun by Saint Francis under the inspiration of divine revelation. For at the bidding of divine providence which guided Christ's servant in everything, he physically repaired three churches before he began the Order and preached the Gospel.

This he did not only to ascend in an orderly progression from the sensible realm to the intelligible, from the lesser to the greater, but also to symbolize prophetically in external actions perceived by the senses what he would do in the future.

For like the three buildings he repaired, so Christ's Church— with its threefold victorious army of those who are to be saved—¹⁰ was to be renewed under his leadership in three ways:

10. This is an allusion to the three orders which Francis founded: the first order of Friars Minor; the second of Poor Clares; and the Third Order of those living in the world.

by the structure, rule and teaching
which he would provide.

And now we see
that this prophecy has been fulfilled.¹¹

CHAPTER THREE ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE ORDER AND THE APPROVAL OF THE RULE

1. While her servant Francis
was living in the church of the Virgin Mother of God,
he prayed to her
who had conceived *the Word full of grace and truth*,¹
imploping her with continuous sighs
to become his advocate.

Through the merits
of the Mother of Mercy,
he conceived and brought to birth
the spirit of the truth of the Gospel.

One day when he was devoutly hearing a Mass of the Apostles, the Gospel was read in which Christ sends forth his disciples to preach and explains to them the way of life according to the Gospel: that they *should not keep gold or silver or money in their belts, nor have a wallet for their journey, nor two tunics, nor shoes, nor staff* (Matt. 10:9). When he heard this, he grasped its meaning and committed it to memory. This lover of apostolic poverty was then filled with an indescribable joy and said: "This is what I want; this is what I long for with all my heart." He immediately took off his shoes from his feet, put aside his staff, cast away his wallet and money as if accursed, was content with one tunic and exchanged his leather belt for a piece of rope. He directed all his heart's desire to carry out what he had

¹¹. Major source: I C 21; II C 18-20; I C 37; minor source: Jul. 14.

¹. John 1:14.

Bernard's plan with a threefold testimony. The book opened the first time to the text: *If you will be perfect, go, sell all that you have, and give to the poor* (Matt. 19:21). The second time to the text: *Take nothing on your journey* (Luke 9:3). And the third time to: *If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me* (Matt. 16:24). "This is our life and our rule," the holy man said, "and the life and the rule of all who wish to join our company. Go, then, if you wish to be perfect (Matt. 19:21) and carry out what you have heard."⁵

4. Not long afterwards five other men were called by the same Spirit, and the number of Francis's sons reached six. The third among them was the holy father Giles,⁶ a man indeed filled with God and worthy of his celebrated reputation. Although he was a simple and unlearned man, he later became famous for his practice of heroic virtue, as God's servant had prophesied, and was raised to the height of exalted contemplation. For through the passage of many years, he strove without ceasing to direct himself toward God; and he was so often rapt into God in ecstasy, as I myself have observed as an eyewitness, that he seemed to live among men more like an angel than a human being.⁷

5. Also at that time a certain priest of the town of Assisi, named Silvester, an upright man, was shown a vision by the Lord which should not be passed over in silence. Reacting in a purely human way, he had developed an abhorrence for the way Francis and his friars were going. But then he was visited by grace from heaven in order to save him from the danger of rash judgment. For he saw in a dream the whole town of Assisi encircled by a *huge dragon* (Dan. 14:22) which threatened to destroy the entire area by its enormous size. Then he saw coming from Francis's mouth a golden cross whose top touched

heard and to conform in every way to the rule of right living given to the apostles.²

2. Under divine inspiration the man of God now began to strive after Gospel perfection and invite others to penance. His words were not empty or joking, but full of the power of the Holy Spirit; they penetrated to the innermost depths of the heart, causing his hearers to be filled with amazement. In all his preaching, he proclaimed peace, saying: "*May the Lord give you peace*" (Matt. 10:12; Luke 10:5), as the greeting to the people at the beginning of his sermon. As he later testified, he had learned this greeting in a revelation from the Lord.³ Hence, according to the words of a prophet and inspired by the spirit of the prophets, he proclaimed peace, preached salvation and by his salutary warnings united in a bond of true peace many who had previously been in opposition to Christ and far from salvation.⁴

3. When the truth of his simple teaching and his way of life became widely known, certain men began to be inspired to live a life of penance. Leaving everything, they joined him in his way of life and dress. The first among these was Bernard, a venerable man, who was made a *sharer* in a divine *vocation* (Heb. 3:1) and merited to be the firstborn son of our blessed father, both in priority of time and in the gift of holiness. When he discovered for himself the holiness of Christ's servant and decided to despise the world completely after his example, he sought his advice on how to carry this out. On hearing this, God's servant was filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit over the conception of his first child. "We must ask God's advice about this," he said. In the morning they went to the church of Saint Nicholas, where they said some preliminary prayers; then Francis, who was devoted to the Trinity, opened the book of the Gospel three times, asking God to confirm

2. Major source: I C 22; minor sources: I C 21; II C 198; Jul. 15.
3. Cf. *Testamentum*, 5.

4. Cf. Isa. 52:7. Major source: I C 23-24.

5. Major source: II C 15; minor sources: Jul. 17; I C 24, 92.

6. He died near Perugia on April 22, 1262, while Bonaventure was writing the present work.

7. Minor source: I C 25.

heaven and whose arms stretched far and wide and seemed to extend to the ends of the world. At the sight of its shining splendor, the foul and hideous dragon was put to flight. When he had seen this vision for the third time and realized that it was a divine revelation, he told it point by point to the man of God and his friars. Not long afterwards he left the world and followed in the footsteps of Christ with such perseverance that his life in the Order confirmed the authenticity of the vision which he had had in the world.⁸

6. On hearing of this vision, the man of God was not carried away by human glory; but recognizing God's goodness in his gifts, was more strongly inspired to put to flight our ancient enemy with his cunning and to preach the glory of the cross of Christ. One day while he was weeping as he *looked back over his past years in bitterness* (Isa. 38:15), the joy of the Holy Spirit came over him and he was assured that all of his sins had been completely forgiven. Then he was rapt in ecstasy and totally absorbed in a wonderful light, his heart was expanded and he clearly saw what would transpire for him and his sons in the future. After this he returned to the friars and said: "*Take strength, my beloved ones, and rejoice in the Lord* (Eph. 6:10; Phil. 3:1, 4:4). Do not be sad because you are few in number, nor afraid because of my simplicity or yours. For as the Lord has shown me in truth, God will make us grow into a great multitude and will cause us to expand in countless ways by the grace of his blessing.⁹

7. At the same time, another good man entered the Order, bringing the number of Francis's sons to seven. Then like a devoted father, Francis gathered all his sons around him and explained to them many things concerning the kingdom of God, contempt for the world, the renunciation of their own wills and the mortification of their bodies. Then he disclosed to

8. Major source: II C 109; but the dragon is not found in Celano's account of the vision. On Silvester, cf. VI, 9 and XII, 2, pp. 236, 294.

9. Major source: I C 26-27; minor source: Jul. 18.

them his plan to send them to the four corners of the world. For already the lowly and seemingly *sterile* simplicity of our holy father had *brought to birth* (1 Kings 2:5) seven sons. And now he wished to call all the faithful of the world to repentance and to bring them to birth in Christ the Lord. "Go," said the gentle father to his sons, "proclaim peace to men and *preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins* (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Be patient in trials, watchful in prayer, strenuous in work, moderate in speech, reserved in manner and grateful for favors, because for all this an eternal kingdom is being prepared for you." The friars humbly cast themselves on the ground before God's servant and received the command of obedience in a spirit of joy. Then he said to each one of them individually: "*Cast your care upon the Lord and he will support you*" (Ps. 54:23). This is what he used to say whenever he sent a friar somewhere under obedience.

Francis knew he should give an example to others, and wanted to practice what he preached; so he himself set out in one direction with one of his companions. The remaining six he sent in the other three directions, thus forming the pattern of a cross. After a short time had passed, the loving father longed for the presence of his dear children; and since he could not summon them himself, he prayed that this should be done by God, who *gathers together the dispersed of Israel* (Ps. 146:2). It happened that, just as he wished, they all came together shortly afterwards quite unexpectedly and much to their surprise, through the kindness of divine providence, without being summoned in any human way. During those days four upright men joined them, increasing their number to twelve.¹⁰

8. Seeing that the number of friars was gradually increasing, Christ's servant wrote in simple words a rule of life for himself and his friars. He based it on the unshakable foundation of the observance of the Gospel and added a few other

10. Major source: I C 29-30; minor source: Jul. 19-20.

things that seemed necessary for their way of life in common. He very much wanted to have what he had written approved by the Supreme Pontiff; so he decided to go with his band of simple men before the presence of the Apostolic See, placing his trust solely in God's guidance. From on high God looked with favor upon his desire and comforted the souls of his companions who were frightened at the thought of their simplicity, by showing him the following vision. It seemed to him that he was walking along a certain road beside which stood a very tall tree. Drawing near, he stood under it and marveled at its height. Suddenly he was lifted up by divine power to such a height that he was able to touch the top of the tree and very easily bend it down to the ground. Filled with God, he realized that the vision was a prophecy of how the Apostolic See, with all its dignity, would show him condescension; and he was overjoyed. He encouraged his friars in the Lord and set out with them on the journey.¹¹

9. When he arrived in Rome, he was led into the presence of the Supreme Pontiff. The Vicar of Christ was in the Lateran Palace, walking in a place called the Hall of the Mirror, occupied in deep meditation. Knowing nothing of Christ's servant, he sent him away indignantly. Francis left humbly, and the next night God showed the Supreme Pontiff the following vision. He saw a palm tree sprout between his feet and grow gradually until it became a beautiful tree. As he wondered what this vision might mean, the divine light impressed upon the mind of the Vicar of Christ that this palm tree symbolized the poor man whom he had sent away the previous day. The next morning he commanded his servants to search the city for the poor man. When they found him near the Lateran at St. Anthony's hospice, he ordered him brought to his presence without delay.¹²

11. Major source: I C 32-33; minor source: Jul. 21.

12. The above paragraph, except for the first sentence, was added to Bonaventure's text by Jerome of Ascoli, Minister General of the Order, 1274-1279, and later Pope Nicholas IV. He learned of it from Cardinal Riccardo degli Annibaldi, a relative of Innocent III; cf. *Chron. 24 General. in Analecta franciscana*, III, 365.

When he was led before the Supreme Pontiff, Francis explained his plan, humbly and urgently imploring him to approve the rule of life mentioned above. Now the Vicar of Christ, Innocent III, was a man famous for his wisdom; and when he saw in the man of God such remarkable purity and simplicity of heart, such firmness of purpose and such fiery ardor of will, he was inclined to give his assent to the request. Yet he hesitated to do what Christ's little poor man asked because it seemed to some of the cardinals to be something novel and difficult beyond human powers. There was among the cardinals a most venerable man, John of St. Paul, bishop of Sabina, a lover of holiness and helper of Christ's poor. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he said to the Supreme Pontiff and his brother cardinals: "If we refuse the request of this poor man as novel or too difficult, when all he asks is to be allowed to lead the Gospel life, we must be on our guard lest we commit an offense against Christ's Gospel. For if anyone says that there is something novel or irrational or impossible to observe in this man's desire to live according to the perfection of the Gospel, he is guilty of blasphemy against Christ, the author of the Gospel." At this observation, the successor of the Apostle Peter turned to the poor man of Christ and said: "My son, pray to Christ that he may show us his will through you. When we know this with more certainty, we can give our approval to your pious desires with more assurance."¹³

10. The servant of Almighty God totally gave himself to prayer, and through his devout supplications obtained for himself knowledge of what he should say outwardly and for the pope what he should think inwardly. Francis told the pope a parable, which he had learned from God, about a rich king who voluntarily married a poor but beautiful woman. She bore him children who resembled the king and for this reason could be brought up at his table. Then Francis added by way of interpretation: "The sons and heirs of the eternal King should

13. Major source: I C 33, 32; minor sources: Jul. 21; II C 16.

not fear that they will die of hunger. They have been born of a poor mother by the power of the Holy Spirit in the image of Christ the King, and they will be begotten by the spirit of poverty in our poor little Order. For if the King of heaven promises his followers an *eternal kingdom* (2 Pet. 1:11; cf. Matt. 19:28ff.), he will certainly supply them with those things that he gives to the *good and the bad alike*" (Matt. 5:45). When the Vicar of Christ had listened to this parable and its interpretation, he was quite amazed and recognized without the slightest doubt that here Christ had spoken through man. And he affirmed that a vision which he had recently received from heaven through the inspiration of the divine Spirit would be fulfilled in this man. He had seen in a dream, as he recounted, that a little poor man, insignificant and despised, was holding up on his back the Lateran basilica which was about to collapse. "This is certainly the man," he said, "who by his work and teaching will hold up the Church of Christ." Filled with reverence for Francis, he was favorably inclined toward everything he asked and always held Christ's servant in special affection. Then he granted what was requested and promised to grant even more in the future. He approved the rule and gave them a mission to preach penance, and he had small tonsures shaved on the laymen among Francis's companions so that they could freely preach the *word of God* (Luke 11:28).¹⁴

14. Major source: II C 16-17; minor source: Jul. 21.

CHAPTER FOUR ON THE PROGRESS OF THE ORDER UNDER HIS HAND AND THE CONFIRMATION OF THE RULE

1. Strengthened by God's grace and the pope's approval, Francis with great confidence took the road toward the valley of Spoleto, where he intended to preach and to live the Gospel of Christ. On the way he discussed with his companions how they should sincerely keep the rule which they had taken upon themselves, how they should proceed in all *holiness* and *justice before God* (Luke 1:75), how they should improve themselves and be an example for others. It was already late in the day as they continued their long discussion. Fatigued from their prolonged activity and feeling hungry, they stopped at an isolated spot. When there seemed to be no way for them to get the food they needed, God's providence immediately came to their aid. For suddenly a man appeared carrying bread in his hand, which he gave to Christ's little poor and then suddenly disappeared. They had no idea where he came from or where he went. From this the poor friars realized that while in the company of the man of God they would be given assistance from heaven and so they were refreshed more by the gift of God's generosity than by the food they had received for their bodies. Moreover, filled with divine consolation, they firmly resolved and irrevocably committed themselves never to turn back from the promise they had made to holy poverty, in spite of any pressure from lack of food or other trials.¹

2. When they arrived at the valley of Spoleto full of their

1. Major source: I C 34; minor sources: II C 17; Jul. 22; I C 35.

holy plans, they began to discuss whether they should live among the people or go off into places of solitude. But Christ's servant Francis did not place his trust in his own efforts or those of his companions; rather he sought to discern God's will in this matter by earnest prayer. Then, enlightened by a revelation from heaven, he realized that he was sent by the Lord to win for Christ the souls which the devil was trying to snatch away. Therefore he chose to live for all men rather than for himself alone, drawn by the example of the one who deigned to *die for all* (2 Cor. 5:15).²

3. Then with his companions the man of God took shelter in an abandoned hut near the town of Assisi,³ where they barely subsisted according to the rule of holy poverty in much labor and want, drawing their nourishment more from *the bread of tears* (Ps. 79:6) than from the delights of bodily food. They spent their time there praying incessantly, devoting themselves to mental rather than vocal prayer because they did not yet have liturgical books from which to chant the canonical hours. In place of these they had the book of Christ's cross which they studied continually day and night, taught by the example and words of their father who spoke to them constantly about the cross of Christ. When the friars asked him to teach them to pray, he said: "When you pray, say '*Our Father . . .*' (Luke 11:2) and 'We adore you, O Christ, in all your churches in the whole world and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.'" He also taught them to praise God in all creatures and from all creatures, to honor priests with special reverence and to firmly believe and simply profess the true faith as held and taught by the Holy Roman Church. The friars followed his teaching in every detail; and before every church and crucifix which they saw even from a distance, they

2. Major source: I C 35; minor source: Jul. 23.

3. At Rivo Torto, on the road between Spoleto and Perugia.

humbly prostrated themselves and prayed according to the form he had taught them.⁴

4. While the friars were still staying in the place already mentioned, one Saturday the holy man went to the town of Assisi to preach in the cathedral on Sunday morning, as was his custom. The devoted man of God spent the night in prayer, as he usually did, in a hut situated in the garden of the canons, separated physically from the friars. At about midnight while some of the friars were resting and others continued to pray, behold, a fiery chariot of wonderful brilliance entered through the door of the house and turned here and there three times through the house. A globe of light rested above it which shone like the sun and lit up the night. Those who were awake were dumbfounded, and those who were sleeping woke up terrified. They felt the brightness light up their hearts no less than their bodies, and the conscience of each was laid bare to the others by the strength of that marvelous light. As they looked into each other's hearts, they all realized together that their holy father, who was *absent physically*, was *present in spirit* (1 Cor. 5:3), transfigured in this image. And they realized that by supernatural power the Lord had shown him to them in this glowing *chariot of fire* (4 Kings 2:11), radiant with heavenly splendor and inflamed with burning ardor so that they might follow him like *true Israelites* (John 1:47). Like a second Elijah, God had made him a *chariot and charioteer* for spiritual men (4 Kings 2:12). Certainly we can believe that God *opened the eyes* (John 9:32) of these simple men at the prayers of Francis so that they might see *the wonders of God* (Acts 2:11; Ecclus. 18:5) just as he had once *opened the eyes* of the servant of Elisha so that he could see *the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about the prophet* (4 Kings 6:17). When the holy man returned to the friars, he

4. Major sources: I C 42; I C 45; minor sources: I C 40; II C 91; I C 45; Jul. 27; I C 80-81; I C 62, 41; Jul. 27. Cf. *Testamentum*, 1.

began to probe the secrets of their consciences, to draw courage for them from this wonderful vision and to make many predictions about the growth of the Order. When he disclosed many things that transcended human understanding, the friars realized the *Spirit of the Lord had come to rest* (Isa. 11:2) upon him in such fulness that it was absolutely safe for them to follow his life and teaching.⁵

5. After this, under the guidance of heavenly grace, the shepherd Francis led the *little flock* (Luke 12:32) of twelve friars to St. Mary of the Portiuncula, so that there, where the Order of Friars Minor had had its beginning by the merits of the mother of God, it might also begin to grow with her assistance. There, also, he became a herald of the Gospel. He went *about the towns and villages proclaiming the kingdom of God not in words taught by human wisdom, but in the power of the Spirit* (Matt. 9:35; Luke 9:60; 1 Cor. 2:4, 13). To those who saw him, he seemed to be a man of another world as, with his mind and face always turned toward heaven, he tried to draw them all on high. As a result, the vineyard of Christ began to sprout shoots with the fragrance of the Lord and to bring forth abundant fruit, producing blossoms of *sweetness, of honor and goodness* (Ecclus. 24:23).⁶

6. Set on fire by the fervor of his preaching, a great number of people bound themselves by new laws of penance according to the rule which they received from the man of God. Christ's servant decided to name this way of life the Order of the Brothers of Penance. As the road of penance is common to all who are striving toward heaven, so this way of life admits clerics and laity, single and married of both sexes.⁷ How meritorious it is before God is clear from the numerous miracles performed by some of its members. Young women,

5. Major source: I C 47; minor sources: Jul. 29; I C 48.

6. Major source: I C 36-37; minor source: Jul. 21.

7. A reference to the emergence of the Third Order; cf. II, n. 10, p. 197; also I C 37 and Jul. 23.

too, were drawn to perpetual celibacy, among whom was the maiden Clare, who was especially dear to God.

She was the first tender sprout
among these
and gave forth fragrance
like a bright white flower
that blossoms in springtime,
and she shone
like a radiant star.

Now she is glorified

in heaven

and venerated in a fitting manner

by the Church on earth,

she who was the daughter in Christ

of our holy father Francis, the little poor man,

and the mother of the Poor Clares.⁸

7. Many people also, not only stirred by devotion but inflamed by a desire for the perfection of Christ, despised the emptiness of worldly things and followed in the footsteps of Francis. Their numbers increased daily and quickly reached *to the ends of the earth*.⁹

Holy poverty,

which was all they had to meet their expenses,

made them prompt for obedience,

robust for work and free for travel.

Because they possessed nothing that belonged to the world, they were attached to nothing and feared to lose nothing.

They were safe everywhere,

not held back by fear, nor distracted by care;

8. The Latin term is *Pauperes Dominae*, Poor Ladies, the official name of the Second Order; we have translated it here by the popular title *Poor Clares*. On Clare and her nuns, cf. I C 18-20 and Jul. 13; also XII, 2, p. 294. Minor sources for no. 6 are Jul. 23 and II C 109.

9. Ps. 18:15.

they lived with untroubled minds,
and, without any anxiety,
looked forward to the morrow
and to finding a lodging for the night.

In different parts of the world
many insults were hurled against them
as persons unknown and despised.

But their love of the Gospel of Christ
had made them so patient
that they sought

to be where they would suffer physical persecution
rather than where their holiness was recognized
and they could glory in worldly honor.

Their very poverty

seemed to them overflowing abundance

since, according to the advice of the wise man,

they were content *with a minimum*
*as if it were much.*¹⁰

When some of the friars went to the lands of the infidels, a
certain Saracen, moved by compassion, once offered them
money for the food they needed. When they refused to accept
it the man was amazed, seeing that they were without means.
Realizing they did not want to possess money because they had
become poor out of love of God, he felt so attracted to them
that he offered to *provide for their needs* (3 Kings 4:7) as long as he
had something to give.

O inestimable value of poverty,
whose marvelous power moved
the fierce heart of a barbarian
to such sweet compassion!

What a horrible and unspeakable crime

that a Christian should *trample underfoot*
this noble *pearl*!¹¹

which a Saracen held in such veneration!¹²

8. At that time a certain religious of the Order of the
Crosiers,¹³ Morico by name, was suffering from such a grave
and prolonged illness in a hospital near Assisi that the doctors
had already despaired of his life. In his need, he turned to the
man of God, urgently entreating him through a messenger to
intercede for him before the Lord. Our blessed father kindly
consented and said a prayer for him. Then he took some bread
crumbs and mixed them with oil taken from a lamp that burned
before the altar of the Virgin. He made a kind of pill out of
them and sent it to the sick man through the hands of the friars,
saying: "Take this medicine to our brother Morico. By means
of it Christ's power will not only restore him to full health but
will make him a sturdy warrior and enlist him in our forces
permanently." When the sick man took the medicine which
had been prepared under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he
was cured immediately. God gave him such strength of mind
and body that when a little later he entered the holy man's
Order, he wore only a single tunic, under which for a long time
he wore a hairshirt next to his skin. He was satisfied with
uncooked food such as herbs, vegetables and fruit and for many
years never tasted bread or wine, yet remained strong and in
good health.

9. As the merits of virtue increased in Christ's little poor
men, their good reputation spread all about and attracted a
great number of people from different parts of the world to
come and see our holy father. Among them was a spirited

11. Matt. 7:6.

12. This incident is not found in Celano or Julian.

13. The Latin term is *Ordo Cruciferorum*, the title of the religious order known as the
Crosiers or Religious of the Holy Cross. This incident is not found in Celano or Julian.

10. Eccclus. 29:30. Major source: I C. 39-40; minor sources: I C. 37, 41.

composer of worldly songs, who had been crowned by the Emperor¹⁴ and was therefore called the King of Verses. He decided to visit the man of God, who despised the things of the world. When he found him preaching in a monastery in the village of San Severino, *the hand of the Lord came upon him* (Ezech. 1:3); and he saw Francis, the preacher of Christ's cross, signed with a cross, in the form of two flashing swords, one of which stretched from his head to his feet, the other crossed his chest from one hand to the other. He did not know Christ's servant by sight, but quickly recognized him once he had been pointed out by so great a miracle. Dumbfounded at the vision, he immediately began to resolve to do better. He was struck in his conscience by the power of the saint's words, as if pierced by a spiritual sword coming from his mouth. He completely despised his worldly popularity and joined our blessed father by making a religious profession. When the holy man saw that he had been completely converted from the restlessness of the world to the peace of Christ, he called him Brother Pacificus. Afterwards he advanced in holiness; and before he went to France as provincial minister—indeed he was the first to hold that office there¹⁵—he merited to see a second vision: a great Tau on Francis's forehead, which shone in a variety of colors and caused his face to glow with wonderful beauty. The holy man venerated this symbol with great affection, often spoke highly of it and signed it with his own hand at the end of the letters which he sent, as if his whole desire were *to mark with a Tau the foreheads of men who have been truly converted to Jesus Christ and who moan and grieve*, according to the text of the Prophet (Ezech. 9:4).¹⁶

10. As the number of friars increased with the passing of time, Francis began to summon them, like a solicitous

shepherd, to a general chapter at St. Mary of the Portiuncula, so as to allot to each a portion of obedience *in the land of their poverty*, according to *the measuring-cord of divine distribution* (Gen. 41:52; Ps. 77:54). Although there was a complete lack of all necessities and sometimes the friars numbered more than five thousand, nevertheless with the assistance of divine mercy, they had adequate food, enjoyed physical health and overflowed with spiritual joy.

Francis could not be physically present at the provincial chapters, but he was present in spirit through his solicitous care in governing, his insistent prayers and his effective blessing. Occasionally, however, he did appear visibly by God's miraculous power. For at the chapter of Arles that outstanding preacher Anthony,¹⁷ who is now a glorious confessor of Christ, was preaching to the friars on the inscription on the cross: *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (John 19:19). A certain friar of proven virtue, Monaldus by name, was moved by divine inspiration to look toward the door of the chapter and saw with his bodily eyes blessed Francis lifted up in midair, his arms extended as though on a cross, and blessing the friars. All the friars felt themselves filled with such unusual inner consolation that it was clear the Spirit *was giving* them certain testimony (John 1:7) that their holy father had been really present. In addition to these evident signs, it was later confirmed by the external testimony of the words of the holy father himself. We can indeed believe that the almighty power of God, which allowed the holy bishop Ambrose to attend the burial of the glorious St. Martin and to honor that holy prelate with his holy presence, also allowed his servant Francis to be present at the preaching of his true herald Anthony in order to attest to the truth of his words, especially those concerning Christ's cross, which Francis both carried and served.¹⁸

14. Either Frederick Barbarossa or Henry VI; certainly not Frederick II, who did not bear the imperial title until 1220.

15. He held this office from 1217 to 1223 or 1224.

16. Major source: II C 106; on the sign Tau, cf. prol., 2, n. 27, p. 182; also p. 287, n. 17.

17. This is Anthony of Padua, the widely venerated saint of the early Franciscan Order.

18. Major source: I C 48.

11. When the Order was already widely spread and Francis was considering having the rule which had been approved by Innocent permanently confirmed by his successor Honorius, he was advised by the following revelation from God. It seemed to him that he had to gather some tiny bread crumbs from the ground and distribute them to many hungry friars who were standing around him. He was afraid to distribute such small crumbs lest they should fall from his hands. Then a voice spoke to him from above: "Francis, make one host out of all these crumbs and give it to those who want to eat it." When he did this, whoever did not receive it devoutly or despised the gift they had received suddenly appeared covered with leprosy. In the morning the holy man told all this to his companions, regretting that he did not understand the meaning of the vision. On the following day, while he was keeping watch in prayer, he heard a voice coming down from heaven, saying: "Francis the crumbs of last night are the words of the Gospel, the host is the rule and the leprosy is wickedness."¹⁹

Since the profusion of texts from the Gospel had lengthened the rule unduly, Francis wished to condense it into a more concentrated form as the vision he was shown had commanded. Led by the Holy Spirit, he went up to a certain mountain with two of his companions where he fasted on bread and water and dictated the rule as the Holy Spirit suggested to him in prayer. When he came down from the mountain, he gave the rule to his vicar to keep.²⁰ But after a few days had elapsed, the vicar claimed that he had lost it by an oversight. A second time the holy man went off to a place of solitude and at once rewrote the rule just as before, as if he were taking the words from the mouth of God. And he obtained confirmation for it, as he had desired, from the Lord Pope Honorius, in the

19. Major source: II C 209.

20. Brother Elias of Cortona, the controversial vicar to Francis and Minister General of the Order.

eighth year of his pontificate.²¹

Fervently exhorting the friars to observe this rule, Francis used to say that nothing of what he had placed there came from his own efforts but that he dictated everything just as it had been revealed by God.²² To confirm this with greater certainty by God's own testimony, when only a few days had passed,²³ the stigmata of our Lord Jesus were imprinted upon him by the finger of the *living God*,²⁴ as the bull or seal of Christ, the Supreme Pontiff, for the complete confirmation of the rule and approval of its author, as will be described below, after our exposition of his virtues.²⁵

21. Honorius III was pope from 1216-1227; he confirmed the Second Rule of Francis in a bull dated November 29, 1223. This incident on the writing of the rule and its approbation by Honorius III are not found in Celano or Julian.

22. Cf. *Testamentum*, 8.

23. Bonaventure uses the expression *paucis diebus*, literally a few days; but actually eight and a half months separated the approval of the Rule from the impression of the stigma, and presumably the time-lapse between the latter and the composition of the Rule was even longer.

24. Apoc. 7:2.

25. Cf. XIII, 3-8, pp. 305-311.

CHAPTER FIVE ON THE AUSTERITY OF HIS LIFE AND HOW CREATURES PROVIDED HIM COMFORT

1. When Francis the man of God saw that many were being inspired by his example to carry the cross of Christ with fervent spirit, he himself like a good leader of Christ's army was encouraged to reach the palm of victory¹ through the height of heroic virtue.

He directed his attention to this text of the Apostle:

*Those who belong to Christ
have crucified their flesh
with its passions and desires.*²

In order to carry in his own body the armor of the cross, he held in check his sensual appetites with such a rigid discipline that he scarcely took what was necessary for the sustenance of nature. He used to say that it would be difficult to satisfy the needs of the body without giving in to the earth-bound inclinations of the senses. Therefore when he was in good health, he scarcely ever allowed himself cooked food; and on the rare occasions when he did so, he either mixed it with ashes or made its flavor tasteless, usually by adding water. About his drinking wine, what shall I say since he would scarcely drink even enough water when he was burning with thirst? He discovered more effective methods of abstinence and

daily improved in their exercise. Although he had already attained the height of perfection, he used to try new ways of punishing his sensual desires by afflicting his body, as if he were always beginning again.

When he went out among men, he conformed himself to his hosts in the food he ate because of the Gospel text (Luke 10:7).³ But when he returned home, he kept strictly his sparse and rigid abstinence. Thus he was austere toward himself but considerate toward his neighbor. Making himself obedient to the Gospel of Christ in everything, he gave an edifying example not only when he abstained but also when he ate. More often than not, the bare ground was a bed for his weary body; and he often used to sleep sitting up, with a piece of wood or a stone for a pillow. Clothed in a single poor little tunic, he served the Lord in *cold and nakedness* (2 Cor. 11:27).⁴

2. Once when he was asked how he could protect himself against the bite of the winter's frost with such thin clothing, he answered with a burning spirit: "If we were touched within by the flame of desire for our heavenly home, we would easily endure that exterior cold." In the matter of clothes, he had a horror for softness and loved coarseness, claiming that John the Baptist had been praised by the Lord for this (Matt. 11:8; Luke 7:25). If he felt the softness of a tunic that had been given to him, he used to sew pieces of cord on the inside because he used to say, according to the statement of Truth itself (Matt. 11:8), that we should look for soft clothes not in the huts of the poor but in the palaces of princes. For his own certain experience had taught him that demons were terrified by harshness but were inspired to tempt one more strongly by what is pleasant and soft.

One night, contrary to his custom, he had allowed a feather pillow to be placed under his head because of an illness in his head and eyes. The devil got into it, gave him no rest

1. Cf. Apoc. 7:9.

2. Gal. 5:24.

3. Cf. *Regula I*, c. 9 and *Regula II*, c. 3.

4. Major source: I C 51; minor sources: I C 52; Jul. 31. Cf. II C 12.

until morning and in many ways disturbed him from praying, until finally Francis called a companion and had him take the pillow with the devil in it far away out of his cell. But when the friar went out of the cell with the pillow, he lost the strength and use of his limbs, until at the sound of the holy father's voice, who was aware of this in spirit, his former strength of heart and body was fully restored to him.⁵

3. *He stood* unbending in the discipline with which he *watched over* (Isa. 21:8) himself, and he took the greatest care to preserve purity of soul and body. Around the beginning of his conversion, in wintertime he often plunged into a ditch full of icy water in order to perfectly subjugate the enemy within and preserve the white robe of purity from the flames of sensual pleasure. He used to say that it should be incomparably more tolerable for a spiritual man to endure great cold in his flesh rather than to feel even slightly the heat of carnal lust in his heart.⁶

4. One night when he was praying in his cell at the hermitage of Sarteano, the ancient enemy called him three times: "Francis, Francis, Francis!" When Francis replied and asked what he wanted, he continued deceitfully: "There is no sinner in the world whom God will not forgive if he is converted; but whoever kills himself by harsh penance will never find mercy for all eternity." At once the treachery of the enemy was revealed to the man of God: how the devil was trying to lead him back to lukewarmness. This was shown by what followed. For immediately after this, a temptation of the flesh seized him, inspired by the one *whose breath sets coals afire* (Job 41:12). When that lover of chastity felt it coming, he took off his clothes and began to lash himself very heavily with a cord, saying: "There, Brother Ass, this is how you ought to be treated, to bear the whip like this. The habit serves the religious state and presents a symbol of holiness. A lustful man has no right to steal it. If

5. Major source: II C 64.

6. Major source: I C 42; minor source: Jul. 24.

you want to go that way, then go!" Even more inspired by a wonderful fervor of spirit, he opened his cell and went out into the garden and plunged his poor naked body into the deep snow. Then with handfuls of snow he began to form seven snowmen, which he presented to himself, saying to his body: "Look, this larger one is your wife; those four are your two sons and two daughters; the other two are a servant and a maid whom you should have to serve you. Hurry, then, and clothe them since they are dying of cold. But if it is too much for you to care for so many, then take care to serve one Master!" At that the tempter went away conquered, and the holy man returned to his cell in victory. While he froze outwardly for penance's sake, he so quenched the fire of passion within that he hardly felt anything of that sort from that time on. A certain friar who was praying at the time saw in the bright moonlight everything that happened. When the man of God discovered that the friar had seen all of this that night, he gave him an account of the temptation and commanded him to tell no living person what he had seen as long as Francis himself lived.⁷

5. He taught that not only the vices of the flesh should be mortified and fleshly impulses curbed but also that the exterior senses, through which death enters the soul, should be guarded with the greatest diligence. He solicitously commanded the friars to avoid familiarity with women, whether by sight or by conversation, which have often led many to a fall. He affirmed that through this sort of thing a weak spirit is often broken and a strong spirit weakened. He said that it is about as easy for one who has much contact with women — unless he be a man of the most proven virtue — to avoid contamination from them as *to walk in fire and not to burn one's feet* (Prov. 6:28). He himself so *turned aside his eyes lest they see vanity* of this kind (Ps. 118:37) that he scarcely recognized any woman by her face, as he once said to a companion. For he did not think it was safe to drink into

7. Major source: II C 116-117.

one's interior such images of woman's form, which could rekindle the fire in an already tamed flesh or stain the brightness of a pure heart. He used to say that conversation with a woman was frivolous except only for confession or very brief instruction,⁸ according to what their salvation requires and respectability allows. "What business," he asked, "should a religious transact with a woman except when she makes a devout request for holy penance or for advice concerning a better life? Out of too much self-confidence one is less on guard against the enemy, and if the devil can claim as his own even one hair from a man, he will soon make it grow into a beam."⁹

6. He taught the friars to flee with all their might from idleness, the cesspool of all evil thoughts;¹⁰ and he demonstrated to them by his own example that they should master their rebellious and lazy flesh by constant discipline and useful work. He used to call his body Brother Ass, for he felt it should be subjected to heavy labor, beaten frequently with whips and fed with the poorest food. If he saw that an idle and vagrant friar wanted to be fed by the labor of others, he thought he should be called Brother Fly, because he did nothing good himself but poisoned the good done by others and so rendered himself useless and obnoxious to all. On account of this he once said: "I want my friars to work and to be kept busy lest by giving themselves to idleness their hearts and tongues wander to unlawful things." He strongly wished that the friars observe the silence recommended by the Gospel, that is, to abstain carefully at all times from *every idle word* that they would have to render an account of on the day of judgment (Matt. 12:37).¹¹ But if he found a friar given to empty babbling, he used to reprimand him sharply, affirming that a modest silence is the guardian of a

pure heart and no small virtue itself, in view of the fact that *death and life* are said to be *in the power of the tongue* (Prov. 18:21), not so much because of taste but because of speech.¹²

7. Although he energetically urged the friars to lead an austere life, he was not pleased by an over-strict severity that did not *put on a heart of compassion* (Col. 3:12) and was not seasoned with the salt of discretion. One night a friar was tormented with hunger because of his excessive fasting and was unable to get any rest. When the devoted shepherd realized that danger threatened one of his sheep, he called the friar and put some bread before him. Then, to take away his embarrassment, Francis himself began to eat first and affectionately invited him to eat. The friar overcame his embarrassment and took the food, overjoyed that through the discreet condescension of his shepherd he had avoided harm to his body and received an edifying example of no small proportion. When morning came, the man of God called the friars together and told them what had happened during the night, adding this advice: "Brothers, in this incident let the charity and not the food be an example to you." He taught them besides to follow prudence as the charioteer of the virtues, not the prudence which the flesh recommends, but the prudence taught by Christ, whose most holy life expressed for us the model of perfection.¹³

8. Encompassed by the weakness of the flesh,
man cannot follow
the spotless crucified Lamb so perfectly
as to avoid contacting any filth.
Therefore Francis taught
that those who strive after the perfect life
should cleanse themselves daily
with streams of tears.

8. Cf. *Regula I*, c. 12.

9. Major sources: II C 112, 114; minor sources: I C 43; II C 113.

10. Cf. *Regula I*, c. 7; *Regula II*, c. 5; *Testamentum*, 4; cf. II C 159-162.

11. Cf. *Regula I*, c. 11; *De religiosa habitazione in eremo*, 40; *Admonitiones*, c. 22; *Regula II*, c. 3; cf. II C 19.

12. Minor sources: II C 129, 75, 161, 160.

13. Major source: II C 22; minor source: II C 21.

Although he had already attained extraordinary purity of heart and body, he did not cease to cleanse the eyes of his soul with a continuous flood of tears, unconcerned about the loss of his bodily sight. When he had incurred a very serious eye illness from his continuous weeping, a doctor advised him to restrain his tears if he wanted to avoid losing his sight, the holy man answered: "Brother doctor, we should not stave off a visitation of heavenly light even a little because of love of the light, which we have in common with flies. For the body receives the gift of light for the sake of the spirit and not the spirit for the sake of the body." He preferred to lose his sight rather than to repress the devotion of his spirit and hold back the tears which cleansed his interior vision so that he could see God.¹⁴

9. Once he was advised by doctors and strongly urged by the friars to allow himself to be cauterized. The man of God agreed humbly because he realized that it would be at once good for his health and harsh on his body. So a surgeon was called and when he came, he placed an iron in the fire for performing the cauterization. But Christ's servant encouraged his body which was now struck with horror and began to speak to the fire as a friend: "My brother fire, whose beauty is the envy of all other creatures, the Most High has created you

¹⁴. This incident is not found in Celano or Julian, but Francis's eye ailment is treated in I C 98, 101, 105, 108; II C 44, 92-93, 126.

strong, beautiful and useful. Be kind to me in this hour, be courteous! I beseech the great Lord who created you to temper your heat for me so that you will burn gently and I can endure it." When he had finished his prayer, he made the sign of the cross over the instrument that glowed with fire, and he waited unafraid. The iron was plunged hissing into the sensitive flesh and was drawn from his ear to his eyebrow in the process of cauterizing. How much pain the fire caused, the holy man himself expressed: "Praise the Most High," he said to the friars, "because I tell you truly, I felt neither the heat of the fire nor any pain in my flesh." And turning to the doctor, he said: "If my flesh is not well cauterized, then do it again!" The experienced doctor marveled at such strength of spirit in his weak body, and he proclaimed it a divine miracle, saying: "I say to you, brothers, *I have seen wonderful things today* (Luke 5:26).

Francis had reached such purity that his body was in remarkable harmony with his spirit and his spirit with God. As a result God ordained that *creation which serves its Maker*¹⁵ should be subject in an extraordinary way to his will and command.¹⁶

10. Another time when he was suffering from a very serious illness at the hermitage of Sant' Urbano, feeling his physical weakness, he asked for a drink of wine. He was told that there was no wine to give him; so he ordered water and when it was brought, he blessed it with the sign of the cross. At once what had been pure water was changed into the best wine; and what the poverty of this deserted place could not provide was

¹⁵. *Wisd.* 16:24.

¹⁶. Major source: II C 166; minor source: Jul. 64; cf. I C 97; II C 129.

obtained by the purity of the holy man. With the taste of this wine, he immediately regained his health so easily that the newness of the taste and the recovery of his health, by supernaturally renewing the drink and the one who drank, confirmed by a double testimony that he had perfectly put off *the old man* and put on the *new* (Col. 3:9-10).¹⁷

11. Not only did creation serve God's servant at his beck and call, but the Creator's providence itself everywhere inclined itself to his good pleasure. One time when his body was weighed down by many forms of illness, he had the desire to hear some music to awaken and delight his spirit. But since it was considered inappropriate that this should be done for him by human musicians, angels came to indulge the holy man's wish. One night when he was watching and meditating about the Lord, he suddenly heard the sound of a lute playing wonderful harmony and a very sweet melody. No one was seen, but he was aware that the musician was moving back and forth by the fluctuation of the sound. With his spirit directed to God, Francis enjoyed so thoroughly the beauty of that sweet sounding song that he thought he had been transported to another world. This did not remain hidden from the friars who were close to him, for they often used to see clear indications that he was *visited by the Lord* (Luke 1:68; 7:16), who gave him such overwhelming and frequent consolation that he could not hide it completely.¹⁸

12. At another time when the man of God and a companion were walking on the banks of the Po while on a journey of preaching between Lombardy and the Marches of Treviso, they were overtaken by the darkness of night. The road was exposed to many great dangers because of the darkness, the river and some swamps. His companion said to the holy man: "Pray, father, that we may be saved from these threatening

dangers!" Full of confidence, the man of God answered him: "*God has the power* (Luke 3:8), if it pleases him in his sweetness, to disperse this darkness and give us the benefit of light."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when, behold, such a great light began to shine around them with a heavenly radiance that they could see in clear light not only the road, but also many other things all around, although the night remained dark elsewhere. By the guidance of this light they were led physically and comforted spiritually; singing hymns of praise to God they arrived safely at their lodging, which was quite a stretch of road away.¹⁹

Consider carefully
the marvelous purity and the degree of virtue
that Francis attained.

At his mere wish
fire tempered its heat,
water changed its taste,
an angelic melody brought him comfort
and a divine light gave him guidance.

Thus it is proven
that all of creation came to the service
of the sanctified senses
of this holy man.

17. Major sources: III C 17; I C 61.

18. Major source: II C 126; minor source: I C 61.

19. This incident is not found in Celano or Julian.

the power of his miracles,⁴²
his mission to preach conferred from heaven,⁴³
the obedience paid him by creatures lacking reason,⁴⁴
the powerful change of heart experienced
at the hearing of his words,⁴⁵
his being instructed by the Holy Spirit
on a level beyond human teaching,⁴⁶
his authorization to preach

granted by the Supreme Pontiff
who was guided by a revelation,⁴⁷
the Rule, in which the manner of preaching is described,
confirmed by the same Vicar of Christ,⁴⁸
and the marks of the Supreme King
imprinted on his body like a seal—⁴⁹
these are like ten witnesses

which testify without any doubt to the whole world
that Francis, the herald of Christ,
is worthy of veneration because of his mission,
authoritative in his teaching,
admirable for his holiness,
and therefore he preached the Gospel of Christ
as a true messenger of God.

42. Cf. XII, 9-11, pp. 298-301.

43. Cf. XII, 2, p. 294.

44. Cf. XII, 3-6, pp. 294-297.

45. Cf. XI, 6; XII, 7-8, pp. 284, 297-298.

46. Cf. XI, 1-2; XII, 7, pp. 280-281, 297-298.

47. Cf. III, 8-10, pp. 203-206.

48. Cf. IV, 11, pp. 216-217; cf. *Regula II*, 9; also *Regula I*, 16-17, 43-48.

49. Cf. XIII, pp. 303-314.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN ON HIS SACRED STIGMATA

1. The angelic man Francis
had made it his habit
never to relax in his pursuit of the good.
Rather, like the heavenly spirits on *Jacob's ladder*
he either *ascended* to God
or *descended* to his neighbor.¹

For he had wisely learned
so to divide the time given to him for merit
that he expended part of it in working for his neighbor's benefit
and devoted the other part
to the peaceful ecstasy of contemplation.

Therefore when in his compassion he had worked
for the salvation of others,
he would then leave behind the restlessness of the crowds
and seek out hidden places
of quiet and solitude,
where he could spend his time more freely
with the Lord

and cleanse himself of any dust
that might have adhered to him
from his involvement with men.²

Two years

before he gave his spirit back to heaven,
after many and varied labors,
he was *led apart* by divine providence
to a *high place*³

1. Gen. 28:12.

2. Major source: I C 91.

3. Matt. 17:1; by employing the Latin words *excelsum sorsum* from the above text in Matthew, Bonaventure is making an allusion to Mt. Tabor and Jesus' transfiguration.

which is called Mount La Verna.
 When according to his usual custom
 he had begun to fast there for forty days
 in honor of St. Michael the Archangel,⁴
 he experienced more abundantly than usual
 an overflow of the sweetness of heavenly contemplation,
 he burned with a stronger flame
 of heavenly desires,
 and he began to experience more fully
 the gifts of heavenly grace.
 He was borne aloft
 not like one who out of curiosity
searches into the supreme majesty
only to be crushed by its glory,
 but like *the faithful and prudent servant*⁵
 searching out God's good pleasure,
 to which he desires with the greatest ardor
 to conform himself in every way.⁶

2. Through divine inspiration he had learned that if he opened the book of the Gospel, Christ would reveal to him what God considered most acceptable in him and from him. After praying with much devotion, he took the book of the Gospels from the altar and had his companion, a holy man dedicated to God, open it three times in the name of the Holy Trinity. When all three times the book was opened the Lord's passion always met his eyes, the man filled with God understood that just as he had imitated Christ in the actions of his life, so he should be conformed to him in the affliction and sorrow of his passion, before *he would pass out of this world* (John 13:1). And although his body was already weakened by the great austerity of his past life and his continual carrying of the

4. Cf. IX, 3, p. 264.

5. Prov. 25:27; Matt. 24:45.

6. Minor sources: I C 94; Jul. 61; cf. I C 91, 92.

Lord's cross, he was in no way terrified but was inspired even more vigorously to endure martyrdom. His unquenchable fire of love for the good Jesus had been fanned into such a *blaze of flames that many waters could not quench* so powerful a love (Cant. 8:6-7).

3. By the Seraphic ardor of his desires, he was being borne aloft into God; and by his sweet compassion he was being transformed into him who chose to be crucified because of the excess of his love (Eph. 2:4). On a certain morning about the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross,⁷ while Francis was praying on the mountainside, he saw a Seraph with six fiery and shining wings descend from the height of heaven. And when in swift flight the Seraph had reached a spot in the air near the man of God, there appeared between the wings the figure of a man crucified, with his hands and feet extended in the form of a cross and fastened to a cross. Two of the wings were lifted above his head, two were extended for flight and two covered his whole body.⁸ When Francis saw this, he was overwhelmed and his heart was flooded with a mixture of joy and sorrow. He rejoiced because of the gracious way Christ looked upon him under the appearance of the Seraph, but the fact that he was fastened to a cross *pierced his soul with a sword* of compassionate sorrow (Luke 2:35).⁹

He wondered exceedingly at the sight of so unfathomable a vision, realizing that the weakness of Christ's passion was in no way compatible with the immortality of the Seraph's spiritual nature. Eventually he understood by a revelation from the Lord that divine providence had shown him this vision so that,

7. September 14.

8. Cf. the vision of Isaiah (Isa. 6:1-13), where the Seraphim are described as follows: *I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple. Above him were stationed the Seraphim; each of them had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they hovered aloft. One called to the other: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!"* (1-3). Cf. Bonaventure's treatment of Francis's vision in *The Soul's Journey into God*, prol., 2-3, pp. 54-55.

9. Major sources: I C 94; III C 4; cf. Jul. 61.

as Christ's lover, he might learn in advance that he was to be totally transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified, not by the martyrdom of his flesh, but by the fire of his love consuming his soul.¹⁰

As the vision disappeared, it left in his heart a marvelous ardor and imprinted on his body markings that were no less marvelous. Immediately the marks of nails began to appear in his hands and feet just as he had seen a little before in the figure of the man crucified. His hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the center by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing on the inner side of the hands and the upper side of the feet and their points on the opposite sides. The heads of the nails in his hands and his feet were round and black; their points were oblong and bent as if driven back with a hammer, and they emerged from the flesh and stuck out beyond it. Also his right side, as if pierced with a lance, was marked with a red wound from which his sacred blood often flowed, moistening his tunic and underwear.¹¹

4. When Christ's servant realized that he could not conceal from his intimate companions the stigmata that had been so visibly imprinted on his flesh, he feared to make public the Lord's secret (Tob. 12:7) and was thrown into an agony of doubt whether to tell what he had seen or to be silent about it. He called some of the friars and, speaking in general terms, presented his doubt to them and sought their advice. One of the friars, who was named Illuminato¹² and was illumined by grace, realized that Francis had had a miraculous vision because he seemed still completely dazed. He said to the holy man: "Brother, you should realize that at times divine secrets are revealed to you not for yourself alone but also for others.

10. Bonaventure uses the term *incendium mentis*, literally *the conflagration of his soul*. The term *incendium* appears in the alternate title of Bonaventure's treatise on the three stages of the spiritual life: *De triplici via seu Incendium amoris, On the Triple Way or The Fire of Love*. On Francis's desire for martyrdom, cf. C. IX, 5-9, pp. 266-271.

11. Major sources: III C 4; I C 95; minor sources: I C 94; Jul. 62.
12. Cf. IX, 8 and XI, 3, pp. 269, 282.

You have every reason to fear that if you hide what you have received for the profit of many, you will be blamed for *burying that talent*" (Matt. 25:25). Although the holy man used to say on other occasions: "*My secret is for myself*" (Isa. 24:16), he was moved by Illuminato's words and then with much fear recounted the vision in detail, adding that the one who had appeared to him had told him some things which he would never disclose to any man as long as he lived. We should believe, then, that those things he had been told by that sacred Seraph who had miraculously appeared to him on the cross were so secret that *men are not permitted to speak of them* (2 Cor. 12:4).¹³

5. When the true love of Christ had transformed his lover into his image¹⁴ and the forty days were over that he had planned to spend in solitude, and the feast of St. Michael the Archangel had also arrived,¹⁵ the angelic man Francis came down from the mountain,¹⁶ bearing with him the image of the Crucified, which was depicted not on tablets of stone¹⁷ or on panels of wood by the hands of a craftsman, but engraved in the members of his body by the finger of the living God.¹⁸ Because it is good to keep hidden the secret of the King,¹⁹ Francis,

13. Cf. II C 135, 203; the incident of Brother Illuminato is not found in Celano or Julian.
14. 2 Cor. 3:18.

15. September 29.

16. Matt. 8:1; an allusion to Christ coming down the mountain after his transfiguration.

17. Exod. 31:18; an allusion to Moses coming down the mountain with the tablets of the Law.

18. Exod. 31:18; John 11:27.

19. Tob. 12:7.

aware that he had been given a royal secret,
to the best of his powers
kept the sacred stigmata hidden.

Since it is for God to reveal for his own glory
the wonders which he has performed,
the Lord himself,
who had secretly imprinted those marks on Francis,
publicly worked through them
a number of miracles
so that the miraculous though hidden
power of the stigmata
might be made manifest
by the brightness of divine signs.²⁰

6. In the province of Rieti a very serious plague broke out
and so cruelly took the lives of cattle and sheep that no remedy
could be found. A certain God-fearing man was told in a vision
at night to hurry to the hermitage of the friars and get the water
in which God's servant Francis, who was staying there at that
time, had washed his hands and feet and to sprinkle it on all the
animals. He got up in the morning, came to the hermitage,
secretly got the water from the companions of the holy man
and sprinkled it on the sheep and cattle. Marvelous to say, the
moment that water touched the animals, which were weak and
lying on the ground, they immediately recovered their former
vigor, stood up and, as if they had had nothing wrong with
them, hurried off to pasture. Thus through the miraculous
power of that water, which had touched his sacred wounds,
the plague ceased and deadly disease fled from the flocks.²¹

7. Before the holy man stayed on Mount La Verna,
clouds would often form over the mountain, and violent
hailstorms would devastate the crops. But after his blessed

vision the hail stopped permanently, to the amazement of the
inhabitants, so that the unusually serene face of the sky pro-
claimed the extraordinary nature of his heavenly vision and the
power of the stigmata that were imprinted on him there.

In wintertime because of his physical weakness and the
rough roads Francis was once riding on a donkey belonging to a
poor man. It happened that he spent the night at the base of an
overhanging cliff to try to avoid the inconveniences of a snow-
fall and the darkness of night that prevented him from reaching
his place of lodging. The saint heard his helper tossing and
turning, grumbling and groaning, since, as he had only thin
clothing, the biting cold would not let him sleep. Francis,
burning with the fire of divine love, stretched out his hand and
touched him. A marvelous thing happened! At the touch of his
sacred hand, which bore the burning *coal of the Seraph* (Isa.
6:6-7),²² immediately the cold fled altogether and the man felt
great heat within and without, as if he had been hit by a fiery
blast from the vent of a furnace. Comforted in mind and body,
he slept until morning more soundly among the rocks and snow
than he ever had in his own bed, as he used to say later.

Thus it is established by convincing evidence
that these sacred marks were imprinted on him
by the power of the One
who purifies, illumines and inflames²³
through the action of the Seraphim.

With their miraculous power
these sacred marks,
in the external realm,
restored health by purifying from a pestilence,
produced serene skies,

22. In the vision of Isaiah (referred to in n. 8, above, p. 305), a Seraph carries in his hand
live coal from the altar and touches the prophet's mouth with it.

23. A reference to the three hierarchical acts presented by the Pseudo-Dionysius, *De
caelesti hierarchia*, III, 2; cf. n. 8, p. 90, and n. 20, p. 180.

20. Minor source: II C 135; cf. II C 135-138; I C 95-96.

21. Major source III C 18.

and gave heat to the body.

After his death
this was demonstrated
by even more evident miracles
as we will record in the proper place later.²⁴

8. Although he tried his best to hide the *treasure found in the field* (Matt. 13:44), he could not prevent at least some from seeing the stigmata in his hands and feet, although he always kept his hands covered and from that time on always wore shoes. A number of the friars saw them while he was still alive. Although they were men of outstanding holiness and so completely trustworthy, nevertheless to remove all doubt they confirmed under oath, touching the holy Gospels, that this was so and that they had seen it. Also some of the cardinals saw them because of their close friendship with the holy man; and they inserted praises of the sacred stigmata in the hymns, antiphons and sequences which they composed in his honor, and thus by their words and writings *gave testimony to the truth* (John 5:33).²⁵ Even the Supreme Pontiff Lord Alexander,²⁶ in a sermon preached to the people at which many of the friars and I myself were present, affirmed that he had seen the sacred stigmata with his own eyes while the saint was still alive. More than fifty friars with the virgin Clare, who was most devoted to God, and her sisters, as well as innumerable laymen saw them after his death. Many of them kissed the stigmata out of devotion and touched them with their own hands to strengthen

24. In his treatise on Francis's miracles, I, 2-6, which is not included in this present volume. The incident recorded in no. 7 is not found in Celano or Julian.

25. Gregory IX (Cardinal Hugolino) composed the hymn *Proles de caelo*, the response *De paupertatis borreo*, the antiphons *Sancte Franciscus proptere* and *Plange turba paupercula*, and the sequence *Caput draconis ultimum*; Cardinal Thomas of Capua, the hymns *Decus morum* and *In caelsti collegio*, the response *Carnis spicam*, the antiphon *Salve sancte Pater*, and the sequence *Laetabundus Franciscus*; Cardinal Rainerio Capoci of Viterbo, the hymn *Plaudite turba*; Cardinal Stefano di Casa Nova, the antiphon *Caelorum candidor splenduit*. Most of these were incorporated into the rhymed office composed by Julian of Speyer.

26. Alexander IV, pope from 1254-1261, who made the same affirmation in his bulls: *Benigna operatio* (October 19, 1255) and *Quia longum esset* (June 28, 1259).

their testimony, as we will describe in the proper place.²⁷

But the wound in his side he so cautiously concealed that as long as he was alive no one could see it except by stealth. One friar who used to zealously take care of him induced him with a pious stratagem to take off his tunic to shake it out. Watching closely, he saw the wound, and he even quickly touched it with three of his fingers determining the size of the wound by both sight and touch. The friar who was his vicar at that time also managed to see it by a similar stratagem.²⁸ A friar who was a companion of his, a man of marvelous simplicity,²⁹ when he was one day massaging Francis's shoulders that were weak from illness, put his hand under his hood and accidentally touched the sacred wound, causing him great pain. As a result, from that time on Francis always wore underclothes made so that they would reach up to his armpits to cover the wound on his side. Also the friars who washed these or shook out his tunic from time to time, since they found these stained with blood, were from this evident sign convinced without any doubt of the existence of the sacred wound, which after his death they along with many others contemplated and venerated *with unveiled face* (2 Cor. 3:18).³⁰

9. Come now, knight of Christ,
vigorously bear the arms of your unconquerable Leader!
Visibly shielded with these,
you will overcome all adversaries.

Carry the standard of the Most High King,
and at its sight

let all who fight in God's army
be aroused to courage.

27. Cf. XV, 3-5, p. 323. Major source: III C 5; minor source: II C 135-136; cf. I C 95-96; 95-96; II C 135-138; II C 214; I C 116-117. Pope Alexander's sermon is not mentioned in Celano or Julian.

28. Brother Elias; cf. I C 95; II C 138.

29. Rufino; cf. I C 95.

30. Major sources: II C 138; I C 95; minor sources: II C 136; III C 5; cf. I C 102.

Carry the seal of Christ, the High Priest,
 by which your words and deeds
 will be rightly accepted by all
 as authentic and *beyond reproach*.³¹
 For now because of *the brand-marks of the Lord Jesus*
 which you carry in your body,
 no one should trouble you,³²
 rather every servant of Christ
 should show them deep devotion.

Now through these most certain signs
 (corroborated
 not by the sufficient testimony
 of two or three witnesses,³³
 but by the superabundant testimony
 of a whole multitude)

God's testimony about you and through you
has been made overwhelmingly credible,³⁴
 removing completely from unbelievers
 the veil of excuse,
 while these signs confirm believers in faith,
 raise them aloft with confident hope
 and set them ablaze with the fire of charity.

10. Now is fulfilled
 the first vision which you saw,³⁵
 namely, that you would be a captain
 in the army of Christ
 and bear the arms of heaven
 emblazoned with the sign of the cross.³⁶
 Now is fulfilled
 the vision of the Crucified

31. Titus 2:8.

32. Gal. 6:17.

33. Deut. 19:15.

34. Ps. 92:5.

35. Dan. 9:24; 4:6.

36. Cf. 1, 3, p. 187.

at the beginning of your conversion
 which pierced your soul
 with a sword of compassionate sorrow.³⁷
 Now the voice that came from the cross
 as if from the lofty throne and secret *mercy-seat*³⁸ of Christ,
 as you have confirmed with your sacred words,
 is believed as undoubtedly true.³⁹

Now is fulfilled
 the vision of the cross,
 in the course of your conversion,
 which Brother Silvester saw
 marvelously coming from your mouth;⁴⁰
 and the vision which the holy Pacificus saw,
 of the swords piercing your body
 in the form of a cross;⁴¹
 and the sight of you
 lifted up in the air in the form of a cross,
 which the angelic man Monaldus saw
 when the holy Anthony was preaching
 on the inscription on the cross—⁴²

all of these
 we now firmly believe
 were not imaginary visions
 but revelations from heaven.
 Now, finally
 toward the end of your life
 you were shown at the same time
 the sublime vision of the Seraph
 and the humble figure of the Crucified,
 inwardly inflaming you and outwardly marking you

37. Cf. I, 5, p. 189; Luke 2:35.

38. Num. 7:89.

39. Cf. II, 1, p. 191.

40. Cf. III, 5, pp. 201-202.

41. Cf. IV, 9, p. 214.

42. Cf. IV, 10, p. 215.

as the *second Angel*,
ascending from the rising of the sun
and *bearing upon you the sign of the living God*.⁴³
This vision confirms the previous ones
and *receives from them*
the testimony of truth.⁴⁴

Behold

these seven visions of the cross of Christ,
miraculously shown and manifested
to you or about you
at different stages of your life.

The first six were like steps
leading to the seventh
in which you have found your final rest.⁴⁵

The cross of Christ

given to you and by you accepted
at the beginning of your conversion

and which from then on

you carried continuously
in the course of your most upright life,

giving an example to others,
shows that you have finally reached
the summit of Gospel perfection
with such clear certitude

that no truly devout person

can reject this proof of Christian wisdom
ploughed into the dust of your flesh.

No truly believing person can attack it,
no truly humble person can make little of it,
since it is truly the work of God
and *worthy of complete acceptance*.⁴⁶

43. Apoc. 7:2; cf. prol., 1, p. 181.

44. John 5:33-34.

45. Note the similarity with the seven stages of *The Soul's Journey into God*, prol., 3; I, 1-7; VII, 1, pp. 54, 59-63, 110-111.

46. I Tim. 1:15, 4:9. Major source: III C 2-3; Celano lists Francis's visions of the cross, but without the rhetorical structure and spirited interpretation supplied by Bonaventure.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ON HIS PATIENCE AND HIS PASSING IN DEATH

1. Now *fixed with Christ to the cross*,¹
in both body and spirit,
Francis

not only burned with a Seraphic love of God
but also *thirsted*² with Christ crucified
for the salvation of men.

Since he could not walk because of the nails protruding from his feet, he had his half-dead body carried through the towns and villages to arouse others to *carry the cross* of Christ (Luke 9:23). He used to say to the friars: "Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord our God, for up to now we have hardly progressed." He was ablaze with a great desire to return to the humility he practiced at the beginning; to nurse the lepers as he did at the outset and to treat like a slave once more his body that was already in a state of collapse from his work. With Christ as his leader, he proposed to do great things; and although his limbs were failing, he bravely and fervently hoped to conquer the enemy in a new combat. Laziness and idleness have no place where the goad of love never ceases to drive a person to greater things. His body was so much in harmony with his spirit and so ready to obey it that when he strove to attain complete holiness, his body not only did not resist, but even tried to run ahead.³

1. Gal. 2:19.

2. John 19:28.

3. Major source: I C 103; minor sources: I C 98; Jul. 64, 67; II C 209; I C 97.