

Go,  
Rebuild  
My Church!

**Comprehensive  
Course on the  
Franciscan  
Mission  
Charism**



The Unity  
of Contemplation  
and Mission

Lesson Unit 10

The documents of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, and Pope John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio* have deeply affected the understanding of mission. Constant efforts are being made to clarify its purpose and objectives, and to determine the most appropriate methods to carry it out. *Go, Rebuild My Church: A Comprehensive Course on the Franciscan Mission Charism*, provides a particular context to stimulate dialogue about the many dimensions of mission and the inevitable recognition of the equality, dignity and humanity of all persons. The course is unique, since it is genuinely inter-Franciscan and inter-cultural. An ongoing process for exchange among all members of the Franciscan Family from six continents provides for a creative meshing of the best in current theology, Franciscan research and pastoral practice. The vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent our search for a fuller understanding of humanity in the light of the Gospel and the Person of Jesus Christ.

As Franciscans, with the world as our "cloister," we welcome this refreshing moment of intercultural dialogue. Francis was the first among founders to situate the missionary dimension of the Gospel call clearly within his rule. This study reawakens us to the challenge and genuineness of Francis' message for our own times.

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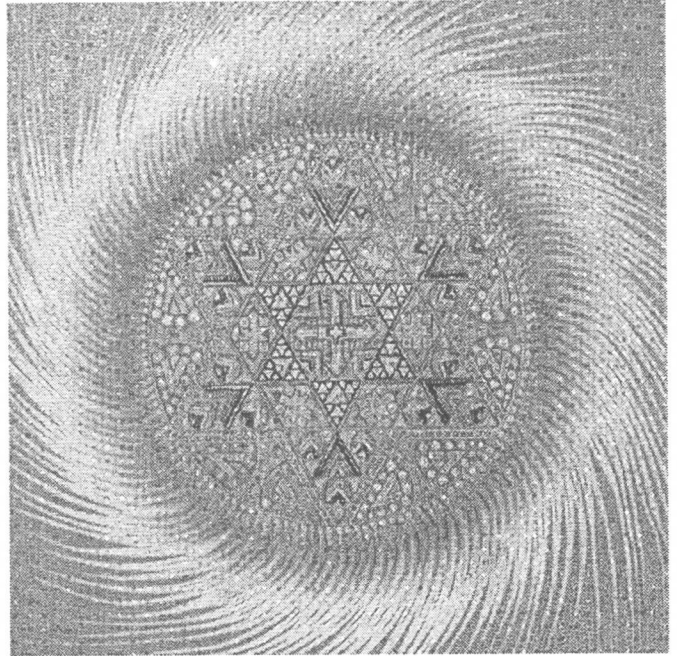
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# Go, Rebuild My Church!

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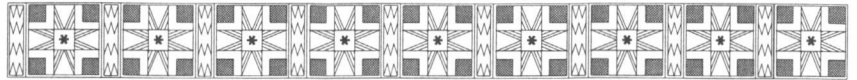
## The Unity of Contemplation and Mission



### Lesson Unit 10



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## he Unity of Contemplation and Mission

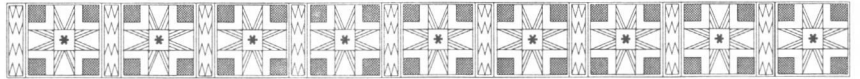
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As if it were God's Voice

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## As if it were God's Voice

Francis had always been attracted to the mystery of God. For hours, he would withdraw, pray, and meditate. Nothing and no one should ever disturb him in this.

But he had decided for a life in the world, he wanted to be poor with the poor, to proclaim the Kingdom of God, to embrace lepers. But when he saw the serene faces of Clare and of the other Sisters who lived secluded from the world in San Damiano, a big question arose in him: Should he not also withdraw from all the turmoil of the world? Would it not be better to live in the Carceri above or in any other lonely place? To avoid people and their quarrels? To know only God and to worship Him undisturbed and unhindered by the world?

How should he find an answer?

Francis knew that he could not give himself an answer. He needed the advice and prayer of others. So he turned to Clare, his beloved Sister, and to Brother Sylvester.



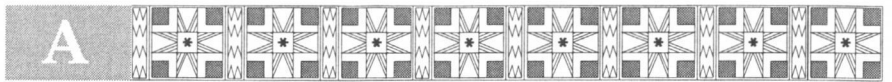
Francis prays for enlightenment for his way of Evangelical perfection.

And both told him the same thing: Francis, God did not call you only for your own sake; you must get your feet dirty. You should not completely retreat from the world, the people need you. Do what God did, who walked the earthly ways of human beings so that people may be able to meet Him and experience His

presence among them. The identical answers of those two beloved persons were to him, as if it was the voice of God Himself. And so Francis got involved in the destiny of the world, wholly turning to God who had identified Himself with the needs of the people (Fior 16 and LM XII,1f).



# Introduction



## Our World Longs for Love, Joy, and Unity

In our world people experience anxiety and fear in many ways. They long for joy, peace and unity, but cannot find it. The senselessness experienced by many people drives them to all kinds of searching and erring. This affects even religious communities. Up to a certain degree, we, too, are affected by this disease of the spirit.

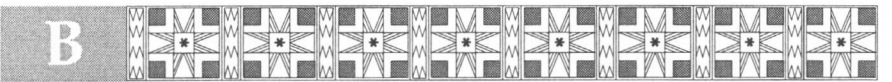
We are in need of orientation, or, in another word, contemplation. In pre-Christian times this word originally designated the activity of priests in ancient Rome who would mark off a segment of the sky to observe the flight of the birds, and thus tried to recognize and interpret the will of the gods. So contemplation means: to orientate oneself by the will of God.

In the christian tradition, it means focusing on

God, to see how He makes Himself known in nature, in history, and in His revelation, in order to find orientation for a life according to His will. In our time we rediscover what the mystics of all times had already experienced: contemplation as a silent openness to the divine, and the focusing with one's whole mind and heart on the presence of God.

Francis and Clare of Assisi are committed to both: the orientation by the will of God and His revelation and to the silencing of all speech before the mystery of God whom they experienced in a personal encounter. At the same time, they want to bring the whole world into the dynamics of God's will. For them, contemplation and mission are two sides of the same coin.

# Survey



## Francis and Clare: Aspects of Contemplation

What we know from Francis and Clare about contemplation has so many aspects that it would be difficult to do more than give a few indications. After a definition of the concept of contemplation, it will be shown that they wanted nothing else than to be people of contemplation. Both of them withdrew from the world in different

ways, but certainly not from the world as God's creation which was dear to them, nor from the world of sinful humanity to which they belonged. In encountering Jesus, Francis and also Clare in her own way, discovered that Christian contemplation includes action as well. They wanted "to live for Him who died for all" (1C 35).



Consequently, there should be no separation between the cloister and the world: *"The world is our cloister."* Commitment to God and engagement in the world form two sides of a complex reality that must not be separated. It follows from this that contemplation does not depend on the walls of the cloister. The place of contemplation is always that place where we are. Moreover, we can live united with God even in the world filled with conflicts and problems. This is true contemplation. In the midst of activity, contemplation remains the true source of strength. In union with God one should go through the world in order to give oneself. This is also true for work, in which *"the spirit of prayer and self-giving must not be extinguished."* At the end, some practical conclusions will be drawn.



Clare heals the sick with the sign of the Cross.

## Information

C



### he meaning of the word Contemplation according to Francis and Clare

Francis and Clare are contemplatives. In Francis' writings we come across the verb *contemplari* (to see, to observe) and in Clare's writings we find the noun *contemplatio*. Both mean less of an activity than of letting it happen. It is about keeping one's heart focused on God. Contemplation grows out of a keen awareness of the

reality of the world and of God's presence in it. *"To have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working"* (RegB 10:8) – that is contemplation. Also: to love God *"with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind and all our strength, ...and with every effort, every affection, every emotion, every wish and desire"* (RegNB 23:8).





Francis:

**"Let us wish for nothing else..."**

Whoever reads the writings of St. Francis can immediately trace the profundity of his contemplation. Whenever Francis speaks of God or Jesus, his language changes from a hapless penpusher, he becomes a poet. Poetically and eloquently he formulates his adoring love of God. Many parts of his writings are purest prayer, genuine hymns of great power. There are liturgical prefaces, litanies and chants. *The Canticle of Brother Sun* is the best known and most perfectly structured text. But there are also many others filled with an inner fire.

This, in itself, is already sufficient proof of the complementary nature of his contemplation and mission. For Francis has written all these texts so that others could draw benefit from them. Without being indiscreet, he wanted to let others have a share in his inner fervour. *The Canticle of Brother Sun* was composed after a severe crisis in his life, a time of sickness and depression, when Francis suddenly experienced such an irresistible attraction to God that all his doubts were blown away. Depression turns into jubilation; suffering and imminent death are transformed into life. Francis translates this experience into words and music so that his Brothers may go through the world to praise the tender love of God so that they could enthuse people into praising God. Even the litany that Francis wrote for Leo is a pastoral text. Francis saw how greatly Brother Leo was plagued by doubts and suffered from feelings of inferiority. So, in a way, he told him:

*You too, Brother Leo, are sealed with the sign of the Cross. Just let yourself be swept along by the Incomprehensible God, by this Mystery that can be addressed so directly and intimately with 'You' and again 'You', in connection with a variety of titles: Love, Beauty, Wisdom, Humility, Peace, Security... (cf. LaudDei).*

It is as if Francis had already known the Oriental method of prayer that consists in gathering and summing up one's inner self into one single



Francis aimed at a community ready to let itself be formed through contemplation, prayer and the liturgy.

word and then expressing, in this word, one's whole being (mantra). What is distinctive about Francis' method is that the words are directed to that great and unfathomable 'You'.

No wonder, then, that Thomas of Celano sees in Francis the ideal of all prayer:

*Indeed, that he might make his whole being a holocaust in many ways, he would set before his eyes Him who is simple to the greatest degree. Often, without moving his lips, he would meditate within himself and drawing external things within himself, he would lift his spirit to higher*





*things. All his attention and affection he directed with his whole being to the one thing he was asking of the Lord, not so much praying as becoming himself a prayer (2Cel 95).*

But, of course, before attaining this intensity of prayer Francis had a long way to go.

According to Francis, it is God alone who ought to get our full attention, nothing else is allowed to compete: We should wish for nothing else and have no other desire; we should find no

pleasure or delight in anything except in our Creator, Redeemer and Saviour; he alone is true God, who is perfect Good, all Good, every Good, the true and supreme Good (cf. RegNB 23: 9).

This text shows unequivocally: With his movement, Francis aimed at a community ready to let itself be formed, without any resistance, through contemplation, prayer, and the liturgy. However, how Francis wanted to put this contemplative dimension of his life into effect, has not been said.



### Clare: "Total self-surrender..."

How contemplation can be lived in a concrete way can be seen in Clare. She had probably wanted to live the way Francis did, but more on grounds dictated by the prevailing circumstances of that time than out of her own decision – she had to withdraw into the enclosure of San Damiano.

There she lived together with 50 sisters for over 40 years. In her canonization process it was stressed that her life was marked by long periods spent in solitude and silent prayer and inner experiences filled with light. The words that she read in Holy Scriptures or heard in the liturgy left an indelible impression on her. It changed into a vision in which she was totally absorbed for hours. She took care that good theologians interpreted the Gospel and she spent hours in meditation of these interpretations. In the same way, she was so fully aware of the eucharistic presence of Christ, that she gazed at him with amazement and embraced him with a burning heart. When Cardinal Hugolin visited San Damiano, she led him into the abyss of mystical experience. As he mentioned in an impressive letter to her, he still felt the pain months later of having had to emerge from it again. Clare experienced God's indwelling so intimately and concretely that it led her to statements that stressed the dignity of human beings in a unique way.

Let us try to get somehow the feel of this contemplative-mystical atmosphere. For Clare contemplation is essentially a love relationship. She writes to her friend, Agnes of Prague:



Clare's life was marked by long periods spent in solitude and silent prayer.



*Love Him totally Who gave Himself totally for your love. His beauty the sun and moon admire; and of His gifts there is no limit in abundance, preciousness and magnitude (3LAg 15f).*

Contemplation is the embrace of the Beloved whose beauty surpasses the glory of creation. This relation between *beauty* and intimate *love* belongs to this kind of contemplation, the so-called Mysticism of the Bride that filled the life of the mystics during those times. This motive runs through all the writings of St. Clare, beginning with the Privilege of Poverty which she obtained from Pope Innocence III in 1216 and whose wording she had a say in, up to the testament which she wrote in the face of death.

In her third letter to Agnes of Prague that has already been quoted, the motive of the enclosure is added to it.

She does not use this important concept of contemplative life in the sense of cloister walls which should protect the relationship with God. *Enclosure* that is the human body, or more precisely, the human heart. This intimate place becomes "*the holy place*" then in a human being, becomes the dwelling-place of God:

*Indeed, is it not clear that the soul of the faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself? For the heavens with the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator. Only the faithful soul is His dwelling place and throne, and this is possible only through the charity which the wicked do not have (3LAg 21-22).*

Clare could certainly not speak like this, if she had not experienced again and again the indwelling of God as a source of joy.

"*Beauty, intimate love, a living relationship with Christ, mysticism of the bride, the Indwelling of God in the soul*". These are probably the most important key words that describe the contemplation of Clare. But it should also be mentioned here that all these key words are connected with the motives of poverty and suffering (cf. Lesson Unit 19). One quotation may suffice here:

*Look upon Him Who became contemptible for you; and follow Him, making yourself contemptible in the world for Him... O most noble Queen,*

*gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him (2LAg 19f).*

One of the most impressive passages where Clare speaks of contemplation is also found in her third letter to Agnes of Prague:

*Place your mind before the mirror of eternity!  
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!  
Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance!  
And transform your whole being into the image of the Godhead Itself through contemplation!  
(3LAg 12f).*

Summing up we can say: Contemplation is the amazement that spontaneously bursts from the heart and transforms itself into praise and thanksgiving. It also means becoming silent and letting oneself be immersed in God, with whom we are reconciled in Christ. Contemplation is God's activity in us. We open ourselves to God in order to be transformed by him. Contemplation means amazement, awe, goodness, being deeply moved. It makes us aware of our nothingness, experiencing the pain in our emptiness, but at the same time becoming aware of our dig-



Contemplation means becoming silent and letting oneself be immersed in God.





## he Retreat:

### Abandoning the world within the world

nity. Contemplation is nothing else but allowing our heart to be completely open towards God.

Concerning contemplation, it is important to clarify a misunderstanding that even within the Christian tradition frequently appeared. Francis mentions in his Testament that he had "*left the world*". This expression can be understood in a platonic or a dualistic way.

What is meant by *platonic* or *dualistic*? These are two terms that express a world view that stands in sharp contrast to the Christian view, as we have already shown in the first lesson unit of this course. This world view sees in the material, visible, physical, and in the world in general something less valuable or even something evil which one should flee and distance oneself from. Those Christians who held on to such a philosophy aimed at "*abandoning the world*" at withdrawing from it in order to seek God alone on a lonely mountain peak or in a desert. The world of people, with their joys and cares, is then a matter of indifference to such a person.

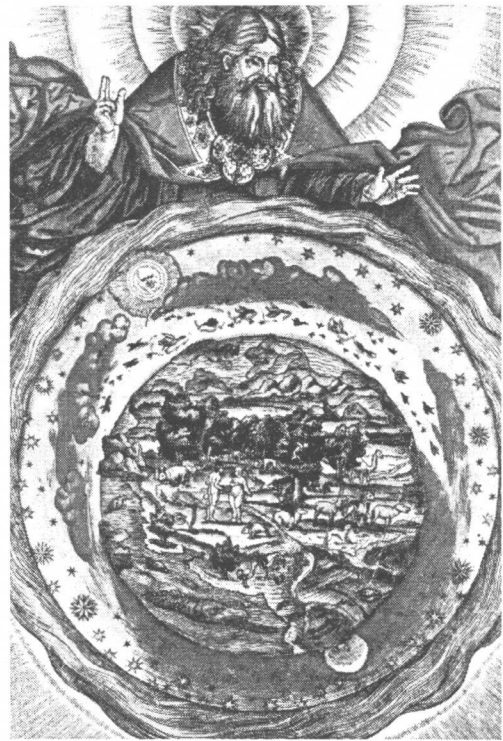
Such an attitude is foreign to our Christian faith, even if Christians too, keep falling into the temptation of dualism; for we believe in a God-made-Man, in the unfathomable mystery that has become flesh, that has taken root in human history once and for all, and so can only be found in this world. This conviction finds its central concept in the "*Kingdom of God*", a world that God wants to create and to which He calls us all. This conviction led a Protestant theologian in the 17th century to the marvellous phrase: "*The end of all of God's ways is the body*" (J.C. Oetinger).

What does Francis mean, when he speaks of "*leaving the world*?" And how does Clare understand her secluded life in San Damiano, sepa-

• from the world? The term *world* could mean different things:

#### **The world seen as Creation, as the Universe, the Cosmos, Heaven and Earth, everything:**

The word *omnia* (everything) occurs in the famous prayer of Francis "*My God and My All*." Here a religious conviction is being expressed: the world does not have its own justification for being; it has been created; and this is its dignity. Nobody can remove himself from this created world, because we all are part of it.



Francis' belief in creation is tangible and concrete, as his *Canticle of the Creatures* proves. And Clare expressed hers, in the face of death, in a short prayer: "*Lord, be praised, because You have created me*" (CL 46). For both of them,





*poverty* bears the same meaning as “to be created”. Poverty means: being dependent, having received life and not possessing it on one’s own account. In the Cantic of Brother Sun this condition of being a creature becomes the common denominator for all that exists.

• **The world in its contradiction:**

The world is seen as a place of contradiction. On the one hand, there is the world where God is active: His creation. On the other, there is the world where people assume attitudes of autonomy and opposition to God and lose themselves; a world that has declared itself independent of God. This contradictory nature of the world runs right through the heart of humanity. One cannot remove oneself from the real world. It is borne along with each one of us. In fact, it is discovered in those very places where it was thought to be far. All who have taken themselves to the desert or to an enclosure in a desire “to flee the world”, have had to experience how evil invades solitude and threatens life. The temptations of St. Anthony in Egypt (+ 356) are well known. But Francis and Clare, too, had similar experiences.

• **The world as human society:**

For this notion Francis used the term *saeculum*. What is meant is a concrete conception of a structured human context; determined by the limitations of time, circumstances, situations, values, moral concepts, deceptions. One can experience such a world as strange, hostile, threatening, a God-denying world. The person aware of it can be forced to the peripheries of this world, no longer finding a home in it. This was obviously the process Francis described in his Testament. The leper, who was rejected by the medieval society made Francis conscious of the fact that he too, was living at the periphery of society. Francis stopped and took a conscious step: he abandoned society in this sense in order to start a new life of penance. In other words, the world shows itself to be a closed circle in which the

human person gradually suffocates (cf. *sin* in the Gospel of John). A new outlet must be found. Jesus Christ and His Gospel become the point of reference on which one’s whole life must be founded.

To retreat from a society that sets itself up as absolute is therefore necessary, even essential to a Christian way of life. However, this does not mean withdrawal from the created world nor does it mean flight from the world.

Francis consequently considers himself as an itinerant preacher who tirelessly moves from one place to another and lives among the people. He retreats from time to time so as not to lose himself. For Clare, however, the time was not yet ripe for allowing her to go through the world as an itinerant preacher. She had to retreat to San Damiano with the Sisters and accept the strict enclosure imposed on her by Hugolin of Ostia. But if one takes a closer look at the language she uses to describe her life, it is very different from the one used by the Church: *claustrum* (Latin for *enclosure*) and *inclusa* (an enclosed person) do not appear. Clare is open towards the world: people seek her advice, she heals the sick who are brought to her, she accepts little children in her convent, she saves her convent and the city of Assisi twice in 1240 and in 1241 from



“The Lord Himself led me among lepers and I had mercy upon them” (Testament 2).

the troops of Frederic II. She says: “Whoever sees God will not be blind,” and she adds, “Whoever knows the Lord suffers nothing that is twisted” (CL 19).





## o live for Him who died for all

Francis was tempted at times to understand contemplation as total withdrawal from the world, and as one called it at that time, “*to lead an angelic life*”. On earth, people were to imitate as closely as possible a form of life supposed to be that of the angels. They were to contemplate nothing else besides God. Nothing else should be allowed to distract them, nor should they let themselves be defiled by the world. Apart from the fact that this is an illusion, such a conception of contemplative life cannot be reconciled with true Christianity.

In conversation with Clare and Brother Sylvester, Francis succeeds in freeing himself from this temptation and finds his own way of life:

*They all conferred together as true followers of justice, whether they should dwell among people or go to solitary places. But St. Francis who did not trust in his own skill, but had recourse to holy prayer before all transactions, chose not to live for himself alone, but for Him who died for us all, knowing that he was sent for this that he might win souls for God (1Cel 35).*

Because Francis and Clare were contemplating the life-story of Jesus and His Cross, Francis and Clare knew that they were sent. Everything revealed quite plainly to them that God wants our salvation. Conformity with the will of God can only be reached if one is just as concerned with the salvation of the world as God is. In other words: contemplation must have its source in Christ; and Christ lived and died for humanity. Jesus, the person who stands at the centre of contemplation, leads us directly back into the world.

Francis, happily, did not have to compromise with the exclusive option he had made for God and for Jesus Christ. But this very exclusiveness includes action and does not exclude it. In other words: God and the world do not confront each other as rivals. To whoever meditates and prays in a Christian spirit, God is present and can be found in all things. He is behind everything and above everything. Paul has expressed this on one occasion: “*God is all in all and all in each*” (1Cor 15:28).



## he World as Cloister: Contemplation as Mission

The word *cloister* as a name for the places where the friars live, is found nowhere in the writings of St. Francis. But the word *enclosure* (*claustrum*) can be found twice in his Rule for Hermitages. Yet, this word is not used in the monastic sense: it does not mean walls which enclose a church or a monastery. The people who meet there, stay

only for a certain limited period. Moreover, they can go out any time they want to.

*Enclosure* in the Franciscan sense is simply a place surrounded by hedges or some other natural barrier so that those who are outside cannot enter so easily. As we have already seen, Clare for her part, has given a wider and deeper mean-



ing to the enclosure which the Church had imposed on her.

She transformed it mystically. Is it surprising then, that the concepts *world* and *cloister* have the same meaning for the Franciscan movement! This is strikingly shown in a Franciscan mystery play where poverty appears as a person and is addressed by the brothers as a *Lady*:

*After she had slept peacefully, she hastily rose and asked to be shown the cloister. The friars led her up to the top of a hill, showed her the whole world as far as the eye could see and said: "This is our cloister, Lady!" (SC 63).*

The cloister is the world, the world is a cloister. The unity between our belonging to God and – at the same time – belonging to the world could hardly be expressed more clearly. Contemplation is possible everywhere and is demanded everywhere. And in order to be contemplative within an enclosure, we must bring the whole universe into the cloister. There must not be any enclosure of the mind and heart. Nothing and no one may be left outside. Everything and everyone is to be included in the contemplative way of life. M. Bartoli says of Clare's community: "It was a community so open as to be without boundaries; with a horizon as wide as the whole world" (Bartoli 86). Although she lived in an enclosure, her life radiated beyond it as a shining example (Bull of Canonization). The power of a good example was in itself an apostolate, a mission with far-reaching consequences. In her testament Clare writes:

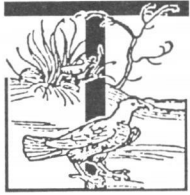
*For The Lord Himself not only has set us as an example and mirror for others, but also for our own sisters whom the Lord has called to our way of life (TestCl 6).*



For Clare everything and everyone is to be included in the contemplative way of life.

*Clare transcended the limits of the hermitage in two directions: from the inside towards the outside, by accepting that she was an example, a model, one who had something to say to the whole Church; and from the outside towards the inside, by the way in which she and her sisters welcomed whoever and whatever came from the outside, so that everything became their concern (Bartoli 87).*





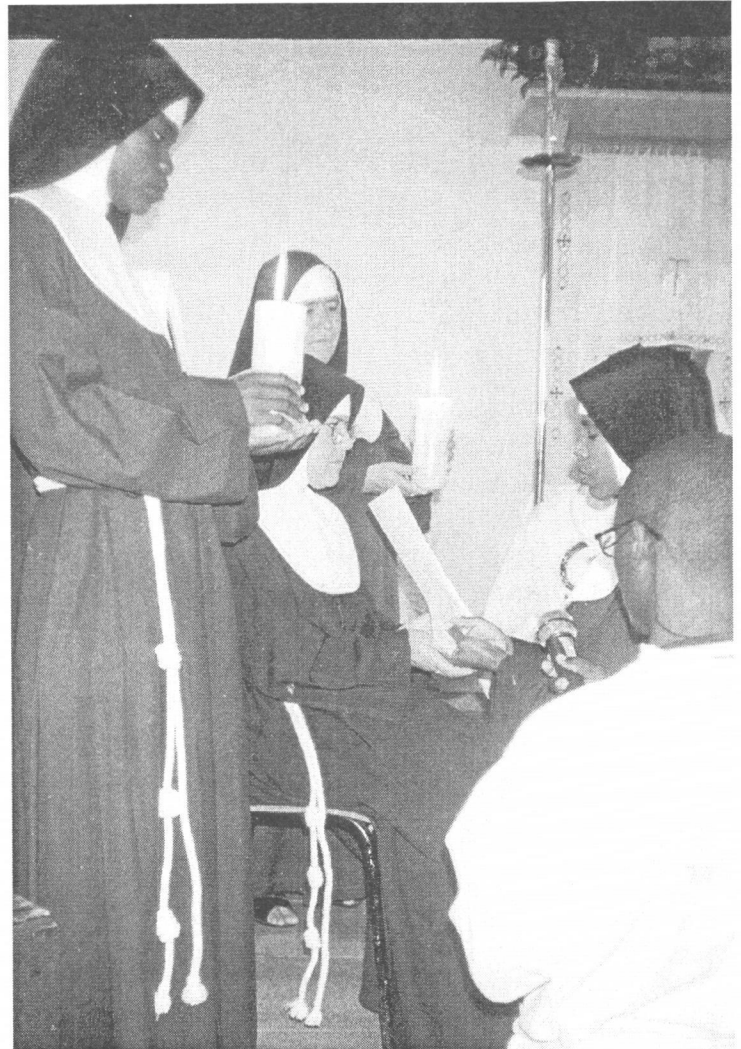
## aking the Cell along everywhere

The contemplative form of life was developed at an early stage in the Franciscan movement. Francis himself had written a rule providing for an “*enclosed area*” (cf. RegEr). The many hermitages of the period in central Italy – that were occasionally used by the friars – are visible evidence for this form of life. One need only think of the Carceri, Greccio, Fonte Colombo, Monte Casale, Le Celle, Poggio Bustone or La Verna.

Perhaps the life of the Poor Clares in the beginning can be compared to this life in hermitages. The Sisters understand poverty as a state of readiness, open to the call of God and the needs of the people – a state of availability to all. They want to let their very selves and their sisterly community life be penetrated with God’s Spirit. In a special way; they take Mary as their model. They want to follow the example of “*the Virgin made Church, the Palace*” where God has His Throne, the *Tent* in which God is sharing our pilgrim existence, a *Dwelling Place* in which He finds a home (cf. SalBVM).

They wish to be “*daughters of the heavenly Father, brides of the Holy Spirit, mothers who receive Jesus, who bear Him within themselves and who give birth to Him through a pious life*” (cf. 2EpFid 49-53; cf. CL).

Thus, from the very beginning there was an exclusively contemplative form of life within the Franciscan movement. However, the conclusion



The Poor Clare understands poverty as a state of availability to all.

must not be drawn that the other way of life, which is described as “*going through the world*”, is less contemplative. Francis once advised his brothers:

*Whenever you are on pilgrimage, let your wandering be as honest as if you had remained in an anchorite’s cell or in a hermitage. For wherever we are or wherever we wander, we have our cell with us. For Brother Body is our cell and the soul is the anchoress who dwells*





there for prayer and meditation. If the soul does not remain in her cell in peace and in solitude, then a monastic cell made by human hands is of little value (LP 80; cf. 2Cel 94).

If Clare describes the human heart as *enclosure*, Francis calls the body a *cell*. What is meant by this, should be lived everywhere and always.

It is a life principle which can express itself in different structures, in the world as well as behind the walls of a monastery, but will never be identical with any of them. These structures can be helpful, but they are not the contemplative way of life itself.



## More than a Hermitage: Contemplation as a lived-out reality

Contemplation is something more than a structure (more than a hermitage). This is clear from the following incident: A minister wanted to run away from his difficult responsibilities in the community. He was experiencing his “being in the world” as an evil from which he wished to escape. The hermitage became a temptation. He expects from it a perfect world, in which one can easily experience God’s presence. Francis however reminded that minister of the “*Deus meus et omnia*” (*My God and all Things*), and indicates that God is at the root of all reality.

*You should consider everything that makes it difficult for you to love God, as a special favour, even if other persons, whether friars or not, are responsible for it, or even if they go so far as to*

*do you physical violence. This is the way you should want it to be* (EpMin 2f).

It is remarkable to note that the phrase “you should want nothing else”, occurring in this context, is repeated from the Earlier Rule of 1221: “and you should want nothing else!” (EpMin 3; cf. RegNB 23:9).

If contemplation can be defined as a conformity with the will of God, then this patient suffering under evil, this bearing of conflict, this remaining in the world is true contemplation, “true obedience”. The letter to a Minister ought to be regarded as an introduction to contemplation. It is only thus that Francis can remain true to his concept that contemplation is possible in any place.



## Going through the world as a contemplative

From all that has been said up to now, it is obvious that also the missionary activity, “the going through the world” (RegNB 14-16) should be done in a spirit of contemplation. Whether Francis preaches, lives among the lepers, or ful-

fills despised tasks assigned to the poor – whatever he does is done out of the fullness of his encounter with God. There is a phrase from the literature of his time which expresses this most concise: Francis wanted “to abandon himself in the



*spirit of contemplation*". This phrase will be more easily understood, if it is compared to the Dominican phrase: "to communicate to others what has been experienced in contemplation." Francis and Clare go beyond that: with them contemplation never ceases. Indeed, the encounter with the lepers and the sick, the laborious work, the fraternal community living, the solidarity with the poor in suffering one's own weakness, and one's state of being mortal – all these are occasions for contemplation. Overcome by their realization of God's presence, who reveals Himself in all this, they surrender themselves completely to Him.



Clare heals the sick:  
The encounter with them are occasions for contemplation.



## Having the Spirit of the Lord: Prayer and Devotion

Clare was contemplative by nature. The spirit of prayer and her devotion to God influenced her as much as her spiritual brother and friend, Francis. Using one of his words, she wrote in her Rule that the Sisters should "have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working" (RC1 10:7).

In solidarity with the great majority of his contemporaries, manual labour was a passionate concern of Francis (cf. Test 20). That is why Clare

too, does not stop her weaving and embroidering, although she was constantly confined to bed from 1224 onwards. For both of them, the dignity of the human person, who is created by God, lies in his/her subordination to God in *devotio* (from *votum* = vow, total devotion) and in prayer. What must not happen, is that the human person – totally absorbed by heavy labour – loses his/her dignity in the process (cf. EpAnt 5; RegB 1).

10.



This conviction of St. Francis and St. Clare lies midway between the ideal of St. Benedict and our modern view. The Benedictine ideal is determined by the phrase "*Ora et Labora*" (pray and work). Prayer being the axis around which everything else turned. Given the background of the ancient world, that is understandable. The true quality of being human was thought to reach its fulfilment in leisure, not in work. Such leisure was the birthright of a free person. Heavy manual labour, to the contrary, was left to the slaves. Prayer as a spiritual activity of life was rather classified as leisure; it is here where the human being experiences himself/herself as human. So prayer takes first place. Work was the counterpole of prayer. In the Benedictine tradition work serves above all, the transmission of cultural values, rather than manual labour which was reserved to the lay brothers and the bonded serfs even in the monastery.

Francis and Clare – and this was new in their time – declared heavy manual work to be an expression of human and Christian solidarity. Prayer is no more placed side by side with work, but it finds its complement in it: the spirit of prayer and devotion must not be extinguished, but it should leave its seal on the perfection of the work. There is no co-existence of prayer and work, but the intermingling of both is the life programme of the Franciscan family.

In the meantime, humanity has taken one further step. In time, the Christians discovered that work was not just something burdensome, but a grace (cf. RegB 5:1), a sharing in the creative act of God, Who has not created a world complete and finished in itself once and for all, but Who deigned to let humanity participate in His creative work. Gradually, therefore, out of the Benedictine "*Ora et Labora*" there grew the "*Labora et Ora*". The axis about which in today's world everything revolves is work; prayer is only added. So it can unfortunately happen very often that work is given so much importance that prayer is forgotten over work, or deliberately neglected. It is regarded as a waste of time, something that keeps people from their legitimate work. The value of work has been raised to such

a degree that the dignity of the human person is measured by it, and an unemployed person is thus threatened with loss of face.



The spirit of prayer and devotion to God influenced Clare as much as her spiritual brother and friend, Francis.

In our time we possibly are about to take another decisive step in human history. In view of the fact that even in industrialized countries unemployment is increasing, and also in the future paid work will not be available for all, work will have to be defined anew and new areas of work found. The "*Ora et Labora*" assumes a more diverse form: the time for leisure and contemplation becomes longer, work will diversify in many activities (cf. LU 21). Therefore the





contemplative spirit, the receptivity for the mystery must flow into many new activities.

But this will remain true in any case: Work does not receive its Christian meaning primarily through the spirit of prayer and devotion or through an antecedent *good intention*, but through that which work is in itself; namely a sharing in the creativity of God, participation in the plan of Christ, to prepare humanity for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Work ought to help build "*the City of God*". That means work itself becomes a liturgical act. But this can only be achieved if it is integrated into the contemplative act.

*The synthesis that is to be worked out is prayer in action, in the midst of action, and through action. It is not enough to pray in one moment and to act in the next, nor is it sufficient to make some additional prayer, said alongside to our concrete Christian commitment in the world. The aim is to pray during the course of a total commitment. It is the experience of encountering God while encountering people. Such a synthesis, if it is to be complete and permanent, must make use of the whole wealth of prayer-life, as a privileged encounter with the Lord, and must take advantage as well of the truly religious value of work and of commitment that is genuinely striving for justice and fraternity. (Cardinal A. Lorscheider)*

Thus, contemplation must always lead to practical application, to work, to an active commitment to justice and peace, to the liberation of the poor from their state of unjust oppression, to the formation of an Asian, an African, a Latin American, a North American and a European way of being truly human. Contemplation looks deliberately towards the so-called profane areas. Not only Jesus Christ, God, religious texts and past realities need to be contemplated, meditated, and pondered upon. People whom we encounter, the work we are doing and the part of the world that has been entrusted to us also provide an integral basis for reflection. Perhaps this is what we need to learn from Francis and Clare today.

## Conclusions

Contemplation is a dimension of human life and not a privilege of a few. To be contemplative means to discover the meaning of life and of reality; seeing the world as a symbol that leads to the mystery of God. This includes the commitment "*to transform the world through the power of the Resurrection into the Kingdom of God.*" (M. Amaladoss).

To live as a contemplative does not mean to distance oneself from the world, but to get involved in it, – "*going through the world*" in an active way, – in order to change it into a better world. One can only discover God by discovering oneself and by relating to other people and to the world.

Our experience of life flows into our contemplation. It is the presupposition for a mission which means that we come in contact with the forces of evil in our existence. A contemplative person also promotes justice and peace, the preservation of God's creation and freedom.

Contemplation, understood correctly, is an invitation to become fully human. Every kind of contemplation that ignores the people around us is on the wrong track.

It is not necessary to renounce the world and follow a particular way of life; for example, to follow a rigorous ascetic program in an Ashram (hermitage), in a monastery or anywhere else. Be yourself wherever you are!



One can only discover God by discovering oneself and by relating to other people and to the world.



## Church and Franciscan Sources

Scripture	Ex 3:7f; Mt 25:31-46; 1 Cor 15:28; Jas 2:20f
Church Documents	
Franciscan Sources	SalBVM; LaudDei; EpAnt; 2 EpFid 49-53; EpMin 2f; RegNB 14-16; 23: 8f; RegB 5; 10: 8; RegEr; CL; Test 20; 1Cel 35; 2Cel 94f; SC 63; LM 12:1f; LP 80; Fior 16; 2 LAg 19f; 3 LAg 15f; RCl 10:7; TestCl 6
Inter-Franciscan Documents	
OFM, OFMConv, OFMCap	
Poor Clares	
Third Order Regular	Rule 20; 30
Secular Franciscans	
Supplements	

Each community may add further items.

## Exercises



### Exercise

#### Read the following text from the Inter-Franciscan Message of 'Mattli 1982':

*We observe with joy that in the Third World God is a reality who is experienced; in Asia we learn that meditation and silent presence before God are interwoven in the life of the people; in Africa the presence and experience of the living God is exteriorized and celebrated in song, rhythm and dance; in Latin America popular religion and the veneration of the saints are meaningful realities which also generate life in spite of all the exploitation.*

*We remember Francis of Assisi who wanted to adore God everywhere, at every moment, and wanted to love Him in all his creatures. He sought the silence of caves, forests and churches. He translated his own experience of God into pictures, gestures and drama. He played-out the mysteries of Jesus (Christmas, Easter, Eucharist). He identified himself with the needs of the people, seeing with their eyes and touch-*

*ing with their hands. In the world, in all his actions, he was totally one with God: before God, he was filled with the concerns of the world.*

*For that reason we want to give back to prayer, liturgy and silence the place they deserve. Without fear we want to encounter the outburst of the peoples' faith, and we want to participate creatively in it. When we stand before God with our people, all of our conflicts and sufferings, our expectations and hopes take on a dimension which transcends all, and at the same time fulfils.*

#### Task and Question

Develop the various aspects of contemplation from this text.

To what extent is the evaluation expressed in the text still valid today?





## Exercise

Read the following testimonies from different continents. They reveal to us important aspects of contemplation and its integration into life.

### • From South Korea: Contemplation and Friendship

*As a Korean Poor Clare and a convert from Confucianism, I see the unity of contemplation, and mission as a most vital aspect to missionary activity in the Church of Korea today. The unity of contemplation and mission can be seen in the light of the Yin and Yang theory of Confucianism:*

*"It is an attempt to explain the structure and the workings of the universe in terms of certain cosmic principles. The Yang force (Yang meaning light) represents the male element, activity and energy, and the Yin force (Yin meaning dark) represents the female element, inactivity and tolerance. These two forces are supposed to be in eternal process of harmonious interaction through which all phenomena of nature are created" (Wanne J. Joe).*

*We can apply this theory to the on-going unity and harmony of the impregnation of the Word of God in receptivity to the power of the Holy Spirit, which results in the Incarnation of the Word made Flesh in total giving to others. Receiving life and giving life is one and the same dynamic working of the Holy Spirit.*

*In the Orient, especially in Korea, loyalty to friendship is a prime value and is the fruit of deep love and unity. If any missionary goes to Korea, the value of fidelity to friendship unto death is a necessity to be kept in mind. It is so much part of the Korean soul. The value of faithful friendship is expressed by sincerity of heart which brings unity in word and actions, with a faithful love commitment. If this value is not embodied in the person of the missionary, by*

*presence and example, the result will be great harm to the inner life of the Korean people.*

*The longing for an undivided heart as the ideal of the Korean people is beautifully expressed in the poem of Chong Mong Chu (1337-1392) to his king:*

*"Though this frame should die and die,  
though I die a hundred times,  
my bleached bones all turn to dust,  
my very soul exist or not –  
What can change the undivided heart  
that glows with faith towards my Lord?"*

Sr. Mary Francis Kwon OSC

### Questions

1. What effect has this testimony on you?
2. What connection do you discern in this text between the active and the contemplative life?

### • From Africa: Impressions from a visit to Malawi

*The low sound of a huge drum called us to church for the Good Friday liturgy in Lilongwe. The church at the monastery of the Poor Clares was filled to capacity, with people sitting close together on mats on the floor. In the sanctuary behind the altar, the bamboo screen which separates the choir of the Poor Clares from the rest of the church, was opened. The Poor Clares had assembled in their choir, facing the priests and the congregation. The liturgy of Good Friday began with the entrance of the church choir dressed in African garments. They represented Jesus and his disciples. Their passion play was integrated into the liturgy. As the passion story unfolded, the singing of the Poor Clares became interwoven with the singing of the congregation, responding to the action in the sanctuary. Actors and audience, they all became active participants in the holy play, all equally involved. It was so real, it was not acting anymore. It*





all happened here and now. The play reached its climax, the crucifixion. Then the last words of Jesus rang out, cutting through a silence that was tangible. His last cry resounded from the walls of the church. It was finished. A subdued, gentle singing in different voices rose out of the silence and filled the room, as if expressing all the sadness and pain of a suffering world. As the Poor Clares were singing, accompanied by African musical instruments, they expressed in gestures the content of their song. They were praying with their whole being, spirit and body, completely at one. The disciples lowered the body of the Crucified, took him down from the Cross and carried Him away. Outside they wrapped Him in a white shroud, while the gentle sad singing that sounded close to weeping, was ebbing away. After some time the disciples entered the church again, carrying high on their shoulders a stretcher with the body completely covered in white cloth. Then they laid Him down on a long table in the sanctuary.

In the background of the church something was happening. A narrow passage was cleared in the middle of the church and three women bowing deeply down, with their foreheads almost touching the floor, were slowly moving on their knees through the middle aisle approaching the sanctuary where the body was laid out. The one in the middle was wrapped in a dark blue cloth (the colour of mourning) which hid her face. She was Mary. Again this gentle unforgettable singing that sounded so close to weeping! When they had reached the body, Mary bent over her dead son and embraced Him. An African lamentation began, as it is sung when the people mourn the death of a great chief. It seems to echo all the sorrows of the world. This was the moment when the whole community began to join the three women, one by one walking up to the body; everybody went passed the bier and bent over the figure in the shroud in veneration. Was it still a play? Was it reality? The shocking reality must have touched everyone: Jesus is dead. His death is a reality. It did not only happen long ago. It is still happening today: in all those who are persecuted, oppressed, tortured, murdered...

The veneration of the Cross, intercessions and communion following the passion play merged into one unity. The Sisters were singing and some of them

were playing African stringed instruments. After hours the liturgy came to an end.

On Easter Monday, we happened to pass the monastery of the Poor Clares again on our way from Madisi to Blantyre. The Easter Sunday Eucharist was about to end. We entered the church, but remained standing near the open doors at the back, as we did not want to disturb. Then we witnessed something that we would never forget. It was the time for thanksgiving after communion. The Poor Clares, holding green flowering branches of some tree in their hands, were singing and dancing – giving full expression to their joy over the Resurrection of the Lord. They raised the branches above their heads and waved them in rhythm to the song they were singing – a song of joy and victory, again accompanied by drums and stringed instruments. How different they sounded from those on Good Friday! The singing of the congregation harmonized with their clear voices. The people were swinging to the music. There was movement going through the whole church, a wave of joy, uniting all in the same rhythm. It was danced prayer, proclaiming the resurrection. MM

### Questions

1. How does this report affect you?
2. What relationship can you establish between the spirit of the African Liturgy and the theme of this lesson?
3. Do you believe that the dance here expresses a dimension which otherwise would be lost? Which one could it be?

- **From Brazil:**  
Ways of expressing contemplation within the context of liberation

**Attention:** Read the headings first and formulate your own ideas about the theme. Then you can read the whole text!

### Prayer nourished by action

Liberating prayer gets its material from a committed life: from the struggles, the collective efforts, the mistakes and the achieved victories. It thanks for steps already taken, prays – not so much for individual interests, – but in view of a whole evolution that has



come to pass. It intercedes for those who suffer and for those who make others suffer. In this kind of prayer the conflictive dimension of the liberating process becomes evident: confession of sins is spontaneous and collective. Nobody hides behind sterile words; but everybody opens his heart, revealing even the most intimate thoughts. It is a prayer that reflects how much liberation has already taken possession of the heart. Special material for accusation are: inconsistencies between what is being professed and what is being lived, as well as lack of solidarity and/or lack of commitment.

### ▶▶▶ **Prayer as a means of expression for a liberating community**

Personal prayer keeps its permanent and secure value. However, in committed groups prayer becomes a sharing of experiences and practices, illuminated by, and criticized in the light of faith and of the Gospel. This experience is not limited to a private communication between the soul and its God, but opens out to others, listening to them and communicating itself to them. One person comforts the other, comments on the problem of the other. They help each other mutually in the problem they have revealed. There is no sacred 'shame', wanting to hide divine visitations and insights. The majority have souls open like books in which anyone can read. This experience is revealing of the process of liberation that has already taken place in the midst of the community itself.

### ▶▶▶ **Liturgy as a celebration of life**

The canonical liturgy has always had a uniting character and gives expression to the catholicity of our faith. To a degree in which the communities integrate faith and life, mysticism and politics, they take into the liturgy the celebration of their life shared with others. In this area the people develop a great creativity. Due to the distinct sense these people have for all that is noble and sacred, there is no lack of dignity and sacredness.

The groups use symbols that are important for them; stage choreographies frequently present authentic religious plays – using bodily forms of expression – that are meaningful for the people.

### ▶▶▶ **Prayer as a revision of life**

Liberating prayer can serve as a critical examen of the attitudes and actions of the members of a commu-

nity. They know how to criticize each other without intending to hurt or feeling hurt themselves. What is important, are objective criteria: the Kingdom of God, liberation, attention paid to the progress of the people. In such a context, authentic conversions can happen, and help is extended, born out of the sincerity and loyalty of real commitment to each other.

### ▶▶▶ **Political holiness**

Out of the process of liberation, a new type of holiness was born: Besides fighting against one's own passions, which is a permanent task, another struggle is going on against mechanisms trying to exploit and destroy the community. Here very difficult, but very real virtues are arising, e.g. solidarity with others, participation in collective decision-making, loyalty to accepted decisions, capacity to overcome hatred of those who have made themselves agents at the service of exploiters of the poor, capacity to see further than immediate needs of the people and to work for a future society not yet existing, and which one will probably not live to see. This new type of asceticism has its own demands and renunciation, challenging a person to stay pure of heart and oriented towards the spirit of the Beatitudes.

### ▶▶▶ **Prophetic courage and historical patience**

Many committed Christians have the courage, born out of faith and prayer, to confront the powerful of this world and to fight in favour of the causes of the people and their trampled dignity. However, they have the patience to wait for the slow advance of the people, understanding its rhythm, as they themselves are accustomed to suffer oppression. They trust the people, their values, their capacity to maintain the struggle inspite of limitations, ambiguities and intellectual backwardness. They firmly believe in the power of the Spirit working in the humbled and suffering people and in the victory of their righteous cause. This attitude is born out of a contemplative vision of history whose only Lord is God.

### ▶▶▶ **A Paschal attitude according to Phil 2:6-9**

There is a very strong conviction that the Cross is a necessary step on the way to final victory. Resurrection is experienced as the moment when justice has triumphed, and when the people will be able to give up fighting because a life worth living will begin. In



*this sense, the resurrection of Christ is understood as being one immense process of liberation, gradually taking form through history. This is being celebrated and lived as a powerful manifestation of the presence of the Spirit in history.*

*So a new type of Christian people is born, deeply involved in the 'earthly city' as well as in the 'heavenly city,' convinced that the latter depends on how much we involve ourselves in the creation of this world. Heaven is not an enemy of the earth, but begins already on earth. Both live under the power of grace and of the liberating gesture of God in Jesus Christ. This is not mere theology anymore, but has become the life and mysticism of many Christians.*

Aloisio Cardinal Lorscheider, Archbishop of Fortaleza, Brazil, 1987.

### Questions

1. What aspects of prayer presented in this text are new to you ?
2. What connections can you establish between contemplation and liberation?
3. When, where and how have you ever had any experiences of community prayer that are comparable or the same as those mentioned here?

- **A document of the time from the former Soviet Union which may still become relevant in many parts of the world today – Prayer in the midst of persecution and under pressure:**

*"I refuse to speak with you!" It was not the first time I found myself within these walls. In the beginning it was very difficult to find the right way of behaving when confronted with the KGB. The majority of those who find themselves under interrogation try deception first and they invent stories concocting some fable or other. But the devil is a past master at cunning, much better than we are. Any conversation with him always ends in total victory for him; he plays with loaded dice. After all, their methods have been tried and tested and*

*refined over such a long period of time to such a degree that they can be used to tease out whatever information they need, and their victim is made out to be a betrayer.*

*About ten years ago, when I was first brought behind these walls, and they began to interrogate me about my acquaintance in the University's Philosophy Department, I took pains to think out something plausible – to say only 'favourable' things. But when I was back home again in my flat, I realized with horror that most of the questions had not been straightforward, that they were framed to learn something different from that which they were apparently probing. For example, I was asked where V. F. lived. I gave his address assuming that the KGB would be in a position to obtain that information anyway. But the judicial examining magistrate only wanted to find out how well I was acquainted with V.F. This is a universal ploy. I was being manipulated; I was being 'toyed' with. This encounter was enough to teach me for the rest of my life that there is only one possible tactic to use in dealing with the KGB: to refuse to enter into any conversation with them at all. Later the KGB employed various psychological tricks to entice me into a dialogue with them. The stern interrogating magistrate was replaced with a mild one. I was threatened with being committed to a psychiatric clinic and my parents were put under pressure. I tried to ignore the KGB completely.*

*I silently prayed. The Jesus-Prayer helped me especially: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' This prayer created an impenetrable force-field about me. Thanks to this prayer, I felt myself fully protected wherever I was, in whatever circumstances I found myself.*

*The Fathers of the Church recommend combatting the Devil by quite simply ignoring him, by giving him no credence at all. So I tried to ward off the persistent, interminable and most devious and cunning pressures of the interrogating magistrate by becoming totally indifferent to them. I did not cooperate with them at all. Thus it was that the experience of the dissidents and the wisdom of the ascetics were in accord. Solschenizyn once formulated a rule of thumb for behaving in the presence of the KGB: "Believe nothing, fear nothing, request nothing."*





And yet one more startling similarity between the methods of the Evil One and this organization leaps to the eye. How skillfully they exploit every single human weakness. How diabolically acute is their perception of evil in fact! Their very existence depends on the exploitation of the baser passions of our human nature: cowardice, envy, vanity, mistrust. When they see that there is something afoot, – seminars being organized, magazines, discussion groups, – they do not initiate a wave of arrests, but begin by attempting to rot this new and vital movement from within. They sow dissension among the people; they foment enmity among them.

“I refuse to speak with you.” This phrase was the only thing I said during my last visit to the KGB. Karmazkij left the room for ten minutes. During this time I sang to myself the well-known and familiar hymn “Jesu dulcis memoria” (Jesus, the very thought of Thee...). As I knew from experience how long an interrogation at the KGB could be, I had taken the precaution of bringing the hymnbook with me from home. When Karmazkij came back, he began again the attempt to start a conversation with me. Obviously he had received instructions from his superior. He tried an abstract argument.

“Tell me, Tatjana Michajlowna, where did you and Poresch get your faith in God from? You have been brought up after all in a normal Soviet family; your parents are intelligent people – atheists. You have absolutely no good social reasons for religious belief. You do not belong to the aristocratic class nor are you from a Kulak family (peasant farmers). What is universally valid for our society is that it cannot engender any kind of religious consciousness, since there is no seedbed for such a growth. There is no exploitation of one group by another. Atheistic propaganda is universal, everyone is literate; no one believes in fairy stories any more. What interests us here is why you – of all people – with your university education believe in such nonsense? Just like some old woman who can neither read nor write!”

It was not the first time such a profound conversation has been attempted at the KGB. Previously I used to rise to the occasion, explaining as best I could how it was I could believe, attempting to make it comprehensible to them that our faith could not be explained

away by attributing it to some sort of ‘Western influence.’ I tried to explain that the Living God Himself had entered into my soul, that there could be no greater joy than this new life in the Church. I do not know whether I was able to convey at least something of it all to them. Hardly, I think.

They are fighting against the Spirit, against something beyond their comprehension, against something they can only conceive of as the greatest danger to themselves, and something that they all too well understand to be their most dangerous opponent – after all, what are they but murderers, cynics, inhuman and diabolically cunning. They could not find any ‘materialistic’ explanation for the Christian Renewal in the Russia of today. And they will not find any either. But that does not prevent them from condemning that shining example of morality, the gentle and talented Wolodia Poresch to eleven years in prison. Tatjana Schtschipkowa, who likewise spent many years in jail. Tatjana Shchipkovna, who was also imprisoned for years on end, has almost lost her sight, while Sasha Ogorodnikow is gravely ill.

And how can we help them? We – who are their friends – temporarily at liberty? I feel a burning shame that my love was so helpless. And so, when Karmazkij asked for the second time, “Do you refuse to take the witness stand? Do you know what statutory obligation you have under Paragraph 181?”

I shook my head... which is tantamount to saying: “I do know; I am ready”.

Tatjana Goritschewa

### Questions

1. List 10 to 12 countries where you know that a similar situation exists.
2. Have you encountered situations in which you had no other recourse but prayer?

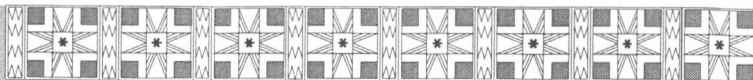
Share them!





# Applications

E



## Application

The Trappist monk **Thomas Merton** has recognized very exactly that Francis transcends the division of contemplation and action.

**Read the following text and, within your group, define your attitude to it.**

*Francis of Assisi did not regard himself as a monk. If he had wanted to become a monk, he could have found a whole crowd of monasteries to enter. Quite obviously he did not go around conscious of being a contemplative. And comparatives between active and contemplative life did not worry him in the least. Yet he led both at the same time, in full perfection. No charitable work was foreign to him; no work of mercy, either spiritual or temporal, that could not have found a place in his magnificent life. His freedom encompassed everything.*

*Francis could have had himself ordained. He refused this out of humility (for that also would have been a vocation and he had gone beyond vocations). Yet he possessed the perfection and the essence of the apostolic spirit of sacrifice and of love which belong to the life of a priest. One needs a moment to reflect that*

*Francis never said Mass - a fact that is scarcely credible with a person of his spirit.*

*If there is some recognized vocation of his time that Francis brought into relationship with his life, it was that of a hermit. The hermits were the only members of a definite class of religious which he imitated. He often retired into the mountains in order to pray and live alone. However, he never thought that he could have a 'vocation' to do anything else. He remained alone as long as the Spirit held him in this solitude, and then he let himself be led by the same Spirit into the towns and villages.*

*If he had thought about it, he would have perhaps recognized that his vocation was a prophetic one according to its nature. He was like a second Elijah or Elisha, instructed in solitude but led by God into the towns to announce a message.*

*All the different sides of the vocation of St. Francis show us that we are beyond the level of the usual states of life. But just for that reason it would be well for us as soon as we speak about the 'mixed life', or of an 'apostolic vocation', to imagine it in the form of a Francis or an Elijah.*



## Application

**Read the following statement:**

*For a person who has faith, reality is neither profane nor sacred, but simply 'sacramental': because to him everything reveals God, evokes God, and is imbued by divine reality. This is why Faith experience unifies life: it contemplates a reality unified by God, who is the origin and the destiny of all things created.*

*As a lifestyle, living faith implies a contemplative outlook on the world; it sees and encounters traces of God everywhere. However, it is not enough for Faith to be alive; it must also be genuine. Faith is only genuine when it becomes Love, Truth and Justice. It is not those people who 'accept God' who are pleasing to Him, but those who help to construct His King-*



dom of Truth, Love and Justice. Only such a committed faith is a salvific faith and therefore a genuine faith (cf. James 2: 20-21).

*This is the moment when man discovers God as The Holy One. It is impossible to play around with such an experience. However, this holy and totally serious God reveals Himself as a committed God, sensitive to the cries of the oppressed. He can say: "I saw the oppression of My people in Egypt... I heard their clamour against their oppressors, I considered their suffering and decided to come down and liberate them..." (Ex. 3:7f). Thus, the God who beckons man*

*in his prayer by saying: 'Come!', orders him in the same prayer to: 'See!' The God who calls is the same One Who asks for a conscious commitment to the cause of our oppressed brothers and sisters (cf. Mt. 25:31-46). Cardinal A. Lorscheider*

### Questions

1. Are there people in your circle of friends who pray like that?
2. What is characteristic of them?



### Application

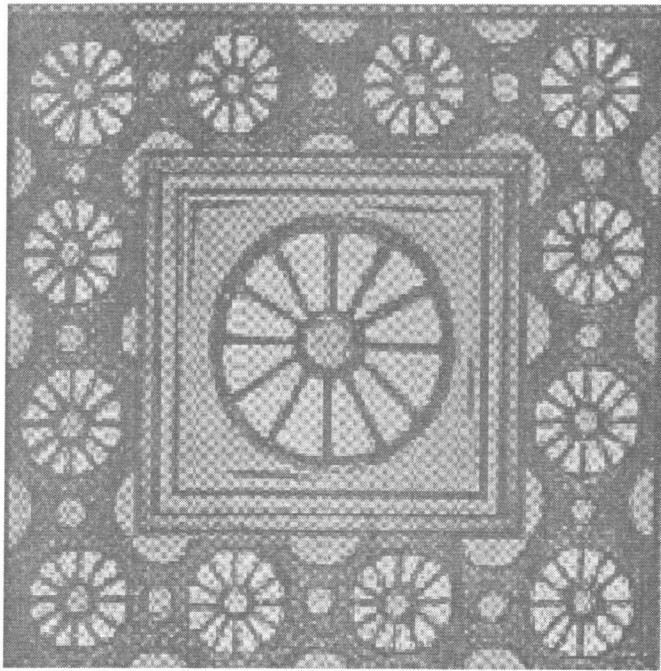
On the following page you will find expressions and symbols used in various world religions.

**Meditate on these. What do they convey to you? What similarities and differences can you establish between them?**

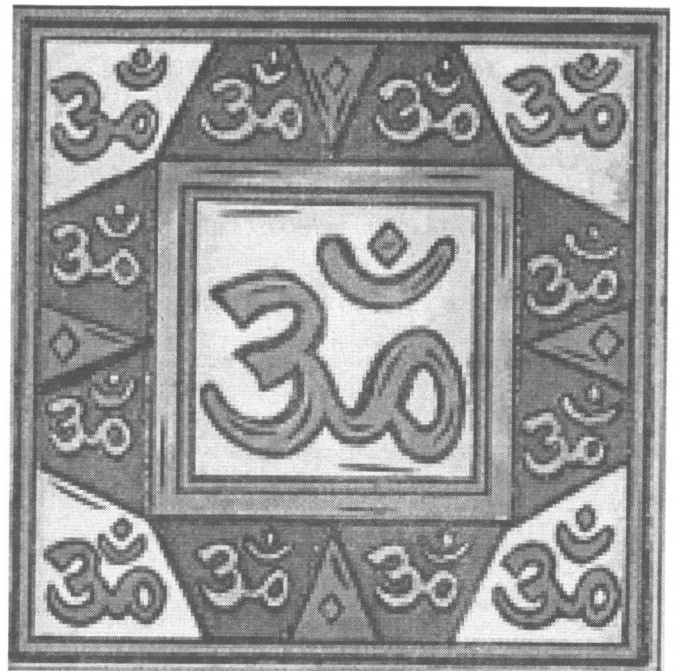


Picture 1: Woodcarving from Rwanda, Africa.

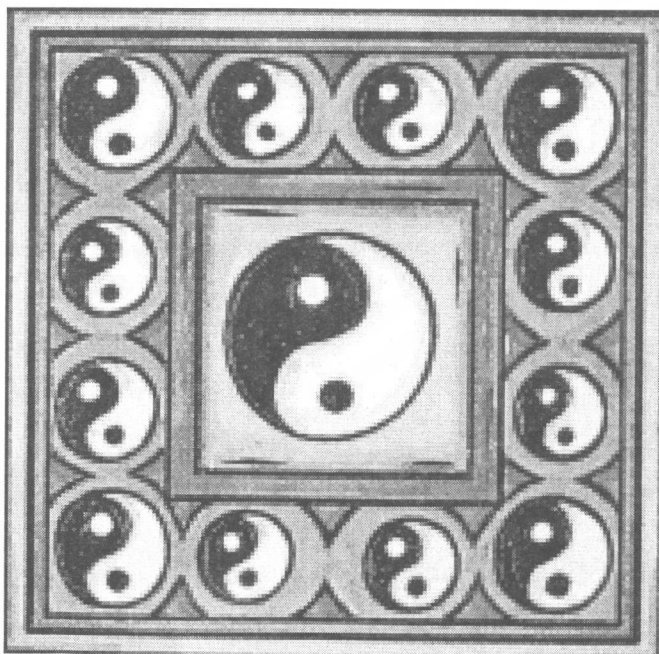




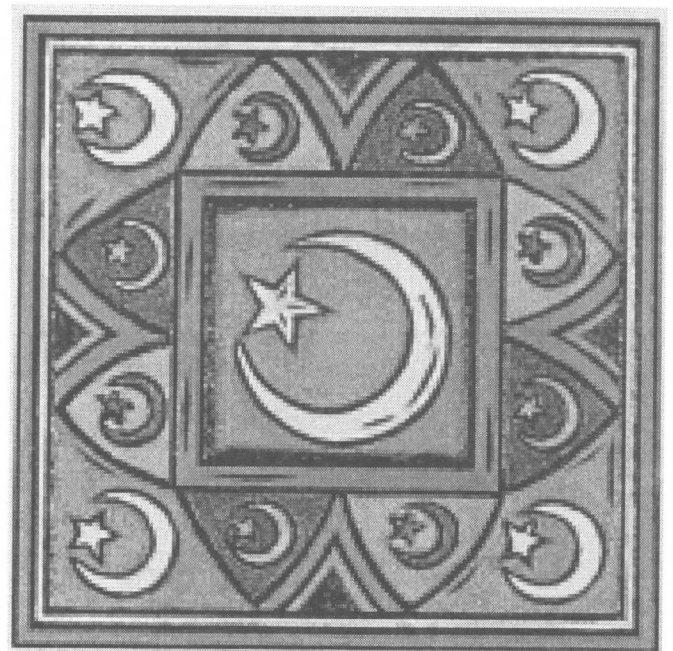
Picture 2: The Wheel of the Law, symbol for the eight-fold path of Buddhism.



Picture 4: AUM or OM (Sanskrit), symbol of the 'One Being', 'Brahma' in Hinduism.



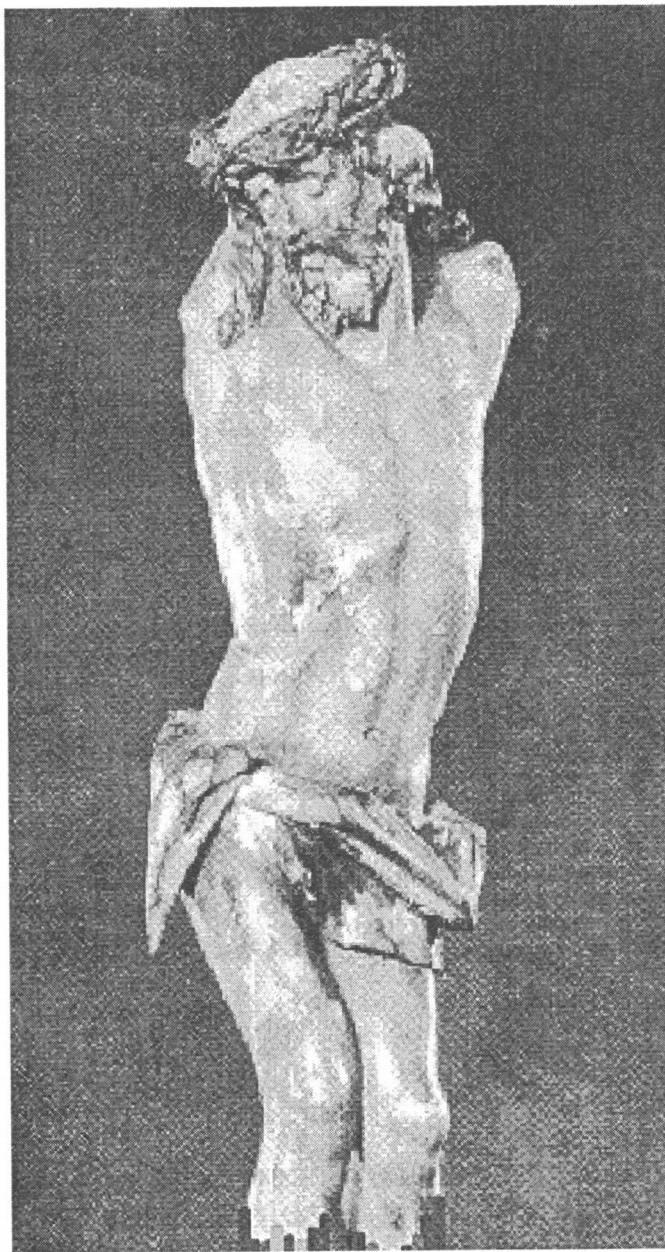
Picture 3: The Yin-Yang, symbolising the theory of Confucianism.



Picture 5: Islam



*You are  
the hands  
of Christ,  
for Christ  
has no hands  
but our hands  
to do  
His work  
today.*



*He has  
no feet  
but our feet,  
to lead  
humankind  
along  
His Path.*

*Christ has no lips, but ours,  
for we are God's Message  
both in word and deed.*

Picture 6: The Christian Symbol of the Cross, Middle Ages,  
Church of St. George, Cologne/Germany.







## Application

### Write you own Haiku!

We could express our experience in contemplation in a short poem, called Haiku. It originated in Japan. The traditional subject matter was nature and the seasons. But today one can find many different subjects treated in Haiku-form.

Haikus are fruits of an intensive listening and observing. It allows only three lines and a total of seventeen syllables in a pattern of 5-7-5 syllables per line. Here are some examples:

Swallows twittering  
on power lines in autumn:  
staff notation against azure. (MM)



Raindrops on a pond:  
concentric circles spread out,  
so does God's Good News!



Nailed to the wood  
of the strong Camelthorn-tree:  
Christ of Dorenfeld.



Sunset's transforming  
power changes colourfully  
Usako's Mountains.



Children, water, wood  
carrying on their backs:  
African women. (HG)



## Application

### Try: Scripture Sharing by Interactive Writing:

After an opening prayer the text (e.g. Mt. 4: 12-22) is read with different roles (Narrator and Jesus). Then the group – if more than ten – could break into smaller groups of five. Each participant writes on a separate piece of paper an idea, a question or statement referring to the text. The papers are handed around in silence to the next person, who comments on the statement of the first person etc. The papers are passed around in the same way once or twice. In this way, with each paper, a kind of dialogue develops regarding the first question or statement. After about half an hour the results can be shared in the

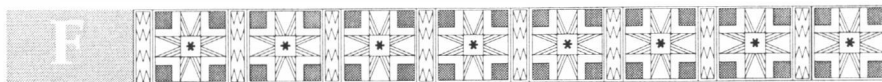
plenary (cf. S.Berg: Kreative Bibelarbeit in Gruppen).

*Some comments by participants after this method of Scripture Sharing:*

This was a very enriching sharing which has deepened my faith. It has proved that we can be complete only by sharing with others, then we grow spiritually. I was surprised at how deeply a Bible passage can speak to me. It was a source of deep meditation. I felt fascinated by the sharing, so my theme was stretched out further than I could have managed alone.



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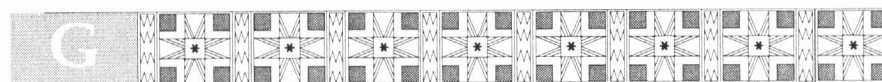
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