

Pietas and the Franciscan Imagination

The Call to Steadfast Holiness in the Capuchin Form of Life

A Thesis

submitted to the Faculty of

the School of Theology and Ministry

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the S.T.L. Degree

By

Rev. William H. Tarraza, O.F.M., Cap.

Boston College
School of Theology and Ministry

April 2023

Co-Director:

Sr. Margaret E. Guider, O.S.F., Th.D.

Associate Professor of Missiology

Professora Ordinaria

School of Theology and Ministry

Boston College

Co-Director:

Dr. Franklin T. Harkins, Ph.D.

Professor of Historical Theology

Professor Ordinarius

School of Theology and Ministry

Boston College

Abstract

The call to holiness manifested in the relationship between God and humankind contemporarily expresses the virtue of *pietas*, often translated as *piety*. The spiritual depth of this virtue reflects a Franciscan approach to holiness that emphasizes relational obligations epitomized by the Trinitarian relationship. With numerous challenges and difficulties in life, I argue that the steadfast character of holiness animates recent solemnly professed Capuchin friars in their baptismal call to holiness strengthened in their consecration to God. Chapter I provides an entry point to *pietas* using the theology of St. Bonaventure in the *Legenda Maior*. I trace the develop of *pietas* from its ancient roots as a defining virtue for the Roman people of the Empire and its Christian appropriation by Augustine. I then discuss some key features of Bonaventure's theology that informs his understanding of *pietas* as a particularly relational virtue consistent with his Franciscan identity. Chapter II begins with a survey of the Franciscan hermeneutical disputes in its history over the *Rule* of Saint Francis. This contextualizes the discussion of the call to holiness as an invitation for humanity to participate in the Divine nature through Baptism and the grace to share in the relationship (and thus accompanying duties) of God, the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit. The tendency to prioritize such duties has caused hierarchical divisions that respectively seek to advance communal evangelical proclamation while upholding fidelity to the revealed Truth of God. Consecrated life deepens this responsibility, especially with the expectations set by great witnesses that invigorates others to partake in the mission. Chapter III acknowledges the difficulties of communal discernment by offering a case study of an unanticipated moment of reconciliation through *pietas* between two prominent 20th century friars. This sets a framework to conclude the thesis with theological reflections for recent solemnly professed Capuchin friars to practice the virtue of *pietas* in the modern western world.

Acknowledgments

In gratitude to the Most High God for the many expressions of family in my life.

Thank you for showing and encouraging *pietas*.

A special word of thanks to
Jeri and Dennis Marshall
for their confidence and support.

Abbreviations

Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi

<i>Admon.</i>	<i>Ad Admonitiones</i> (Admonitions).
<i>LMin.</i>	<i>Epistola IV ad quondam ministrum</i> (Letter to a Minister).
<i>ER</i>	<i>Regula fratrum minorum</i> (the Earlier Rule).
<i>LR</i>	<i>Regula fratrum minorum</i> (the Later Rule with Papal seal 1223).
<i>Test.</i>	<i>Testamentum S. patris Francisci</i> (The Testament of Holy father Francis).
<i>L.E.O.</i>	<i>Espistola II</i> (A Letter to the Entire Order).

Writings of Bonaventure

<i>Brev.</i>	<i>Breviloquium</i> .
<i>Comm. Lc.</i>	<i>Commentarius in Evangelium S. Lucae</i> (Commentary on the Gospel of Saint Luke).
<i>De donis.</i>	<i>Collationes de Septem donis Spiritus Sacti</i> (Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit).
<i>Itin.</i>	<i>Itinerarium mentis in Deum</i> (A Guide for the Mind into God).
<i>Leg. Maj.</i>	<i>Legenda maior sancti Francisci</i> (The Major Legend of Saint Francis).
<i>Myst. Trin.</i>	<i>Questiones disputatae de mysterio Trinitatis</i> (Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity).

Other Primary Sources

<i>DcD.</i>	Augustinus Hipponensisi, <i>De ciuitate Dei</i> (The City of God).
<i>ST.</i>	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> (Summa).
<i>2Cel.</i>	Thomas of Celano, <i>Uita secunda sancti Francisci</i> (Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul).
<i>4 Miss.</i>	Bernard of Clairvaux, <i>Homiliae super 'Missus est.'</i>

Translations and Dictionaries

CMLED Chambers Murray Latin-English Dictionary.

FA:ED I *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents. Volume I, the Saint.*

FA:ED II *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents. Volume II, the Founder.*

Legislative and Ecclesial Documents

Cap. Con. *The Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor.*

CCC. *Catechism of the Catholic Church.*

GS *Gaudium et Spes.*

LG *Lumen Gentium.*

VC *Vita Consecrata.*

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Introduction

In his 2008 Circular Letter titled “Let Us Fan the Flame of Our Charism,” the General Minister of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, Mauro Jöhri, courageously asserts, “I believe that, with all due respect for each person’s interior life, the [Capuchin] fraternity can and should expect every single brother to live what he has promised to the full.”¹ Although many friars might take umbrage with his seemingly antagonistic approach, Brother Mauro implicitly exhorts all the friars to recall their initial fervent response that led them to solemnly profess the evangelical counsels, which may have faded or been forgotten over time. While these sentiments deserve non-judgmental care, this thesis addresses Capuchin friars who may experience disappointment, frustration, or discouragement *after* solemn profession when their formative expectations of Capuchin life encounter the shortcomings, generational or ideological gaps, and even indifference to the *Rule* of St. Francis of Assisi² and the *Capuchin Constitutions*.³

As a global entity, the Capuchins’ vast range of cultural, socio-political, ministerial, and ecclesial priorities and beliefs, albeit celebrated, present a challenge to promoting and upholding a defining feature of Capuchin life. Without discounting specific values, the fundamental unifying feature is, by virtue of baptism, a relationship with the Triune God. Called by Christ and promoted by Francis, the Capuchin form of life and its lived experience builds upon this relational foundation. Unexpectedly, this defining virtue is the Latin *pietas*, translated as piety.

¹ Mauro Jöhri, Circular Letter 4: “Let Us Fan the Flame of Our Charism” (Rome: Curia Generale dei Frati Minori Cappuccini, December 8, 2008), https://www.ofmcap.org/images/docs/lettere/ministro_generale/en/pdf/mj_2008_12_carisma_en.pdf.

² Francis of Assisi, *the Later Rule in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. 1, *the Saint*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999), 99-106. Henceforth, translations from this volume cited as *FA:ED* I.

³ *Constitutions of the Capuchin Friars Minor* (Rome: General Curia of the Capuchin Friars Minor, 2013). Henceforth *Cap. Con.*

The purpose of this thesis is to argue that the grace of *pietas*, theologically exemplified in Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior* (*Leg. Maj.*) and appropriated for a contemporary context, fortifies and orients recent solemnly professed friars in their resolve to faithfully persevere and preserve their vocational journey through steadfast holiness, which is a contemporary dynamic equivalent of *pietas*. Chapter 1, titled "Understanding *Pietas*," articulates Bonaventure's understanding of *pietas* revealed in his theological account of Francis that builds upon the secular origins and Christian appropriation of *pietas*. Since the *Leg. Maj.* is my entry point into the theology of *pietas*, I limit my use of Bonaventure's works to those written prior to the *Leg. Maj.* Chapter 2, titled "Recovering *Pietas*," provides a historical survey of the hermeneutical disputes in the Franciscan tradition of what constitutes fidelity to the *Rule* of Francis. The chapter then builds on Christian commitment and responsibility to relationship with God as the fundamental expression of *pietas* through an exposition of the call to holiness and renewal in light of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) reform movement. This relationship informs and orders individual and communal priorities for faithfully responding and sharing this relationship. The consecrated life deepens the baptismal call to holiness exemplified in the Capuchin tradition. Chapter 3, titled "Practicing *Pietas*," applies the exposition of the theological concepts to the lived experience of Capuchin life. The offered theological reflections and suggestions encourage recent solemnly professed friars to be reoriented in their perspectives of Capuchin life through *pietas* that accentuates the Franciscan significance of communal commitment to be steadfast on the journey toward union with God.

Some working definitions of terms and preliminary statements provide a groundwork for contextualizing this thesis. To avoid confusion with its modern connotation, I use *pietas* in its Latin form instead of "piety" unless other grammatical forms arise where the English translation

should be interpreted similarly to the noun *pietas*. I do not, however, change the word piety in quotations and citations of authors or translators unless noted. I understand *pietas* as *the virtuous grace to pursue steadfast holiness with faithful integrity and a firm disposition of vocational identity as a brother/sister of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. I acknowledge that this relational virtue may seem overly spiritualized or even romanticized; however, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, *pietas* involves striving to embrace its ideals while conscious of the human condition and fragility. By *steadfast holiness*, I mean a *firm resolve or commitment to persevere through disappointment and endure discouragement with the grace gifted by the Holy Spirit*. It also implies *the capacity to remain emotionally temperate when such challenges arise while embracing the gift of the Spirit*.

I often reference *recent solemnly professed friars*, which does not necessarily indicate age; rather, a Capuchin friar who has recently professed solemn vows (i.e., > 15 years). Though the intended audience is Capuchin men, I try to use inclusive language where applicable; however, I invite everyone to utilize what might be useful or adaptable according to each person's state of life or respective charism. An audience familiar with Franciscan idioms and history should know that I make no distinction between Francis' canonically approved Rule (*Regula Bullata*) and his spiritualized form of life in the Unapproved Rule (*Regula non Bullata*). Thus, references to the *Rule* should be understood as an integrated whole.

Finally, I humbly recognize my own human limitations and struggle to live *pietas* as a Capuchin Friar. I pray that my brother Capuchins may receive this work as a sign of my love and respect for them, for our Capuchin way of life, and as a personal response to Brother Mauro's encouragement to live what we have professed to the full.

Chapter 1

Understanding *Pietas*

This chapter theologically explores Bonaventure's concept of *pietas* according to his portrayal of Francis in the *Legenda Maior* (*Leg. Maj.*) to offer a Franciscan approach to faithfully engage the various disappointments and challenges that arise in consecrated life, especially for recent solemnly professed friars. As suggested in the introduction, my working definition of *pietas* is *the grace to resolutely pursue steadfast holiness with a firm disposition of vocational identity as a brother/sister of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. Although this definition may be applied to all Christians, this Capuchin exposition begins with a general examination of Bonaventure's use of *pietas* in the *Leg. Maj.* I then survey the secular origin and connotations of *pietas* in ancient Rome and show how Saint Augustine claims the virtue for Judeo-Christian appropriation. Next, I describe some key aspects of Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology that sets a framework for his portrayal of Francis who exhibits *pietas* at its highest level. Finally, I articulate in detail four features of *pietas* identified by Bonaventure that theologically illumines Francis' path to his life in the Trinity. The purpose is to provide a foundation for recovering *pietas* as a Capuchin disposition that promotes harmony with God, reconciliation within the fraternal brotherhood, and a witness of evangelical hope in the world.

Pietas* in the *Legenda Maior

During the General Chapter of Narbonne in 1260, the friars commission the re-elected General Minister, Bonaventure, to gather the existing biographical accounts of Francis to compile and assemble a single official biography of their beloved founder.⁴ Using his theological wisdom, acclaimed intellect, and interviews with friars who possess unmediated testimonies and

⁴ See: Regis Armstrong, "Introduction" in *Such is the Power of Love: Francis of Assisi as Seen by Bonaventure* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2007), 13.

memories of Francis, Bonaventure presents his completed work, the *Leg. Maj.* at the following general chapter.⁵ Bonaventure composes a comprehensive interpretation of Francis' life through the virtues he displays, virtues which reveal his internal conformity to God as manifested by the visible wounds of Christ imprinted on his own body. This extraordinary phenomenon exemplifies the product of a life completely entrenched in grace. Yet Bonaventure also intends to impart a model for the friars so that, by imitation of Francis, who meant to imitate Christ, they, too, may similarly respond to grace in their own lives.

In his theological account of Francis' life, Bonaventure assimilates his scholastic theological insights into the numerous hagiographical stories and accounts of Francis to assert the foundation of the canonical Order and ensure its permanence in the Church, according to the work of the Holy Spirit.⁶ Thus, he calls for all the friars to imitate Francis' proven path to sanctity by responding to their vocation according to the grace received. Many scholars have uncovered various structures embedded in the *Leg. Maj.* that reflect overarching principles and themes pervading his writings.⁷ While all the identified virtues illumine the path to holiness as

⁵ *Leg. Maj.* in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol. II, *the Founder*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong, J.A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000). Henceforth, translations from this volume cited as *FA:ED* II.

⁶ André Vauchez provides an outstanding explanation of Bonaventure's methodology for the *Leg. Maj.* that captures the fundamentals of Francis' life without placating the various disputes regarding the specifics for incorporating these features identically in Franciscan life. Bonaventure views the great expansion of the Franciscan Order as a movement of the Holy Spirit that draws individuals to live the gift of grace in the proven manner Francis had lived. Thus, according to Vauchez, Bonaventure "dehumanizes" Francis to build upon the virtuous gifts he received and acted upon, which begins an evangelical movement that continues today. While this sounds disgraceful for a modern audience, Bonaventure envisions the Order cemented in the life of the Church far beyond his own death. This requires a *timelessness* approach for all generations to imitate within their own context (similar to the Gospels). See: André Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*, trans. Michael F Custato (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 196-200.

⁷ Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. discerns a theological structure in his doctoral dissertation that utilizes the medieval concept of the *triplici via* or "the Threefold Way" for the chapters regarding the virtues in the *Legenda Maior*. Basically, he argues that chapters 1-4 and 14-15 are respectively historical in nature, while chapters 5-7 correspond to the purgative way, chapters 8-10 to the Illuminative way, 11-13 to the Unitive way. Yet after further analysis and contemplation, Armstrong identifies further approaches to theological structural patterns that reflect Bonaventure's theology of the Book of Creation, Book of Scripture, and the Book of Life. Armstrong develops in his article,

union with God, *pietas* is often the most underappreciated due to its modern association with external displays of holiness.⁸ Furthermore, *pietas* hardly arises as a recognized feature of the Franciscan charism. Yet Bonaventure's use of *pietas* in the *Leg. Maj.* reflects its medieval context that has undergone numerous developments in connotations from its pagan roots. Bonaventure builds his understanding of *pietas* on the fascinating appropriation of *pietas* in Christian theology. To recover the medieval concept of *pietas* for modern practice, one must first appreciate the virtue from Bonaventure's perspective. This exposition describes his theological concept of *pietas* and arrives at such an understanding to help prevent a modern audience from conflating contemporary connotations of *pietas* with his.

In his opening chapter of the *Leg. Maj.*, Bonaventure recounts select moments from Francis' life before his conversion. Whereas none of the previous biographers on which Bonaventure relies, like Thomas of Celano, explicate the extent of Francis' revelry and ambitious lifestyle, Bonaventure offers an interpretation as he delicately revises these examples of his impiety.⁹ For Bonaventure, Francis lives in a state of *ignorance* attributed to original sin;

"Towards an Unfolding of the Structure of St. Bonaventure's *Legenda Major*" *The Cord: a Franciscan Spiritual Review* 39, no. 1 (January 1989): 3-17. See: Regis J. Armstrong, *The Spiritual Theology of the Legenda Major*. Ph.D., Dissertation, Fordham University, 1978.

⁸ For a credible academic example of this sentiment, see the book, *Beyond Piety*, by Franciscan professor Gilberto Cavazos-Gonzalez, OFM. He understands piety in the modern sense of ritual recitations or devotional methods of prayer that are personal means of worship; however, he only explicitly references the word, piety, in his conclusion. He assumes his audience understands its contemporary meaning to suggest that while piety nourishes the worship of God, Christians should be moved by the Holy Spirit *from* piety *towards* evangelical action through works of justice. See: Gilberto Cavazos-González, *Beyond Piety: The Christian Spiritual Life, Justice, and Liberation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2010).

⁹ The editors of *FA:ED* incorporate the invaluable work done for the Latin critical edition for citations of Bonaventure's sources in his Legend. Their edition of the *Leg. Maj.* uses bold font to indicate the words and sentences that belong to previous biographies with its source in the left column margin. On the right column margin, the editors put all scripture references. Since Bonaventure incorporates further testimony and contributes much of his own theology to the *Leg. Maj.*, the editors choose to put that which is original to him in normal font. For this depiction of Francis' life before his conversion, Bonaventure only utilizes a single word from the second biography by Thomas of Celano, the Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul (*2Cel*) in its indicative imperfect tense, *ignorabat*. See: *Leg. Maj.* I.2 (*FA:ED* II, 531) and *2Cel.4* (*FA:ED* II, 241).

however, his failure to comply with a beggar's request for alms, "immediately turned [him] back to his heart."¹⁰ By being redirected inwardly toward God, he resolutely pledges to give outwardly "for the love of God" as he is able.¹¹ This moment begins his lifelong observance of "*indefessa pietate*" or "tireless piety."¹² Although it seems that Francis initiates this pursuit, Bonaventure intimates that *pietas* comes from God and leads back to God. He will take this idea further throughout the *Leg. Maj.*

Bonaventure titles chapter VIII of the *Leg. Maj.* "His Drive for Piety and How Irrational Creatures Were Drawn to Him."¹³ This chapter includes many instances of arguably the most endearing aspects of Francis' life that recount his filial relationship with animals, whom Francis calls his "brothers" or "sisters."¹⁴ The affectionate nature of these stories often overshadows the theological implication of their appearance in this particular chapter. Bonaventure conveys a connection between these seemingly fantastic tales and the pious disposition that Francis displays. Before these stories are told, Bonaventure articulates his concept of *pietas* through moments in Francis' life that, although not necessarily chronologically ordered, reflect its essence and provide context for this virtue to be imitated.¹⁵

¹⁰ "Statim ad cor reversus." *Leg. Maj.* 1.1 (*FA:ED* II, 531).

¹¹ "Promisit Domino Deo, quod nunquam ex tunc, dum adesset possibilitas petenibus pro amore domini se negaret." *Leg. Maj.* I.1 (*FA:ED* II, 531). The provided translation above is unclear to whom this applies (i.e., the one begging or to Francis). The Latin text provided here seems to indicate that Francis acts *for* the love of God.

¹² cf., *Leg. Maj.* I.2 (*FA:ED* II, 531).

¹³ "De pietatis affectu, et quomodo ratione carentia videbantur ad ipsum affici." *Leg. Maj.* VIII (*FA:ED* II, 586). Like *pietas*, the word *affectus* has many possible connotations. Furthermore, this word appears in the ablative case, which means that it could have several potential functions. Although the translators suggest a sense of movement towards something, I would like to suggest for the purposes of this thesis a different translation to accentuate a mode of steadfast holiness. If we consider the preposition *de* with *affectū* as an ablative of description and *pietatis* as the genitive, we could correctly translate this as "Concerning his state/condition of piety."

¹⁴ cf., *Leg. Maj.* VIII.8 (*FA:ED* II, 590).

¹⁵ Henceforth, the reader may assume that piety refers to the Latin *pietas* and its various forms unless otherwise noted.

One story that Bonaventure relates in this chapter especially reinforces *pietas* as the virtue that affords steadfast holiness when discouragements or disappointments arise:

[Francis] was often so deeply saddened by scandal given to the weak, that he felt he would be overcome unless he had been bolstered by the consolation of the Divine Mercy. One time when he was disturbed by some bad examples [of the friars], he anxiously prayed to the merciful father for his sons, and brought back a response of this sort from the Lord: “Why are you so upset poor little man? Have I set you up as a shepherd over my religion so that you can forget that I am its main protector? I have entrusted this to you, a simple man, so that the things that I work in you would be attributed not to human industry, but to divine grace. I have called, I will preserve, and I will pasture, and I will raise up others to make up for the fall of some. So that, even if they have not been born, I will have them born! No matter how severely this poor little religion is shaken it will always remain safe by my gift.”¹⁶

This story might resonate with recent solemnly professed friars who have idealized expectations of how they would like to live the Franciscan charism. From an ecclesial perspective, “scandal is an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil.”¹⁷ Francis’ strict interpretation of poverty might imply that those who compromise poverty not only sin against the *Rule* but also provide bad example for other friars, which leads them to make similar compromises. The prompting factor, which likely differs today from Francis’ perception, may be adapted to a variety of circumstances according to a friar’s ecclesial, devotional, fraternal, ministerial, or other

¹⁶ “Tanta frequenter afficiebatur moestitia super scandalo pusillorum ut deficere se putaret nisi divinae fuisset clementiae consolatione suffultus. Cum autem semel malis turbatus exemplis anxio spiritu misericordem patrem precaretur pro filiis responsum huiusmodi reportavit a domino: cur tu pauper homuncio conturbaris? An ego te super religionem meam sic pastorem institui ut me principalem nescias esse patronum? Hominem simplicem ad hoc te constitui ut quae in te fecero non humanae industriae sed supernae gratiae adscribantur. Ego vocavi servabo et pascam et aliis excidentibus alios subrogabo ita ut si nati non fuerint faciam illos nasci et quantiscumque fuerit impulsibus paupercula haec concussa religio salva semper meo munere permanebit.” *Leg. Maj.* XIII.3 (*FA:ED* II: 588). The *bad examples* that Bonaventure references likely allude to the careless or neglectful observance of the *Rule* by the friars.

¹⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 2284 (p. 551). Henceforth CCC.

ideological visions of Franciscan life. No matter the priority, God's response to Francis refocuses the perspective from the self to God. From this approach, a clearer understanding of *pietas* arises.

One slight yet significant change to Bonaventure's primary source, the *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* by Thomas of Celano (2*Cel*), highlights the theological turn. In Celano's account, God's answer to Francis suggests *pietas* is the initiative of the individual: "I have entrusted this to you, a simple man, so that the things that I work in you *for others to imitate may be followed by those who want to follow*."¹⁸ Bonaventure substitutes the "divine grace" that effects the good in Francis and the response of his followers. While Francis' prayer suggests a pious concern for his brothers, Bonaventure shows by contrast the divine initiative of *pietas* that stands against modern expectations of personal devotion and outward displays of holiness. God circumscribes the manifestation of *pietas* by assuring Francis of the permanence of the Order according to divine Providence and divine initiative. God rebukes Francis for his sadness, which he quickly renounces in trust that his own *pietas* towards God will not be overlooked.

However, this relational approach to *pietas* according to Bonaventure relies on its development from antiquity as a lauded pagan virtue for the Roman Empire. Saint Augustine seizes the term from its disfigured function for prideful Romans who attribute their glory and shame according to the level of their *pietas*. Thus, a brief overview of this Roman perspective and Saint Augustine's refutation provides a background for incorporating this virtue in modern Capuchin life.

¹⁸ "Hominem simplicem ad hoc te constitui ut quae in te fecero caeteris imitanda sequantur qui sequi voluerint." 2*Cel*.156 (FA:ED II, 349). Emphasis is my own. All Latin references except those from Francis of Assisi are cited from the Brepolis Library of Latin Texts (Brepolis.net)

Ancient Roman *Pietas* and Augustine's Refutation

Ancient connotations of *pietas* fundamentally reflect Roman socio-political values in the 2nd century BC.¹⁹ In pagan societies, the favor of the gods directly impacts their flourishing or demise. Divine favor depended on the proper worship and offerings of the people. The citizens of Rome understood the abundance of favorable outcomes in their imperial conquests to be a sign of the sovereign presence in the ancient world and a validation of their civic pride.

Defended by a strong military force and sustained by juridical codes founded on Greek thought, Roman citizenship provided a stable existence that *should* evoke gratitude and loyalty, feelings that imposed a corresponding response of indebtedness from those who enjoyed the benefits of order. *Pietas* captures this sentiment of devoted affection for the Roman Republic, which modern society calls patriotism.²⁰

While Roman society embraced Hellenistic influences in its politics, philosophy, and arts, *pietas* stood as a distinctly Roman disposition that influenced many aspects of Roman life.²¹

Pietas even becomes venerated as a god because of her kindness to Rome.²² Political theory and

¹⁹ James Hankins argues that the word *pietas* develops not only as an ancient western concept, but also in eastern philosophical and religious thought and principle. With western concepts of judicial systems foreign to eastern morality, Hankins cites an essay written by Xunzi, a founding member of Confucianism, that utilizes virtuous exercise of piety to maintain right order and proper social behavior. He even affirms the essential nature of this virtue for eastern social structures on which most other virtues hinge. See: James Hankins, "Pietas" *First Things* (November 2020): 42. Hankins does not expound on how *pietas* originates or adapts in western ideology.

²⁰ cf., James Hankins, "Pietas," 42.

²¹ In an article entitled, "the Concept of the Cosmopolitan Greek & Roman thought," Anthony A. Long expounds on the influence of Hellenistic thought that promotes social inclusivity where individuals are "citizens of the world" rather than limited to one's nation of origin. He concludes that while Roman Stoicism and politics embraced fundamentals of cosmopolitan Greek thought, including key figures such as Cicero and Seneca, yet nationalism remained a priority in the majority of the Roman world. See: A.A. Long "the Concept of the Cosmopolitan Greek & Roman thought." *Daedalus* 137, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 50-58.

²² See: Hendrik Wagenvoort, *Pietas: Selected Studies in Roman Religion*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1980), 15.

exemplary myths used for educational purposes prompted many classic thinkers to stress its vitality for societal enrichment and preservation of the good for the Empire. The two most notable figures who incorporate features of *pietas* in their thought are the Roman political philosopher Cicero and the philosophical poet Vergil. Their respective approaches contribute to the concept becoming definitively part of the Roman ethos.

As a leading pagan philosopher, Cicero's political thought influenced an ascending hierarchical social structure with the gods at the peak. Inclined by *pietas*, individuals made up the entity that upheld Roman society. Metaphorically, *pietas* foundationally supported the pillars that hold up the social and political structures. Quoting Cicero, Hankins writes, “ ‘in all probability, the disappearance of piety towards the gods will entail the disappearance of loyalty and social union among men as well, and of justice itself, the queen of all the virtues.’ ”²³ *Pietas* binded the individual to the *fatherland* overseen by the gods who protected and disciplined their subjects. Yet it is this divine vertical allegiance that set, ordered, and affirmed individual status within the structure. Thus, the social and political elite delighted in *pietas*, for it secured their exalted societal position. Yet for Cicero, without dutiful regard for the divine, the individual became the center which disfigured the unified pursuit for the glory of Rome. In his extensive research on the origins of *pietas*, James D. Garrison states, “the *pietas* of Cicero's *Republic* [was] more than right thinking: it [was] a public virtue identified with the ethos of the ruling class.”²⁴ For Rome to be a dominating force, each person had to know their societal position and role with loyal reverence to the governing body (i.e., the gods and rulers). It meant willingly putting the

²³ James Hankins, “Pietas,” 42.

²⁴ James. D Garrison, *Pietas from Vergil to Dryden* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 10-11.

self below the gods and the good of Rome. In this sense, *pietas* was the *expected* philosophical disposition for civil discipline and stability. Unlike the Christian virtue of humility, the tyrant elite exalted themselves in their perceived socio-political superiority, which reflected the prideful disposition of the gods.

The poet Vergil nuanced the concept of *pietas* to accentuate its relational effect, which signified imitation. In his epic, *Aeneid*, Vergil expressed *pietas* as the hero's "principal claim to glory."²⁵ The mythical character Aeneas, characterized by his courage, loyalty, and physical strength, became the exemplar of *pietas* through his dedication to his own father, the gods whom he obeyed, and the defense of the people whom he considered his own in the newly settled city of Rome.²⁶ Hendrik Wagenvoort summarizes what makes Aeneas' heroism remarkable: "...we see depicted a clash between self-interest and the divine calling. Aeneas is the hero because he sacrifices his own desires, his own love, for the formidable task of seeking a new land for the fugitives from Troy for whom a glorious future lay in wait."²⁷ The myth became the model for good Roman citizens to emulate.

Aeneas displayed a godly deference to his parental obligations when he heroically carried his father from the burning city of Troy. This eventually led to the foundation of the great empire whose leaders, the caesars, were likewise worthy of devotion. For Vergil, devotion and

²⁵ James Hankins, "Pietas," 42.

²⁶ The interpretation of Roman mythology, especially in artistic portrayals, varies according to the author or artists' underlying moral or philosophical message. The piety that Vergil attributes to Aeneas is not universally exemplary or even pious at all according to some ancient critics of his departure from Troy. Garrison succinctly cites several of these criticisms and refutations that accuse Aeneas of apparent impiety, disloyalty, and even cowardice for avoiding a would-be heroic battle to his death. In this estimation, Vergil refashions the epic myth to provide a moral archetype for the average Roman citizen. Yet Vergil's portrayal of *pietas* in Aeneas appeals to the relationships between people rather than the abstract nation. See: James. D Garrison, "History: Pietas and Roman Destiny" in *Pietas from Vergil to Dryden*, 61-92.

²⁷ Wagenvoort, *Pietas*, 17.

faithfulness to familial relationships informed the relationship between citizens and the *person* who rules over them.²⁸ Thus, relationships enlighten the responsibilities associated with them, which induces right action.²⁹ However, this brief overview captures the deceptive nature of Roman *pietas*. While Aeneas was characterized by the laudable traits of courage, loyalty, and physical strength, the myth also elevated and championed the evils of domination, vengeance, and violence.

The Roman concept of *pietas*, rooted in pride, social status, and duty toward the gods, family, and country, appeared as a façade veiling the malignity of those who proclaim it as the defining feature of Rome. Yet the sack of Rome by the Visigoths in 410 raised uncertainties about the god of Christianity recently embraced by the Roman Empire. Service of the pagan gods was rewarded with centuries of Roman dominance; service of the Christian God caused the empire to crumble slowly, the argument went. In his seminal refutation of this growing sentiment, *The City of God*, Saint Augustine addressed the falsity of the pagan religion that not only failed to convey truth but also corrupted those who abided by its principles. As a master of

²⁸ Gerald Malsbary reminds his audience that Vergil's concept of divine relationship indicates a strict sense of philosophical justice and the formality of connection between the gods and the human person. While Vergil's depiction of parental obligations and care appeal to emotional attachments for children and their parents, the gods bestow justice as, "‘revenge’ or strict retributory justice (e.g., at *Aeneid* II, 536)." See: Gerald Malsbary, "Pietas and the Origins of Western Culture," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 4 no.2 (2001), 114.

In other words, one must not equate the divine pagan bonds with the Judeo-Christian concept of a covenantal relationship.

²⁹ The secular development of *pietas* as an affective expression often translated as "pity" has vague origins. Since "pity" and "piety" have the same derivative, some overlapping information about its various interpretations indicate the secular emotional sentiment may be attributed to Vergil's portrayal of sorrowful pleas to the gods made by Aeneas, which evokes sorrowful feelings for his initially unnoticed piety. See: Garrison, *Pietas*, 67. While this conclusion seems possible, Saint Augustine assumedly states the common affective perception of piety centuries after Vergil while addressing a Roman worldview. He notes, "while in popular speech [piety] is constantly used in connection with acts of compassion - the reason for this being, in my opinion, that God especially commands the performance of such acts, and bears witness that they please him as much as sacrifices or even more than sacrifices" (*DcD* I.X.I). English translation: Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. by Henry Bettenson, (London: Penguin Publishing, 1984), 373. Considering Augustine's assumption that piety implies compassion, I will incorporate this sentiment acknowledging that the term may have adopted this further connotation within the Christian appropriation.

rhetoric, he framed his defense of Christianity by holding the Romans' worldview before a mirror that reflected their own demise through their praise of arrogance and pride. Among many other corrections, Augustine addresses their false perception of *pietas* to reaffirm and instill authentic devotion to the Triune God.³⁰

Throughout his reproach of the City of Man, Augustine contrasted perceived worldly losses against celestial rewards that proceed from fidelity to Christ. The unimaginable fall of the Roman Empire devastated those who had devoted themselves to personal righteousness for divine favor and success. Their dutiful fidelity now appeared both personally and civilly unprofitable since the entire empire experiences shame and defeat, especially since the expectation for good fortune applied to this life alone. Augustine addressed the question of theodicy by calling to mind the people's pervading indifference to or consent of evil. A passive tolerance of the evil that was committed by a few fellow-citizens made everyone subject to the same punishment, because none of these bystanders made any effort to prevent or discourage it. Augustine states,

Good and bad are chastized together, not because both alike live evil lives, but because both alike, though not in the same degree, love this temporal life. But the good ought to have despised it, so that the others might be reformed and corrected and might aim at life eternal; or, if they refuse to be partners in this enterprise, so that they might be born with, and loved as Christians should love their enemies, since in this life it is always uncertain whether or not they are likely to experience a change of heart.³¹

³⁰ *Pietas* in its various forms appears at least 90 times throughout the *City of God* and over 850 references throughout Augustine's many works according to the Brepolis Library of Latin Texts catalogue. Once again, the scope of this thesis limits the ability to discuss the nuances of Augustine's use of *pietas*. Yet the major shift in Christian piety occurs due to Augustine's intentional reformulation of its application from gods to the one true God. See: Brepolis.net

³¹ "Flagellantur enim simul, non quia simul agunt malam uitam, sed quia simul amant temporalem uitam, non quidem aequaliter, sed tamen simul, quam boni contemnere deberent, ut illi correpti atque correcti consequerentur aeternam, ad quam consequendam si nollent esse socii, ferrentur et diligerentur inimici, quia donec uiuunt semper incertum est utrum uoluntatem sint in melius mutaturi." *DcD* I.I.IX (Bettenson, 16).

Augustine inferred a conditional sense of loyalty to the gods. In other words, even the good lack *pietas* because their devotion is contingent on the fulfillment of their expectations by the gods. Thus, the alleged glorious *pietas* associated with a Roman ethos had less to do with Rome than with personal gain.³² For Christians, expectations for eternal life sprang from fidelity to Christ and His teachings, liberating them from the erroneous perception of unmerited suffering. The loving relationship is the reward in and of itself. However, Christ reveals the eternal nature of this relationship that seals an unbreakable bond that even mortal death cannot rupture. Christian *pietas* surpassed a transactional sense of relationship, for the reward of eternal life may never be merited or earned without grace. Thus, God showed God's *pietas* by freely offering eternal life to those who freely chose to forgo worldly solaces and embrace the relational Truth revealed in Christ.

Augustine augmented this unconditioned nature of Christian *pietas* by suggesting that the personal plights paradoxically revealed the true interior disposition of a seemingly pious person. Since *pietas* involved a transcendental relationship (whether the intangible *fatherland* of the Roman Empire, its patron gods, or the Triune God), the strength of the bond could be measured by the extent of an individual's willingness to preserve his fidelity and loyalty when *tested*. Augustine asserts, "And so the good have a different reason for which they might be afflicted by temporal evils, such a reason as Job had: so that the human soul might prove and know for itself

³² Garrison mentions Augustine's emphasis on actual impiety that Aeneas exhibits because of his pride. Garrison writes, "the model for Roman history is, in effect provided by the fallen angels, whose ambition and desire produces the turbulence that characterizes the city of man. when, on the other hand, Augustine repeats *Aeneid* 6.853, he discredits Vergil's definition of imperial *pietas* by denying that Rome ever battered down the proud or spared the humble" (Garrison, *Pietas*, 89). Augustine alludes to historical evidence that indicates even the origins of the Roman Empire entail civil wars to assert powerful positions in its formation. Thus, Harrison concludes, "Augustine takes familial violence as the essential theme of Roman history" (Garrison, *Pietas*, 89). Their concept of piety has little integrity and consistency.

with how much of the virtue of piety it freely loves God.”³³ Devotion that was surrendered in the face of adversity hardly exhibited a real sense of mutual relationship. The willing freedom portrayed by the early Christian martyrs manifested an unbreakable relational bond unsevered by fear or pain. The agonizing reality of this romanticized unconditional commitment rested in experiences of loneliness or doubt when the trials arose. Yet the strength of *pietas* bestowed upon those who freely exercised the virtue had infinite power to endure trials and anguish when the individual was motivated by their faithful *relationship* to God. Those who blamed the fall of the Roman Empire on Christianity failed to understand that the real reason for their suffering was their reliance on a false sense of power in empire and the gods. The true power of *pietas* came from God who bestows it (cf., Jn 19:11a).³⁴

Reframing the downfall of the Roman Empire through a critique of its false religious beliefs, Augustine declared the sovereign freedom to be bestowed by God alone and offered to God alone. The mirror placed before Roman society reflected the fundamental reason for their suffering: pride. The false *pietas* attributed to powerless gods meant little when confronting humiliation and defeat. Christian power, however, continued to confound them, for Christ reveals the power of God is humility (cf., 1 Cor 1:24). To a people clinging to their dying tradition, Augustine offered this powerful life preserver in the Christian faith. He also acknowledged the underlying pride that pervades the Roman ethos. This vice prevented them from accepting the Truth in humility, demonstrated by Christ.³⁵ His power contradicted its

³³ “Deinde habent aliam causam boni, quare temporalibus affligantur malis, qualem habuit iob: ut sibi ipse humanus animus sit probatus et cognitus, quanta uirtute pietatis gratis deum diligit” (I.I.IX). Translation provided by Dennis Surrency, OFM, Cap., Ph.D., S.T.L. to reflect the literal sense not captured in Bettenson’s translation, who interprets the Latin, “that he may learn for himself what is the degree of disinterested devotion that he offers to God,” (Bettenson, *City of God*, 17).

³⁴ All Sacred Scripture passages are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

³⁵ cf., Bettenson, *City of God*, 416.

worldly perceptions since it is not gained through conquest and domination; rather, God freely bestowed it upon those who freely offered themselves in charity back to God, which manifested in genuine *pietas*. Thus the actual relational nature associated with Christian *pietas* begins to emerge: not only do humans offer *pietas* to God; God also bestows *pietas* on humanity.

The Trinitarian Pattern of *Pietas*

While Augustine's refutation of the pagan understanding of *pietas* sets a foundation for its Christian appropriation, a concrete definition has yet to be uncovered. Thus far, it is evident that *pietas* is first a self-less *disposition* with an outward focus. It conveys a sense of unconditional loyalty or fidelity that wills the good for the other. With its familial connotations, it rightly applies to a child's loving yet dutiful response to his parents. Finally, "true piety..." seems to also transmit a force or energy that "...gives power to all things."³⁶ From these conclusions, *pietas* arguably reflects the relational nature of the Trinity. A further explanation of this comparison through Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology shows how the human person, who is created in the image of the Trinity, rightly exercises *pietas* as a means to steadfast holiness in life.

In his *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, Bonaventure uses *pietas* to describe relational nature of the Trinity.³⁷ Like the concept of *pietas*, words alone cannot capture the essence of the Trinity in its magnificence. He writes, "no brother, I could not lead you to the

³⁶ cf., *Leg. Maj.* XIII.1 (*FA:ED* II, 586).

³⁷ *De donis*. Those familiar with Bonaventure know that this work is written after the *Leg. Maj.*. As noted in the introduction, this thesis uses Bonaventure's works *before* the *Leg. Maj.* as a means of limiting this argument to the insights that Bonaventure has when he writes the *Leg. Maj.*. This is the only reference I make to this work. I use this reference here to show how difficult it is for Bonaventure to convey the spiritual depth of *pietas*. My perception is that the *Collations* reveal his own encounter with *pietas* that permits his participation in the relational nature of the Trinity during his time as General Minister, which undoubtedly presents him with many trials and difficulties.

original source of piety except through the act and the exercise of piety.”³⁸ Since *pietas* fundamentally involves divine relationship, it is by means of revelation and experience that one may begin to grasp its powerful force.³⁹ The fully revealed Truth in Sacred Scripture calls for the fullest and most complete trust that God withholds nothing in God’s Self-disclosure and is thus, trustworthy. According to Bonaventure, the highest form of *pietas* [*piissime*] allows humankind to lovingly confess the Triune essence of God revealed in paschal mystery by analogy [i.e., Father, Son, and Spirit].⁴⁰ This approach privileges a contemplative awareness of the inner relationship within the Trinity that is so far beyond human intellectual capacity. Bonaventure’s Trinitarian theology hinges on earlier perspectives by Augustine and Richard of St. Victor that involve a movement of ascent from reflections to the image by means of a ladder.⁴¹ While Bonaventure affirms this approach, he nuances his approach stating that God is both “the highest Good [and] therefore, the most highly self-diffusive.”⁴² In other words, God constantly wills the Good and thus naturally gives of Godself. This eternally generates a circular mutuality of love incapable of deprivation.⁴³ The Trinity eternally shares this love within itself without end. The

³⁸ “Non frater non possem te ducere ad originale principium pietatis nisi per actum et exercitium pietatis” *De donis*. III.9. Cited in Maria Calisi, *Trinitarian Perspectives in the Franciscan Theological Tradition*, (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2008), 11.

³⁹ cf., Calisi, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 27.

⁴⁰ cf., “Ratio autem huius veritatis haec est quia fides cum sit principium cultus dei et fundamentum eius quae secundum pietatem est doctrinae dictat de deo esse sentiendum altissime et piissime” *Brev* I.2.4. Dominic Monti translates *piissime* - “in the most loving way.” While this is an adequate translation, I emphasize Bonaventure’s use of the superlative for piety. See: Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, vol. 9, ed. and trans. by Dominic V. Monti, O.F.M. (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 2005), 31.

⁴¹ cf., Rik Van Nieuwenhove, *An Introduction to Medieval Theology*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 141.

⁴² “Summum igitur bonum summe diffusivum est sui” *Itin*. VI.2a in Regis Armstrong, *Into God: Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* of Saint Bonaventure, an Annotated Translation (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 125.

⁴³ cf., *Brev*. I.6.5 (Monti, 47). Bonaventure’s departure from Richard of St. Victor occurs in what necessarily follows because of his premise that God is most diffusive.

question arises whether this love may extend beyond itself into “beings” that are created by its love.

Natural reason would logically conclude that if the diffusive nature of the Trinity extends its goodness beyond itself, a deficiency would inevitably arise. Yet the infinite reality of this relationship confirms neither a deficit nor an addition by including the participation of creation.

In his *Disputed Questions on the Holy Trinity*, Bonaventure states,

Since the essence is identical in the three persons, the distinctive relation of the Trinity does not involve a relation to something outside itself. Therefore there is no dependence of one person on another; therefore they all exist equally and unchangeably. Therefore, if one is *necessary*, all are *necessary*. Consequently... these three exist together; namely, Trinity, necessity, and will. And there is no repugnance among them, but the highest harmony, just as the supreme unity, truth, and goodness exist in harmony.⁴⁴

The necessity of “highest fecundity [*summam fecunditatem*]” in the Father according to Bonaventure accentuates the fundamental nature of God as *relational*. Maria Calisi notes the originality of this feature in Bonaventure’s Trinitarian theology that “the Father *must* beget the Son.”⁴⁵ Yet this truth corresponds with God’s longing to impart and share Goodness through love. To love without an object to love suggests the existence of love is static. Yet the Trinity consists of the loving relationship between the Father and the Son, sealed by the bond of the Holy Spirit in constant movement. Because of God’s infinite goodness and self-diffusiveness that *must* be communicated within itself, this love rightly extends to the created universe, the recipient of such love.

⁴⁴ *Myst. Trin VII.Concl.* in *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, trans. Zachary Hayes (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: The Franciscan Institute, 1979), 256. Emphasis my own. Within the unity of essence, Bonaventure appropriates “oneness... to the father, truth to the Son, and goodness to the Holy Spirit.” cf., *Brev. I.6.1* (Monti, 45).

⁴⁵ Calisi, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, 34.

Despite the Goodness of God revealed by the very existence of the universe, Bonaventure recognizes the most possible chasm of being between creation and God. In his overview of Bonaventure's theology, Christopher Cullen explains how Bonaventure reconciles the "nothingness" of creation with God's loving care for it, most especially rational beings.⁴⁶ He states, "Bonaventure's constant reiteration of the nothingness of creation has a twofold aspect: (1) creatures are made by God from nothing; and (2) even in their being, creatures are almost nothing in that they participate in a finite way in being, and they are radically contingent, for they come to be and cease to be."⁴⁷ Yet Cullen recognizes Bonaventure's theology of creation inherently reflects the influence of Francis of Assisi, who praises the creator for and in creation itself.⁴⁸ Every creature, spiritual or corporal, reflects the image of the Trinity. Cullen explains this: "everything that exists is brought about by the Trinity, which is the efficient, exemplar, and final cause...[that is,] every being is one, true, and good; has mode (a dependency upon the efficient cause), species (a conformity to its exemplar cause), an order (an ordination to its final cause)."⁴⁹ The exemption, of course, is sin; however, God is moved by love to destroy sin with the prospect of reconciling the human person to the state of innocence before sin.

⁴⁶ Christopher Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

⁴⁷ Cullen, *Bonaventure*, 128.

⁴⁸ It is important to recognize the uniqueness of Francis' influence on Bonaventure. While Bonaventure does not appropriate the name creator to Christ, Francis does. Norbert Nguyễn-Van-Khanh, OFM clarifies this aspect of Francis' thought for modern readers: "Francis does not hesitate to call Christ God and creator, seeing that Christ is both God and man. Francis does not separate the human and the divine but sees a single living person, that God-man, in whom and with whom the father and the spirit act as one." See: Norbert Nguyễn-Van-Khanh, OFM, *the Teacher of His Heart: Jesus Christ in the Thought and Writings of St. Francis*, trans. Ed Hagman, OFM Cap. (St Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1994), 34. The influence of Francis' Trinitarian framework for viewing creation has great implications for Bonaventure's use of *pietas*.

⁴⁹ Cullen, *Bonaventure*, 130.

Sin is the result of human free choice to pursue finite goods rather than the eternal Good. Bonaventure teaches that humankind, created happy and blameless, “forsakes the highest power, truth, and goodness [by moving] toward a perishable good [and] loving that good excessively. Therefore, by losing original justice, human beings incurred weakness, ignorance, malice, and concupiscence.”⁵⁰ The reality of sin divides the Good produced by God in creation from God. Humans attribute this good to themselves (pride) or for their disproportionate enjoyment (lust). Yet God does not leave humanity to eternally suffer the empty consequences of seeking the Good outside God. The Trinity extends its superabundant love to be reunited with humankind. Drawing from Augustine, Bonaventure states,

When someone falls, there[,] one needs to remain
until another reaches down and stays at his side, so that he can get up.
Our soul, then, could not have been perfectly lifted
from these perceptible affairs
to gaze attentively upon itself and, within itself,
upon the Timeless Truth,
unless the Truth, assuming a human form in Christ, became a ladder,
repairing the first ladder that had been damaged by Adam.⁵¹

This image of a fallen person in need of a helpful hand captures the nature of the Incarnation.

The divine Love moved by compassion for the misery of humankind reconciles the human person through the Paschal Mystery, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The incarnate Word in the flesh as the only Begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth, indistinguishably unites the divine and human natures together. By this glorious act of humility and condescension, the

⁵⁰ “Et quia omnis culpa dicit recessum a bono incommutabili et accessum ad bonum commutabile et recedere a bono incommutabili est recedere a summa virtute veritate et bonitate accedere autem ad bonum commutabile est plus debito tendere in illud per amorem hinc est quod perdens originalem iustitiam incurrit infirmitatem ignorantiam malitiam et concupiscentiam.” *Brev.* III.5.4 (Monti, 111).

⁵¹ “Et quoniam ubi quis ceciderit necesse habet ibidem recumbere nisi apponat quis et adiciat ut resurgat non potuit anima nostra perfecte ab his sensibilibus relevari ad contuitum sui et aeternae veritatis in se ipsa nisi veritas assumpta forma humana in Christo fieret sibi scala reparans priorem scalam quae fracta fuerat in Adam” *Itin.* 4.2 (Armstrong, 89). Format here reflects the poetic Latin text.

grace shed upon the world through Christ's sonship is extended to humanity in the reconciliation of the world, which engenders adoption as God's children. In this manner, faith instills a relational bond that permits human participation in the loving relationship of the Trinity through the gift of grace. Bonaventure argues, "since restoration is a work of the first principle, flowing out from it with generosity and leading back to it through conformity, it is therefore fitting that this be accomplished through grace and conformity to God, for grace flows from God generously and transforms human beings into God's own likeness."⁵² God's own likeness indicates a state of innocence completely fixated on and moved toward God. For Bonaventure, Francis is refashioned into this image through the pious disposition of steadfast holiness untainted by bad example or external forces. It is so fixated on the blessed relationship that it can neither be shaken nor disfigured by sin. The loving and salvific work of the Trinity illumines a pattern that Bonaventure identifies to articulate the capacity to be refashioned in this state of innocence. While Francis embodies this, Bonaventure suggests that this is a grace available to all Christians; however, the way for the followers of Francis is evidenced by Francis' own journey on this path. The *end* of the path might be unexpected; however, it manifests the movement towards steadfast holiness.

Bonaventure's Four-Fold Passage to a State of *Pietas*

The Trinitarian pattern for *pietas* according to Bonaventure reverberates with Augustine's reformation of Roman *pietas* as a more subjective relational concept. While Augustine mostly disputes Vergil's understanding, Thomas Aquinas, a contemporary of Bonaventure, appropriates Cicero's approach to *pietas* as a form of dutiful justice. Aquinas incorporates Cicero's hierarchal

⁵² "Ratio autem ad intelligentiam praedictorum haec est quia reparatio est operatio primi principii ita quod ab ipso manat secundum liberalitatem et ad ipsum reducit secundum conformitatem ideo oportet quod fiat per gratiam et deiformitatem. Gratia enim et manat a deo liberaliter et reddit hominem deiformem." *Brev.* IV.5.3 (Monti, 147).

approach by recognizing the duty owed to parents as subordinate to the duty “owed” to God. Yet the gift from the Spirit infinitely separates their hierarchal order. In his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas states,

Now the Holy [Spirit] moves us to this effect among others, of having a filial affection towards God, according to Romans 8:15, "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba (Father)." And since it belongs properly to piety to pay duty and worship to one's father, it follows that piety, whereby, at the Holy [Spirit's] instigation, we pay worship and duty to God as our Father, is a gift of the Holy [Spirit].⁵³

Although the reference to Paul acknowledges the relational dimension, the emphasis of Aquinas for *pietas* is on *duty*. As a mode of justice, Aquinas distinguishes the *virtue* and *gift* of *pietas*. The virtue systematically orders respective duties towards the various relationships, both people (e.g., parents, extended family, friends, etc.) and institutions (Church, state, etc.). The *gift*, however, generates due reverence and devotion to God. Brian Davies, an acclaimed Thomistic scholar, concludes that for Aquinas, “piety in general should be viewed as a prudentially governed recompense for what has been given to one by others (2a2ae,102,I-3).”⁵⁴ In other words, the *gift* of *pietas* from the Spirit returns to God that which is due since that which is received is immeasurably disproportionate to the human capacity to repay God. The distinction that Aquinas makes between the human virtue and God’s gratuitous act, albeit valid, seems to evoke a sterile sense of the relationship between God and humans, not to mention the

⁵³ “Inter cetera autem, movet nos spiritus sanctus ad hoc quod affectum quendam filialem habeamus ad Deum, secundum illud rom. viii, accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus, abba, pater. Et quia ad pietatem proprie pertinet officium et cultum patri exhibere, consequens est quod pietas secundum quam cultum et officium exhibemus Deo ut patri per instinctum spiritus sancti sit spiritus sancti donum” *ST* II-II.121.resp. in *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 3 of 5 (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1981), 1690.

⁵⁴ Brian Davies, *Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Guide and Commentary* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2014), 264.

relationship within the Trinity. Bonaventure, however, articulates a path that provides an *affectus* of *pietas* exemplified by Francis.⁵⁵

For Bonaventure, the virtue of *pietas* emulates the Trinitarian relational mode of love that ceaselessly communicates Itself in an eternal circular movement. The universe, created in God's image, suffers the consequences of sin through the act of disobedience, that is, turning from God's goodness. Christ, the New Adam, restores the capacity for this state for humankind by his loving obedience to the Father. He fulfills his pious duty to the Father by reconciling the world to God through the Paschal Mystery. Since Bonaventure views the Goodness of all creation reflecting the Trinity, this reconciliation is considered to apply to *all* things. Perfect reconciliation signifies union with God in the loving relationship of Trinity. Francis, who embodies this state of innocence, is refashioned through a four-fold journey that Bonaventure identifies as follows:

[piety] is what, through devotion [*devotio*], lifted him up into God; through compassion [*compassio*], transformed him into Christ; through self-emptying [*condescensio*], turned him to his neighbor; through universal reconciliation [*universalis conciliatio*] with each thing, refashioned him to the state of innocence.⁵⁶

Thus, the four-fold way moves through (1) devotion, (2) compassion, (3) self-emptying, and (4) universal reconciliation to arrive at a disposition of *pietas*. This way reflects a timeless approach to arrive at such a state, which sustains a friar in steadfast holiness. Bonaventure expounds upon these four features using corresponding examples from Francis' life and theological insights

⁵⁵ I purposely leave *affectus* in the Latin at this stage to allow the reader to be persuaded by the argument that Francis' state of piety draws creatures towards him. Furthermore, although there is a true distinction between the human virtue and bestowed grace of *pietas*, I make no such distinction in this thesis. Thus, I use virtue and grace interchangeably.

⁵⁶ "Haec est quae ipsum per devotionem sursum agebat in deum per compassionem transformabat in Christum per condescensionem inclinabat ad proximum et per universalem conciliationem ad singula refigurabat ad innocentiae statum." *Leg. Maj.* VIII.1 (*FA:ED* II, 586).

according to and developed in his medieval context. The four features reveal a theological path that, through grace, orients Francis toward union with God.

(1) Devotion [*devotio*]. Bonaventure understands devotion as that which elevates Francis into God [*in Deum*]. The concept of ascent is well developed in the Judeo-Christian context beginning with Jacob's ladder. Scripture reveals through the tower of Babel that humankind cannot ascend to God through resolute will and pride alone. Spiritual loneliness informs the heart of a desire for something more than the self. Augustine describes the "steps" of love where the extent of ascent is determined by how much an individual loves.⁵⁷ Of course, this ascent to God presumes the assent of the will for grace.

The Roman understanding of devotion portrayed a mythical approach to the balance between good and evil.⁵⁸ As evil was perceived as a greater force than good, those who obtained or pleaded for favor from an upright god would have offset the figurative scale balancing the forces of good and evil. Those who disrupted this scale or asked for righteousness needed to offer devotion to both the good and evil gods. The perception implied the agent's ability to persuade favor from a good god and indifference from an evil god through a sacrificial offering. As time progresses, the perceived scale between good and evil fades for devotion to develop as an active dedication or offering of service to a person or the gods. The Judeo-Christian concept easily appropriates the concept as "wholehearted service of God."⁵⁹ For Bernard of Clairvaux, devotion is characterized by a willing desire to respond to God's call for discipleship. The holy

⁵⁷ cf., Augustine, *Exposition of Psalm 83*, trans. by Maria Boulding, ed. by John E. Rotelle, OSA, the Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, part 3, vol. 18 (Hyde Park N.Y.: New City Press, 2002), 196-197. Cited in Armstrong, *Into God*, 182.

⁵⁸ cf., Edith Scholl, *Words for the Journey: A Monastic Vocabulary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), 79-80.

⁵⁹ Scholl, *Words for the Journey*, 81.

irony is that the capacity of the human will to respond depends on grace, which moves individuals in their response. The Blessed Mother exemplifies this notion:

Again, the phrase “let it be to me according to your word” is to be understood more as the expression of a yearner's affection than as a doubters’ demand for assurance. We may also, of course, take “let it be” as a prayer. No one prays for something unless he believes in and hopes for it. God wills that we pray to [God] even for those things which [God] has promised. It may even be that [God] first promises many things which [God] is disposed to give us so as to arouse our [devotion] by [God’s] promises and to urge us to produce by [devout] prayer what [God] is ready freely to give us. That is how the [pious] Lord, who wills that all [people] should be saved, [takes] from us what we deserve and, while [God] supplies us ahead of time with the very thing [God] is going to grant, [God] freely acts lest he squandered his gifts.⁶⁰

Mary, who possesses prevenient grace, responds immediately to God’s will. Those who lack this fullness of grace rely on encountering the Word through the vestiges (footprints) in the world.⁶¹ Devotion, which for the Cistercian tradition “implies a formality and stateliness,” yields a desire for relationship with God, expressed by *pietas*.⁶² Notice that Bernard recognizes that human devotion to God begins with conditions of receiving promises and answers to prayer (the prospect of compensation). God’s *pietas*, however, lovingly bestows the gift of grace before it is even requested. Bonaventure captures this in the *Leg. Maj.* in that the very thing Francis *desires*

⁶⁰ “Et per hoc quod dicit: Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum, magis intelligenda est affectum exprimere desiderantis, quam effectum requirere more dubitantis. Quamquam nil obstat intelligi FIAT esse verbum orationis. Nemo quippe orat, nisi quod credit et sperat. Vult autem a se requiri Deus etiam quod pollicetur. Et ideo forte multa quae dare disposuit, prius pollicetur, ut ex promissione **devotio** excitetur, sic quae quod gratis daturus erat, **devota** oratio promereatur. Sic **pius** Dominus, qui omnes homines vult salvos fieri, merita nobis extorquet a nobis et, dum nos praevenit tribuendo quod retribuatur, gratis agit, ne gratis tribuat” 4 *Miss.* 11, in *Magnificat: Homilies in praise of the Blessed Virgin Mary By Bernard of Clairvaux and Amadeus of Lausanne*, Cistercian Father Series, vol. 18, trans. Marie-Bernard Saïd and Grace Pergio, (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1979), 56-57. Edith Scholl identifies a single sentence from this passage in Scholl *Words for the Journey*, 82-83. The translators of the Latin text translate *devotio* as ‘piety’ and ‘pious’ for *devota*. Furthermore, the translators use “gracious” to translate *pius*. To indicate this, I have bolded the words here in the Latin text and inserted the corresponding translation above. The many brackets for God indicate the changes made for inclusive language.

⁶¹ cf., Cullen, *Bonaventure*, 87.

⁶² Scholl, *Words for the Journey*, 85.

(i.e., union with God), is given to him (i.e., participation in the life of the Trinity). In other words, the formality of his devout prayer and service are rewarded by his ascent *into God*.

Bonaventure explains how the lack of such intimate *pietas* stems from unfamiliarity with God in God's Word. Francis lovingly cares for those who turned from God in sin. Yet he recognizes that the promises and faithfulness of God are most evident in Sacred Scripture, where people hear about their redemption in the blood of Christ.⁶³ Thus, he reverences ministers and preachers of the Word because of their responsibility to convey this truth to the faithful, which ideally initiates devout worship in response for the prospect of redemption. Bonaventure asserts that this devotional accompaniment proclaims to sinners the evangelical truth of salvation through the cross and is the highest form of sacrifice, from which devotion originates. Since this responsibility awakens devotion in sinners, Francis laments the hypocrisy of those concerned with worldly praise for their preaching of the Word but fail to enact it in their lives. This lack of devotion, nevertheless *pietas*, affords the preacher temporal praise, yet neglects his opportunity for pious care of sinners. Despite the misplaced devotion of these preachers, God provides through the silent prayers and humble example of simple uneducated brothers, whom Francis affirms the merit of their witness. Charitable devotion allows God to enter the depths of the heart, grasp it, and lift it into the Trinitarian reality of love. Yet, as the Trinity is necessarily self-diffusive according to Bonaventure, so too does the person who is lifted into God express this nature in his life.

(2) Compassion [*compassio*]. Our simple definition of compassion comes from its components *cum* (with) and *passio* (suffer)—thus, to suffer with someone. In Christian theology we posit the compassion of God who suffers with humankind through Christ's experience of the

⁶³ cf., *Leg. Maj.* VIII:1 (*FA:ED* II, 586).

unfortunate realities of fallen human existence—betrayal, abandonment, loneliness, rejection, condemnation, torture, exhaustion, humiliation, and death. Though blameless Himself, Christ suffers supremely the realities of sin. His lived experience of human suffering is preceded by the divine compassion that witnesses suffering but had not yet undergone it. Bonaventure articulates this connection between divine compassion and the Incarnation. Prior to the incarnation, God *hears* the cries of God’s creation in their suffering (e.g., Ex 2:23, Ex 3:9, Judges 10:10, 2 Kings 20:5, etc.). The divine compassion differs from human empathy that shares in suffering through a previous experience of it. Yet suffering indicates a form of deprivation incapable in God. Thus, divine compassion reveals a form of love that seeks to alleviate suffering. For Bonaventure, since God is self-diffusive by *nature*, then the incarnation must proceed according to God’s own nature, which is unity, truth, and goodness. Christ suffers in the flesh because of His freely given *love* manifested in His obedient relationship to the Father. Human rejection to participate in this relationship evokes the sense of compassion, for Jesus pleads for their forgiveness because “...they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34).⁶⁴ Bonaventure summarizes this, “in accepting his passion, Christ was moved to endure his sufferings by the will of the father, by the needs of humanity, and by the strength of his own virtue... He was moved by our needs, which he was led to understand through knowledge and for which he was led to show compassion through piety.”⁶⁵ Thus the theological concept of compassion integrates divine love with human suffering that longs for relationship with creation. For Bonaventure, Francis experiences

⁶⁴ Bonaventure accentuates the high priesthood of Christ that is heard because he is a “pious and merciful high priest, offering himself an interceding for the salvation of the people” [Unde etiam in hoc apparuit, quod fuit pontifex pius et misericors, offerendo se et interpellando pro populi salute]. *Comm. Lc.*, 23:34, 41 in *St. Bonaventure’s Commentary on the Gospel of Luke: Chapters 17-24*, vol.3, trans. Robert J Karris, OFM (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2004), 2152.

⁶⁵ *Brev. V.5.6* (Monti, 189)

Trinitarian love in its totality. In other words, God conforms him into the image of love, Christ, who sees and experiences the world through a lens of mercy and forgiveness.

The sin of detraction opposes compassion and is “a foe to the source of piety and grace.”⁶⁶ If compassion looks with mercy on those who fallen in sin, then detraction kicks the sinner while he is down. The Catechism defines detraction as the sin that “without objectively valid reason, discloses another's faults and failings to persons who did not know them.”⁶⁷ Bonaventure identifies detraction as a failure to compassionately mourn over sin rather than expose it to others, which can even induce delight. Furthermore, detraction destroys the bonds of fraternal and filial relationship through a sense of superiority over the one who has sinned. For Bonaventure, Christ’s compassionate tears over the impending destruction of Jerusalem accentuates the merciful sense of *pietas*. The citizens fail to see the love He offers, which evokes his compassionate love for them. In his Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Bonaventure states, “the great extent of Christ’s [*pietas*] is shown that on the day of his greatest honor on earth [that is, his triumphant entry into Jerusalem] he shed tears of compassion.”⁶⁸ The sin of detraction has timeless implications; however, pious compassion exemplified by Christ calls for merciful responses to sin, which cannot be separated from the justice of God.

Chapter VIII presents this four-fold pattern of *pietas* that accentuates the human person in relationship to and with the Holy Trinity. So far, Bonaventure has identified devotion that lifted [*agebat*] Francis into God and compassion, which transformed [*transformabat*] Francis into

⁶⁶ *Leg. Maj.*. VIII.4 (FA:ED II, 588).

⁶⁷ CCC., 2477.

⁶⁸ “Ostenditur autem huiusmodi **pietas** Christi magna, quia in die summi honoris sui in terris non cessabat a lacrymis per affectum compassionis.” *Comm. Lc.*, 19:41, 63 (Karris, 1872). Karris translates *pietas* as mercy. Once again, I have bolded it here to emphasize Bonaventure’s use of it and have bracketed the translation of piety above.

Christ.⁶⁹ These two conjugations in the active imperfect tense suggest incomplete past actions literally translated as ‘he *was* lifted’ and ‘he *was* transformed’. Interestingly, five chapters later in Chapter XIII on the Sacred Stigmata, Bonaventure prepares the reader for Francis’ spiritual experience, stating, “with the seraphic ardor of desires, therefore, he was being born aloft into God; and by compassionate sweetness he was being transformed into him who chose to be crucified out of the excess of his love.”⁷⁰ Strikingly similar to the same statement made in Chapter VIII, Bonaventure respectively changes the tense of the previous words to *ageretur* and *transformaretur*. As passive subjunctive verbs, the literal sense translates, “he *would be* lifted” and “he *would be* transformed.” Bonaventure thus implicates Francis’ path to *pietas* that is articulated as previous events in Chapter VIII arise from the mystical moment that stigmatized Francis in Chapter XIII.⁷¹ While the stigmata has its own mystical reality, Bonaventure shows that the flame of Trinitarian love enkindled in Francis’ soul is not the conclusion to his life as it is for martyrs; rather, it is confirmation of his complete union within the shared love of the Trinity.

(3) Self-emptying (*condescensio*). The theological understanding of self-emptying is often identified with the hymn of the Philippians (Phil 2:6-11). The Vulgate, however, uses the Latin verb, *exinanire*, to communicate the fact that Jesus completely emptied Himself in humility (without losing his divinity).⁷² The translators of *FA:ED* note that *condescensio* here “implies the

⁶⁹ cf., *Leg. Maj.* VIII.1 (*FA:ED* II, 586).

⁷⁰ “Cum igitur seraphicis desideriorum ardoribus sursum ageretur in deum et compassiva dulcedine in eum transformaretur qui ex caritate nimia voluit crucifigi.” *Leg. Maj.* XIII.3 (*FA:ED* II, 632).

⁷¹ Bonaventure’s theology regarding the Sacred Stigmata could alone be a thesis. For a comprehensive study of the Stigmata according to the various Franciscan biographical sources. See: Ottaviano Schmucki, *The Stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi: a Critical Investigation in the Light of Thirteenth-Century Sources* (St. Bonaventure NY: The Franciscan Institute Press, 1991).

⁷² cf., Chambers Murray Latin-English Dictionary, 248. Henceforth *CMLED*.

stooping of one who is actually exalted in power, rank and dignity, i.e., Christ, so as to accommodate himself to others.”⁷³ In other words, He is made *available* despite His significant and superior status as one who is self-*giving*. For Bonaventure, this reflects the nature of grace articulated in Part V of his *Breviloquium*. Influenced by his Franciscan instructor, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure identifies this condescension of God as *the* means of a direct relationship with each Person of the Blessed Trinity through the gift of grace. He states,

As a gift, grace is bestowed and infused directly by God... At the same time, grace is a gift by which the soul is perfected and becomes the bride of Christ, the daughter of the eternal father, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. This could in no way happen except by the ennobling condescension and condescending nobility of the eternal majesty through the gift of his own grace.⁷⁴

While God offers this relational gift, Francis participates in the life of the Trinity in such a way that he also participates in God’s condescension. Since Bonaventure has already suggested that Francis partakes in the life of the Trinity through devotion and compassion, the radicalness of this claim suggests Francis’ *own* condescension that turns him toward his neighbor. This could easily be a source of inflated arrogance or pride for many; however, the immense grace that Francis receives spares him from worldly accolades and praise.

Francis demonstrates this self-emptying (*condescensio*) firstly by recognizing his own limitations for providing care to the poor. The power he possesses to perform acts of charity and minister to the poor completely belong to Christ. Bonaventure, who previously expresses Francis’ natural benevolence even before his conversion, elevates Francis’ loving care for the poor because of the *pietas* of Christ. He states, “[Francis] certainly had an inborn kindness

⁷³ Footnote 2 in *FA:ED* II, 586.

⁷⁴ “De gratia igitur in quantum est donum divinitus datum haec tenenda sunt quod ipsa est donum quod a deo immediate donatur et infunditur... ipsa nihilominus est donum per quod anima perficitur et efficitur sponsa Christi filia patris aeterni et templum spiritus sancti quod nullo modo fit nisi ex dignativa condescensione et condescensiva dignatione maiestatis aeternae per donum gratiae suae.” *Brev.* V.1.2 (Monti, 169-170).

doubled by the piety of Christ poured out on him. Therefore, his soul melted for the poor and the infirm; to those to whom he could not extend a hand he extended his affection.”⁷⁵ In other words, by accepting the true healer and savior as the one who heals and saves, Francis responds to the needs of others according to the will of the Father. When the will of the Father (for whatever reason) does not call for Francis to heal in Christ’s name, he shows loving care for them. Thus he does nothing out of his own sense of need but, rather, only in harmony with his relationship to the Trinity.

The ongoing dissension among Franciscans regarding the observance of poverty misses a key feature that Bonaventure addresses through the concept of condescension. The majesty of a king or emperor affords to his subjects the *privilege* of offering recompense in exchange for their protection and ordered way of life. Although his subjects pay their dues (willingly or begrudgingly), the ruler *relies* on their payment to sustain his power. Without their financial or political support, the ruler will inevitably be overcome by a stronger or wealthier entity. Thus for a ruler to condescend to the needs of his subjects suggests there is nothing they could offer him that he does not already possess. The Incarnation, an event so dear to Francis, reveals the extreme manner that the Highest Good lovingly and willingly condescends to the needs of the most vulnerable. Jesus does not provide temporal wealth to accommodate the needs of the poor; rather, he provides *Himself*. This reveals that the only necessity in life is possession of the Highest Good.⁷⁶ As a theological principle, the practicality of this seems illogical, especially considering the physical needs of the human body, not to mention psychological and human

⁷⁵ “Sane elementiam habebat ingenitam, quam superinfusa Christi pietas duplicabat. Itaque liquescebat animus eius ad pauperes et infirmos, et quibus non poterat manum, exhibebat affectum” *Leg. Maj.* VIII.5 (*FA:ED* II, 589). Bonaventure clarifies to whom the piety belongs by adding Christ to Celano’s original text: “Sane clementiam habebat ingenitam quam superinfusa pietas duplicabat.” *2Cel.* 83 (*FA:ED* II, 302).

⁷⁶ cf., *Brev* V.1.3 (Monti, 170-171).

relational needs. However, Francis cherishes beyond measure the possession of eternal happiness in God. Thus through his own condescension, nothing temporal matters to him except his relationship with God and those to whom God stoops to accommodate their needs in the Incarnation (e.g., the poor). Since *the* Ruler, the Supreme Good, has no need for recompense yet stoops Himself to provide for the needs of His subjects, so too does Francis give freely of his temporal possessions to provide for the needs of the poor. Material poverty means very little if one attributes it as the “highest good.” Yet true possession of God significantly changes the meaning of all temporal goods. Through the *pietas* extended to humanity in Christ, a person’s relationship to those in need becomes the focus of poverty.

(4) Universal Reconciliation (*universalis conciliatio*). Bonaventure demonstrates a clearly Franciscan approach to the reconciliation of creation to God. Francis, whom he suggests enjoys the state of innocence lost in the Fall, embodies the harmonious presence of humanity in Paradise. As a participant in the Trinitarian unity, the state of innocence suggests an unrestrained relationship not only with humankind, but also with all living beings. The absence of sin instills a gentleness within him unlike any other, which makes him attractive to irrational creatures. Bonaventure builds this theological concept on the notion presented by Gregory the Great that people who are morally and spiritually sound are “like” God, created in God’s image and likeness.⁷⁷ G.R. Evans, a scholar of Gregory the Great, articulates the anthropologic theology according to Gregory. Although humans spiritually resemble God already, Gregory asserts their obligation to piously reflect the image of God through obedience to the commandments of the Creator who creates all things good. By continual disobedience and disregard for the Creator, humans ignore the instruction of the teacher to actively imitate the good. Evans concludes that

⁷⁷ cf., G.R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 73.

for Gregory, “man [sic] has become more like a beast than like his God...in another echo of the Hermetic tradition.”⁷⁸ The distinction between humans and irrational creatures suggests animals possess no awareness of their Creator’s image and thus have no capacity to respond to its goodness. Bonaventure’s depiction of the relationship Francis has with animals shifts this perspective.

For Gregory, those who are morally and spiritually good reflect the image and likeness of God in their disposition of character. Evans writes, “the strongest marks of this resemblance of good men to God is the inward stillness and calm they display. They are tranquil in the midst of earthly turmoil. Even busy administrators can, if they are ‘holy men,’ remain free inwardly while outwardly doing their duty.”⁷⁹ This *gentleness* characterizes Francis who enjoys the essential wisdom of being completely reconciled to God. Reconciliation through the blood of Christ not only affects humankind but is also extended to the entire universe.⁸⁰ For Bonaventure, the creatures recognize and are drawn to the imprint of their Creator through Francis, who is completely consumed by the essence of the Trinity. Francis celebrates the identical origin he has with creatures as creations of God, which leads him to identify fraternal and sororal relationship to them.⁸¹ Francis’ relationship to God fundamentally instills a serene tenderness devoid of anxiety, in which he possesses that for which he longs and is thus immune to external

⁷⁸ Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great*, 74. Evans describes Gregory’s understanding of the Hermetic tradition, “there are three kinds of created spirits: angels, men [sic] and beasts, and he explains the difference between the soul of a man as it inhabits his body, and the soul of a beast, which dies with the animal, while a man’s soul is immortal. As he proceeds he never moves far from a Scriptural text or an illustration” (Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great*, 14).

⁷⁹ Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great*, 73.

⁸⁰ The immortal nature of the human soul and the mortal nature of rational souls remains orthodox teaching of the Church. Bonaventure does not suggest that irrational creatures have equal dignity with human beings; rather, they participate in the reconciliation according to their essence and purpose to glorify God in their existence by being what they are.

⁸¹ cf., *Leg. Maj.* VIII.6 (FA:ED II, 590).

distractions and cares that affect those who have not reached such conformity. Bonaventure demonstrates this fact in several stories of the beasts who obey Francis' instruction.

While most of the animal stories affectionately display Francis' gentleness and care for creation, the final account in Chapter VIII of the *Leg. Maj.* illuminates a connection between these stories and *pietas*. Although Bonaventure identifies four features that characterize and lead to *pietas*, six of the eleven paragraphs in this chapter recount stories about Francis' relationship to animals.⁸² While the historicity of the stories may be dubious, Bonaventure shares a deeper theological meaning that captures the essence of Francis' *pietas* and provides a lesson for the friars to contemplatively examine.

The final story depicts two tragic occurrences in Greccio, where a pack of wolves terrorizes the livestock of the town and even mortally attacks the citizens. They also suffer the loss of their farm produce due to severe hailstorms. Pleading to Francis, they beg for his intercession to stop these forces of nature from ruining their livelihood. Francis responds with the assurance that God will not only end the destruction but will also provide even more abundantly fruit of the earth if they "show mercy to [each other]" and sincerely confess their sins.⁸³ Bonaventure implies that the true destruction of the town is due to the citizens' inability to

⁸² In a conversation about the chapter structural theme for chapter XIII of the *Leg. Maj.*, Regis Armstrong suggests for these animal stories employed by Bonaventure that begins with the tamest and most gentle of animals (i.e., lambs, sheep, hares, and rabbits) moving towards more common yet untamed animals (flock of birds, waterbirds, fish, crickets, pheasants) culminating in majestic and wild animals (falcons and wolves). At the beginning stages of this thesis, my intention was to identify the significance of these animals in medieval catalogues of beasts (actual and mythical) called "bestiaries." These bestiaries are not necessarily theological; however, it would provide a fascinating inquiry to discern why Bonaventure chose these *particular* stories while sorting through the many other stories that are depicted in previous biographies. Unfortunately, this inquiry did not transpire as I had hoped; however, I encourage the reader to see the fascinating classifications of animals identified in a bestiary compiled and translated by T.H. White. See: T.H. White, *The Book of Beasts: Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century*, ed. by T.H. White (Garden City, NY: Dover Publications, 1984).

⁸³ "Si mihi credentes, misereamini vestri, ut, vera confessione praemissa, dignos faciatis poenitentiae fructus." *Leg. Maj.* VIII.11 (*FA:ED* II, 594). *FA:ED* II translates *misereamini vestri* as show mercy to yourselves. For the sake of clarity, I change *vestri* to *each other* above in brackets.

forgive one another. They care more for their agriculture than their interpersonal relationships. This lack of *pietas* towards each other results in external forces affecting their way of life. The theological implication is that the disorder of priorities results in spiritual destruction, which is far worse than the loss of agriculture. Interestingly, Francis never addresses the wolves or the clouds that pour the hail; rather, he encourages right relationship with each other and with God. Bonaventure poetically concludes,

The hail kept the pact of God's servant
as did the wolves;
nor did they try to rage anymore contrary to the law of piety
against people converted to piety,
as long as, according to their agreement,
the people did not act impiously
against God's most pious laws.⁸⁴

Thus, universal reconciliation calls for a harmony among creation that foreshadows the heavenly reality of complete union with God. Francis, consumed by the fire of divine love, reveals himself through devotion, compassion, condescension, and reconciliation to be in a pious state characterized by innocence, which may be succinctly understood in Bonaventure's own words:

If then, the rational spirit is to become worthy of eternal happiness, it must partake of this God-conforming influence. This influence that renders the soul dei-form comes from God, conforms us to God, and leads to God as our end. It therefore restores the image of our mind to likeness with the blessed Trinity—not only in terms of its order of origin, but also in terms of its rectitude of choice and of its rest in enjoying God. And since a soul possessing these qualities is led back immediately to God and directly conformed to God, this grace is therefore given immediately by God acting as the source of this inflowing. Hence, just as the image of God emanates immediately from God, so too does the likeness of God, which is the same image but in its God-conformed perfection. It is called, therefore, the image of the new creation.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ “Servavit grando, servaverunt et lupi pactionem servi Dei, nec contra pietatis legem in homines ad pietatem conversos attentaverunt amplius desaevire, quamdiu iuxta condictum contra piissimas Dei leges impie non egerunt.” *Leg. Maj.* VIII.11 (*FA:ED* II, 594).

⁸⁵ “Necesse est igitur spiritui rationali ut dignus fiat aeternae beatitudinis quod particeps fiat influentiae deiformis. Haec autem influentia deiformis quia est a deo et secundum deum et propter deum ideo reddit imaginem nostrae mentis conformem beatissimae trinitati non tantum secundum ordinem originis verum etiam secundum rectitudinem electionis et secundum quietudinem fruitionis. Et quoniam qui hoc habet immediate ad deum reducitur sicut

Conclusion to Chapter I

In this chapter, I have expounded upon the virtue of *pietas* exhibited by Francis in the *Leg. Maj.* of Bonaventure. I first identify where *pietas* arises in the *Leg. Maj.* by recounting a relatable story of Francis complaining to God about the bad example of friars. God's response in this story sets the tone for an understanding of *pietas* according to Bonaventure. Since Bonaventure develops his concept on the foundation of secular and Christian appropriations of *pietas*, I survey its origins and how Augustine redefines this virtue for Christianity. I then explain Bonaventure's theology of the Trinity as a relational pattern in which Francis enters, participates, shares, and points back to the Trinity. These four aspects correspond to Bonaventure's four-fold passage to *pietas*, which, through grace, invites friars to respond *piously* to their call to holiness. The recovery of *pietas* as a Franciscan (and particularly Capuchin) virtue fortifies a friar as he navigates the seemingly opaque consensus on appropriate observance of the *Rule* of St. Francis in modern times. This especially applies to recent solemnly professed friars who often yearn with lively enthusiasm for the ideals presented to Capuchin life. Considering these fundamental aspects of *pietas*, Chapter II develops an understanding of the fundamental call to holiness that may be expressed through *pietas*. The pursuit of holiness encounters polarized perceptions of values and priorities that cause division when seeking a common goal. The virtue of *pietas* provides a particularly Capuchin approach to the preservation of a form of life in a modern contextual setting.

immediate ei conformatur ideo donum illud immediate donatur a deo tanquam a principio influxivo ut sicut immediate emanat a deo dei imago sic immediate manet ab ipso dei similitudo quae est divinae imaginis perfectio deiformis et ideo dicitur imago recreationis." *Brev* V.1.3 (Monti, 171).

Chapter 2

Recovering *Pietas*

The previous chapter describes the theological concept of *pietas* according to its original connotation and its Christian appropriation. Bonaventure articulates it as a key virtue in the pursuit of holiness. In this chapter, I suggest the recovery of *pietas* as a contemporary Capuchin virtue in the pursuit of steadfast holiness. I begin with a brief survey of the numerous divisions and disputes in Franciscan history over what constitutes authentic interpretation and implementation of Francis' vision, leading up to the Capuchin reform in 1528. As the virtue of *pietas* upholds a disposition of fidelity to and love for obligations to various relationships, I connect *pietas* with the vision of holiness after Vatican II that emphasizes the relationship to and with Christ in the world. I then describe the response to this relationship as the work of the Holy Spirit. With diverse understandings of the relationship between God and humanity, I demonstrate the presence of the Spirit who is perceived to inspire contrasting approaches to reform movements. For this section, I use the seemingly opposing positions of Yves Congar, O.P., and Joseph Ratzinger to emphasize their contrasting priorities. I suggest the possibility of a *both/and* approach to uphold their respective priorities and values. This portrays their positions as paradoxical yet reconcilable rather than competing convictions that demand an *either/or* approach. I then describe the zealous ideals of the Capuchin tradition, witnessed by the holy lives of Capuchin saints in their rigorous devotion to the Gospel. The recovery of *pietas* as a fundamental Capuchin virtue expresses the primacy of relationship with God, people, and the world. These reflections provide a framework for encouraging recent solemnly professed friars to remain committed in their response to God's call to pursue steadfast holiness.

A Historical Survey of Reform in the Franciscan Family

As demonstrated in Chapter I, the fundamental desire for relationship constitutes an essential feature of the human person created in the image of God according to God's likeness (Gen 1:27). While Francis of Assisi embodies the human capacity for union with God, he leaves no doubt that each person receives the call to share likewise in God's life according to the grace received. At the end of his *Leg. Maj.*, Bonaventure recounts Francis' final exhortation to his brothers: "goodbye, all my sons, in the fear of the Lord! Remain in him always! Because a trial and tribulation is coming in the future, happy are they who will persevere in those things they have begun. I am hurrying to God, to whose grace I entrust all of you."⁸⁶ The immediate implication of Francis' words refers to persisting divisions within the brotherhood regarding observance of the *Rule* and the further inquisitions by the ecclesial hierarchy regarding the orthodoxy of the Order. Yet Francis' encouragement applies as much today as it did for his brothers who heard this admonition, which is the essence of *steadfast holiness*. However, the challenge to embrace *pietas* in the modern world requires a vision for implementing the Franciscan ideal without reinventing its form of life. Holiness according to *pietas* begins by reflecting on the historical pattern of *renewal* and *reform* in the Order so that we may *learn* from previous efforts to instill a faithful observance of the *Rule*.

The concept of reform in the history of the Order of Friars Minor has been a contentious topic of discussion despite the seemingly settled structural state of the First Order in modern times.⁸⁷ In recent times, reform conversations have shifted from the perceived need to impose

⁸⁶ "Valete filii omnes in timore domini et permanete in eo semper. Et quoniam futura tentatio et tribulatio appropinquat felices qui perseverabunt in his quae coeperunt. Ego vero ad deum propere cuius gratiae vos omnes commendo." *Leg. Maj.* XIV.5 (*FA:ED* II, 643).

⁸⁷ The three branches of the First Order continue as the Conventuals (OFM, Conv.), the Observants (O.F.M), and the Capuchins (OFM, Cap.) Today, it is quite difficult to articulate the current organizational differences and distinctions between the 3 first Order Franciscans in the United States. An example of their ability to create a sense

unification for its own sake to creative forms of ministerial and spiritual collaboration among the friars. The First Order of friars collectively constitute the largest body in Catholic consecrated life.⁸⁸ The attractiveness of the Order flows from the charismatic witness of the founder, Francis of Assisi, and his few followers who, by divine inspiration, begin an alternative form of life completely devoted to living the Gospel. Although many friars intentionally follow a more intensive path to holiness in the Franciscan ideal, the practical implementation of Francis' vision has caused multiple divisions and calls for reform to live the authentic observance of the *Rule* considering the abundant number of members in need of greater structural order.⁸⁹ A relatively brief survey of Franciscan reform shows the seemingly unending dissatisfaction with outspoken friars who stubbornly declare their criticisms and accusations against faithful observance of the *Rule* that seemingly impedes the Order from pursuing holiness and Gospel witness envisioned by Francis. These disputes have resulted in several fractures in the Order as each reform group seeks *the* correct manner of implementing Francis' example.

of unity among the newer brothers is the annual collective gathering of all the novices for combined classes on Franciscan values and fraternal fellowship. Currently, the Conventual Franciscan Provinces in the United States collaborate for a common novitiate site in Arroyo Grande, California. The Capuchins U.S. Provinces' common novitiate site is located 50 miles south in Santa Ynez, California. The Observants U.S. Provinces' common novitiate site is 30 miles further south in Santa Barbara, California. These strategic locations also offer a picturesque and serene environment for the canonical year of novitiate before profession of temporary vows. This reality indicates the progress made for appropriate coexistence and on-going dialogue about the movement of the Holy Spirit for the entire Franciscan Order.

⁸⁸ This information is current as of 2020 according to statics from a non-profit website, gcatholic.org. I verified the statics according to provincial websites of each respective Order. The Salesian Order and the Society of Jesus respectively have approximately 14,500 members worldwide. The Observant Franciscans (OFM) tally appx. 12,500 members. The Capuchins follow with roughly 10,500. Finally, the Conventuals have just about 4,000 members. Thus, the total number of Friars who observe the *Rule* of Saint Francis is close to 27,000, which is easily the largest body (not Order) in the Church. See: <http://www.gcatholic.org/>

⁸⁹ cf., *LR (FA:ED I, 99)*. The *LR* is identified as the official Rule of Saint Francis that possesses the Papal Bull and is thus called, *Regula Bullata*. See: Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order (1226-1538)*, (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987), 23. Nimmo's introduction provides a helpful background accounting the role of Francis in the Order prior to his death. The conflicts within the friars had begun long before Francis dies.

The well-documented history of the Order of Friars Minor in all its volatility illustrates the copious convictions held by groups and individual friars and has provided a seemingly endless debate regarding the best way to live Francis' *Rule*.⁹⁰ The Rule and Life of the Friars Minor according to Francis is quite simple: "to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of our own, and in chastity."⁹¹ The former half of the sentence applies to all Christians; the latter designates ecclesial approval and recognition within its hierarchy. This distinction thus institutes the Franciscan Order. In his book, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order (1226-1538)*, Duncan Nimmo meticulously discusses and analyses the spiritual, ecclesial, political, and social rifts that proceeded from the formal establishment of the Order.⁹² Nimmo suggests that the first traces of division within the Order occur even before its canonical inception. Francis' pursuit of evangelical perfection attracts many followers to imitate his witness according to the letter of the Gospel, *vita evangelii*.⁹³ His

⁹⁰ Countless accounts in various languages already exist that impart knowledge of Francis' biography and history of the Order and development. Their extensive research offers historical data and context that inform their opinions regarding the Order's inception, the issues and challenges faced, and their implications for the modern observance of the *Rule*. Many of the books devoted to Franciscan history were written more than 30 years ago; however, subsequent articles about specific topics continue to emerge today. This brief and hardly exhaustive history of the challenges that the Order faced regarding observance of the *Rule* simply provides a framework for the reader to engage himself as a participant in this hermeneutical debate by virtue of his own profession of vows and his conscious implantation of them in his life. This section relies heavily on the research of Duncan Nimmo and the various articles collected in "The Capuchin Reform: Essays in Commemoration of its 450th Anniversary, 1528-1978" *Analecta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum*, trans. Ignatius McCormick, OFM Cap., vol. 94 No.5 (Rome: Curia Generalis OFM Cap, 1978). For more depth into the history, the various controversies, and its historical impact on the Franciscan Order today. See: John Moorman, *A History of the Franciscan Order: From its Origins to the Year 1517*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), Kajetan Esser, *Origins of the Franciscan Order*, trans. by Aedan Daly and Irina Lynch (Chicago: Chicago Franciscan Herald Press, 1970). Lázaro Iriarte, O.F.M. Cap. *Historia Franciscana*, (Valencia: Librería San Lorenzo, 1979).

⁹¹ "Scilicet Domini nostril Iesu Christi sanctum Evangelium observare vivendo in obedientia, sine proprio et in castitate." *LR (FA:ED I, 100)*.

⁹² Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order (1226-1538)* (Rome: Capuchin Historical Institute, 1987).

⁹³ Nimmo uses seemingly unfamiliar language to identify aspects of the early Franciscan movement. Here, he calls Francis' first attempt at a Rule that simply indicated the way of life as synonymous with the Gospel. Nimmo's explanation clarifies this: "Saint Francis' religious purpose, we have seen, which simply the imitation of Christ's example as presented in the gospel; and, although he certainly stressed particular features of that example, such as

fidelity to the ecclesial hierarchy compels him to seek papal approval. The *Regula Bullata*, distinct from his *vita evangelii* and *Regula non bullata*, incorporates organizational structures and obligations that regulate Francis' broad spiritual vision of observance.⁹⁴ From this point forward, the hermeneutical debate regarding practical observance of the *Rule* vis-à-vis Francis' rigorous form of life (*Forma Vitae*) underlies the growth and implementation of the Franciscan Order.

In his biography of Francis, the French scholar Andre Vauchez conveys the medieval differences between hagiographical and historical accounts of Francis considering his unprecedented saintly fame and first-hand accounts of holiness.⁹⁵ The biographers had no need to prove Francis' sainthood; rather, they sought to reveal the depths of Gospel perfection exhibited by Francis. Their written legends (*legendae*) and accounts of his life (*vitae*), however, shed light upon their underlying partiality towards two opposing camps within the early Franciscans, the "Community" and the "Spirituals."⁹⁶

humility and poverty, there is no doubt that his commitment and principle was to the whole, without limitation: in other words the gospel entire, as he saw and interpreted it. One sign of this totalist approach is that for Francis it issued in, not merely a guide to right living, or set of discreet religious prescriptions, but a whole way of life – *vita*: the very life of the gospel. But if such a wholist approach was possible for Francis, the founder, it could not be extended, without any modification, to his order. For that, we have seen, required a quasi-legal text as its official basis, whose prescriptions the friars could be obliged to observe; and neither the gospel entire nor Francis' comprehensive *vita evangelii*, were specific enough to serve as such a standard. Accordingly the establishment of a Franciscan order- which is to say the routinization of the Saint's charisma- involved some attempt to limit Francis' own upended gospel commitment." Duncan Nimmo, *Reform and Division*, 31.

⁹⁴ Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order*, 31.

⁹⁵ Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi*, 186. The surviving *vitae* and *legendae* provide a useful lens for modern scholars to critically discern the early Franciscan priorities and challenges according to the biographers' presentation of Francis' life. The common criticism among scholars laments the minimal number of surviving accounts written before 1260 due Saint Bonaventure's mandate for accounts of Francis' life other than his *Legenda Maior* be removed. The significance and controversy regarding Bonaventure's theological biography of Francis will be subsequently addressed. For current purposes, Bonaventure would be categorized in the "Community" camp.

⁹⁶ Nimmo classifies the original group of brothers as 'the Community' rather than 'Conventual'. He identifies them as "all those Friars who stood for a development of the order involving more or less extensive departures from the principles and practice of their founder and his first followers." Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan*

Relatively soon after the death of Francis, members of the “Community” began to make compromises that opposed essential Franciscan values such as poverty, humility, and obedience. The motivation for disobedience to Francis varied from honest requests for papal and social privileges that would secure institutional longevity to blatant contempt for the *Rule*. Nimmo summarizes this time: “...during the 13th century the Franciscan Order became clerical, educated, urban, and conventual. Each characteristic spelt modification of the fraternity’s primitive pattern.”⁹⁷ While objectively permissible, these characteristics raise the problematic social and cultural status of the friars, causing objection with those who favor poverty and the status of *minor*. Individual observance of poverty would be nearly impossible if the Order failed to obtain organizational dispensations. Despite Francis’ prophetic appeal in his *Testament*, Gregory IX officially weakened the bond established in the *Rule* between the Gospel and the vows.⁹⁸ Even with the most holy and noble objectives, enticing worldly forces led the early Community to dismantle Francis’ intended ideal.

Concerning the sentiment of the Spirituals, the opposing side, in the debate over interpretation of the *Rule*, they found the Community’s witness to the *Rule* to be nothing short of deplorable. The Spirituals based their rigorist interpretation on the testimony of witnesses who were among Francis’ companions. Francis also left his own written testimony, albeit limited, which served as the Spirituals most persuasive evidence for their outlook on Franciscan life.⁹⁹

Order, 51. For the purposes of consistency with Nimmo’s language, I will continue to refer to the friars as the “Community” until Nimmo shifts the language to Conventual.

⁹⁷ Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order*, 55.

⁹⁸ cf., Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order*, 57.

⁹⁹ cf., Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order*, 81. The *question franciscaine* regarding the lost written recollections of Leo, Rufino, and Angelo called the “*Flowers*” remains a continued debate in the pursuit of historical accuracy to recount Francis’ life. Thomas of Celano’s relies on this unfortunately missing text for his

The Community, in turn, rationalized their understanding of Francis' words, arguing that his vision, as praiseworthy as it may be, was unsustainable for a sizable number of friars both personally and communally in various parts of the world. The Spirituals' way of interpreting Francis' life relied on the accuracy of personal memory and on the early biographers who may have exaggerated and embellished their accounts according to their own priorities and experience.¹⁰⁰ The marginalized Spirituals found themselves struggling to persevere in their desire to literally observe Francis' words "without gloss" as he states in his *Testament* before he dies.¹⁰¹ Their unbending insistence for observing absolute poverty, along with heretical proclamations about Francis' identity, pushed the Order to the brink of suppression. At the recommendation of the resigning general minister, Bonaventure succeeded to the position, filled with theological wisdom that might inspire some form of reconciliation among the friars in their own pursuit of holiness.

After he was elected minister general, Bonaventure positioned himself as a mediator in the contentious dispute between the Community and the Spirituals.¹⁰² His ministry took tremendous dedication and pain, not only to encourage faithful observance of the *Rule* while

second account of Francis' life. Based on Celano's own disclosure, Nimmo presumes that he incorporates the most important memories of the original text in his *Second Life*. See pp. 81-86 for more information.

¹⁰⁰ Nimmo notes that some of the Spirituals distort what would obviously be self-evident support for their fidelity to Francis' intention in the authentic biographies by undeniably falsifying some sources, thus providing merit for objection from the Community and even the hierarchical Church that has unfavorable implications in their future (cf., Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order*, 95).

¹⁰¹ From Francis' *Testament*: "And I strictly command all my cleric and lay brothers, through obedience, not to place any gloss upon the rule or upon these words saying: they should be understood in this way." FA:ED 127. Nimmo comments on the Spirituals' imprudent reference to Francis' words in the *Testimony* considering that, "the 'glosses' of the rule repudiated by the spirituals standard were the glosses of the head of the Church and successor of Saint Peter, and moreover from the very first of these onwards the *Testament* of Saint Francis had been declared void of legal force" (Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order*, 104).

¹⁰² It is well understood that Bonaventure positions himself a *moderate* within the Community side of the division.

attempting to resolve the pervading tension, but also to affirm and reassure the Order's ecclesial fidelity and future existence after the imprudent publication of *An Introduction to the Eternal Gospel* by the friar Gerard of Borgo.¹⁰³ The spiritual fortitude he received for persisting and persevering in his love for Christ *as a friar* led him to conclude that “such discipline in the present life appears, not as joy, but as pain.”¹⁰⁴ Yet this discipline, informed by the stigmatized Francis through unprecedented holiness and confirmed by the nails of the cross driven through his extremities, reinforced Bonaventure's resolve to navigate the Order through these divisive disputes. With so much focus on the letter of the *Rule*, its fraternal and spiritual essence receded, overtaken by the human desire to be *correct* often motivated by the ego. Thus human limitations impeded the friars' ability to actively respond wholeheartedly to the Spirit and pursue Gospel perfection.

Bonaventure's painstaking efforts to provide a resolution to the friction led most notably to a rare fraternal settlement at the Chapter of Narbonne, which called on him to write the *Leg. Maj.* As described in the previous chapter, Bonaventure provides a comprehensive illustration of virtues as lived by Francis for the friars to imitate, which he hoped would bring about a cooperative understanding of Francis' life and harmonize the Order. After presenting his completed work at the following general chapter, all other *legendae* and *vitae* of Francis were to be discounted and subsequently discarded, as some of these biographies had essentially been weaponized to advance or restrain the ideal of poverty.¹⁰⁵ Although he continues to be highly

¹⁰³ Vauchez, *Francis of Assisi*, 198.

¹⁰⁴ *Epist. de XXV memorialibus, concl.* (VIII, 622): *Quorum quidem disciplina in prasenti non videtur esse gaudii, sed moeroris*. Found in J. Guy Bougerol, OFM, Introduction to the Works of Bonaventure, trans. Jose de Vinck, (Paterson, NJ: St Anthony Guild Press, 1964), 8.

¹⁰⁵ From a historical approach, it seems asinine to discredit sources on the basis of consensus and order. William Hugo, a Capuchin priest, identifies his historical bias in his book, *Studying the Life of Saint Francis of Assisi: A Beginner's Workbook*, 2nd ed. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011). In his assessment of the *Leg. Maj.* as a

praised for his theological and mystical contributions to the Franciscan intellectual tradition, Bonaventure fell short in his pursuit to seal a agreeable vision of observance for a unified Order.

The prospect of reconciliation dimmed further after Bonaventure's death. Leaders from the Spirituals, such as Ubertino of Casale in his *Sanctitas Vestra*, took drastic measures to assert their unwavering desire for communal strict observance of the *Rule*, even at the expense of ecclesial obedience.¹⁰⁶ Ferocious persecution of the Spirituals entailed extremes of unfounded incarceration, imposed starvation, and even ecclesial estrangement from the Order as in the case of Ubertino of Casale. While their ostracized efforts may seem worthy of sympathy, they often lacked prudence in their stubborn persistence for absolute poverty. Their emerging voice under the leadership of Angelus Clareno incited continual criticism and disputes. His efforts abruptly halted after he accused the pope of heresy and was swiftly suppressed.¹⁰⁷ The unending struggle to gain structural autonomy and ecclesial recognition for the Spirituals became the demise of their pugnacious existence. The remnants of the movement found approval from the minister

reliable source for uncovering the *historical* Francis, he states a fundamental aspect that is often overlooked when discussing the subsequent mandate following the publication of the *Leg. Maj.* Hugo writes, "the motivations for both the commissioning of a new biography and the order to destroy the other compositions are unknown. None of the known documents about these two events give reasons for these decisions" (89). Thus I acknowledge that my suggestion here is an educated guess and based on what I perceive Bonaventure's ending desire rather than means... The motivational possibilities are endless, not to mention the modern discipline of psychology that might raise even more speculations. The Franciscan family rejoices that this mandate was not completely fulfilled with the various legends and hagiographical manuscripts that have surfaced and dated prior to the 1263 mandate. While I understand Hugo's cautious approach to the *Leg. Maj.* as a reliable source, I also assert that we cannot apply modern intellectual ethics to a medieval context. If so, then we should also accuse most medieval writers of direct plagiarism! Since Bonaventure previously teaches that God is the highest good, I choose to presume his good will even if I do not agree with the mandate or the outcome. The fact is, other accounts of Francis' life *have* providentially survived and provide a valuable tool for historians like Hugo to uncover the historical Francis. I simply suggest setting aside modern approaches to censorship to grasp and marvel at the theological brilliance that Bonaventure displays through his account of Francis' life. Hugo's book is an invaluable tool and resource for anyone, lay or religious, seeking to learn more about Francis of Assisi through primary sources.

¹⁰⁶ See: Nimmo, *Reform and Division*, 104.

¹⁰⁷ See Nimmo, *Reform and Division*, 244-246.

general with the Regular Observance founded by John of Valle in 1334.¹⁰⁸ Their softened tone at least warranted realistic engagement with the Conventuals, whose relaxed observance had emerged victorious from the debate within the Community.¹⁰⁹ Over a century after Francis' initial audience with Pope Innocent III, the Franciscan Order continued to lack the serenity of standing on a structural foundation that was in no need of reform.

The Franciscan Order continued to seek resolution to their disputes from the hierarchy; however, the possibility of enduring as a single organizational structure dissolved to an irreconcilable point in the 16th century. In 1517, the same year that Martin Luther's *95 Theses* effectively severed the Catholic Church, Pope Leo X's Papal Bull *Ite Vos* officially divided the Franciscan Order as well into two respective Orders, the Conventuals and the Regular Observants. Not too long after, the Capuchin reform materialized in 1528 as the first canonically recognized reform Order amidst the Protestant Reformation.¹¹⁰ The reform proposed a firm spiritual observance of the *Rule* as envisioned by the *Testament* while acknowledging the canonical approval of papal privileges.¹¹¹ While other Franciscan schisms and divisions continued to arise after the foundation of the Capuchin Order, the arrival at a finalized canonical First Order structure seems to placate the various disputes over scrupulous implementation of the *Rule*. The most ideal outcome would be a unified vision and observance of the *Rule*; however, the canonical sanction of three distinctive Franciscan Orders underscores the Spirit's activity. The ease in hostility between the communities further indicates a paradoxical harmony in the

¹⁰⁸ See Nimmo, *Reform and Division*, 370.

¹⁰⁹ Nimmo, *Reform and Division*, 205.

¹¹⁰ cf., Optatus van Asseldonk, "Franciscan Significance of the Capuchin Reform" ("The Capuchin Reform," *Analecta Franciscana*, 38.

¹¹¹ cf., "Franciscan Significance of the Capuchin Reform" ("The Capuchin Reform," *Analecta Franciscana*), 45-53.

disunity. Each respective approach to the Franciscan charism supports a mode for individuals to communally pursue holiness on a path toward God.

***Pietas* as Holiness in the Christian Life After Vatican II**

Although the unending disputes regarding proper observance of Franciscan life appears contrary to fraternal humility, the divisions point to a fundamental reality of human existence: the infused desire for God as creatures created in God's image and likeness. Francis cherishes this desire so much that it ensures that his conduct never diminishes or forsakes such longing. At the conclusion of his Letter to the Entire Order, Francis prays,

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,
give us miserable ones
the grace to do for you alone
what we know you want us to do
and always to desire what pleases you.
Inwardly cleansed,
interiorly enlightened
and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit
may we be able to follow
in the footprints of your beloved son,
our Lord Jesus Christ
and, by Your grace alone,
may we make our way to You...¹¹²

The universal and timeless nature of Francis' prayer applies not only to the 13th century friars, but also to *all* those baptized in Christ. This desire for God and the personal call to do *for God alone what God wants* arises in the ecclesial proclamation at Vatican II of the *universal call to holiness*.¹¹³ This human desire for holiness proceeds from the Divine love for humanity.

¹¹² "Omnipotens, aeternae, iuste et misericors Deus, da nobis miseris propter te ipsum facere quod scimus te velle, et semper velle quod tibi placet, ut interius mundati, interius illuminati et igne sancti Spiritus assensu sequi possimus vestigia Filii tui, Domini nostri Iesu Christi, et ad te, Altissime, sola tua gratia pervenire." *L.E.O. (FA:ED I, 120-121)*.

¹¹³ The concept of the Universal Call to Holiness according to Vatican II will be subsequently addressed in Chapter III.

The fundamental relationship between humankind and a transcendent Being pervades anthropological history of human society. The expression and perception of such relationship has taken many forms (e.g., monotheism, polytheism, spiritual liberation, etc.). The Divine Being (God) of the Judeo-Christian tradition does not elect certain individuals for exclusive relationship; rather, God invites fellowship in a covenantal relationship. From Abraham to John the Baptist, God discloses this covenant to the chosen people of Israel. The Paschal Mystery reveals a radical inclusivity that extends this covenantal relationship to all creation. The response to this invitation cannot be passive. Those who accept the invitation are called to actively embrace the relationship and offer invitation to others. As the universal sacrament of salvation defined by Vatican II, the mission of the Church is collectively united in this obligation as a globalized and rapidly progressing society emerges. The disposition of *pietas* informs the loving responsibility to respond to the Divine initiative for holiness.

A contemporary theology of *pietas* in light of Vatican II depends on an understanding of the communal call to participate in the Trinitarian relationship. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, affirms the Christian obligations due in the loving relationship with God.¹¹⁴ Baptism not only confirms an identity as members of the Body of Christ, but also sends forth to share in the evangelical mission to the world. The document states, “upon all the laity, therefore, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation to all men [sic] of each epoch and in every land. Consequently, may every opportunity be given them so that, according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church.”¹¹⁵ As *pietas* conveys the obligations to various relationships, the

¹¹⁴ Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 33. Henceforth *LG*.

¹¹⁵ *LG* 33.

identified missionary *duty* reflects Christ's own duty to the Father of which he summons his disciples to partake (cf., Mark 16:15). The call of Vatican II for all disciples to share in this relationship and mission reframes this duty to emulate Christ in *relationship* to the Father. *Pietas* characterizes the fidelity to the Trinitarian relational love. Holiness expresses the response. The *pietas* Jesus shows to the Father informs and directs the understanding of holiness that moves the individual from God and back to God. The striving for holiness entails three dimensions that build upon each other: *conversion to*, *relationship with*, and *proclamation of* Christ for the salvation of the world.

As an active participant, the Christian call to holiness reaffirms the primacy of relationship that produces or inspires deed. *Lumen Gentium* asserts, "the followers of Christ are called by God, not because of their works, but according to His own purpose and grace. They are justified in the Lord Jesus, because in the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy."¹¹⁶ The process of *conversion to* Christ extends beyond moral conduct by the rejection of sin. Considering its literal sense in Latin, *conversio* suggests a singular motion to "turn around." The ongoing pursuit of *conversio* thus indicates the turning *toward* something, which inherently means also turning away from something else. As Bonaventure suggests, the first moment of turning toward Christ signals an impulse from the Spirit to respond to the resounding call.¹¹⁷ An affirmative response to this call

¹¹⁶ LG 40.

¹¹⁷ This initial turn is not necessarily a conversion experience. Children whose parents neglect their responsibility to raise them in the faith after baptism (for whatever reason) still possess the initial sacramental grace. The initiative of Holy Spirit is not restrained by human action. Matured young adults may respond at an opportune time according to their desire that may not yet be cognitively apparent to them; however, God knows the depths of the heart and respects free choice. Furthermore, unbaptized individuals may receive the prompt of the Spirit to be moved towards accepting the truth and receiving the sacraments. In other words, human limitations and intellect rely on God's providence when discussing the nature of response to the call for holiness.

opens the doors to *relationship with Christ*. Entrance through these doors inclines individuals to confront fundamentally existential questions regarding their purpose for existence. An honest search for answers can take countless paths and much time; however, the Christian explanation will always direct individuals back toward Christ, the manifestation of God's love.

Through Christ, humans experience the relational love revealed in the Triune God that gives meaning and purpose to life. In a homily given as pope to seminarians in Rome, John Paul II describes this awesome reality.

It is truly impressive to think that one possesses the truth, that is to say, to know the meaning of human life, the significance of history and of all the universe, the reason for existence that develops between the heights of scientific conquests and the abysses of misery and pain. And the truth is God, Creator, Redeemer, and Remunerator; the truth is Christ, who has been precious defined as "way, truth, life, light, love, and salvation"; The truth is the Church that he has loved and founded to entirely communicate his Word and the means of salvation. And you all possess this, you all taste this admirable patrimony! ¹¹⁸

The relentless pursuit of conversion to Christ points the sight of individuals to this relational possession since it can be misplaced or forgotten throughout the course of life. Yet when possessed with integrity, this truth necessarily affects and guides a person's entire worldview, outlook, and activity. The person feels compelled out of love to *proclaim* Christ in daily living. Many people often ignore or miss the inspiration of the Spirit because of worldly distractions, and deceptions that impede their capacity to listen and discern the Spirit's initiative. Those who take possession of this gift preserve it by striving to adhere to its obligations. The endeavor to understand such truth becomes a life-long process through conversion, relationship, and

¹¹⁸ Es realmente impresionante pensar que se posee la verdad, es decir, conocer el sentido de la vida humana, el significado de la historia y de todo el universo, el motivo de la existencia que se desarrolla entre cumbres de conquistas científicas y abismos de miserias y dolores. ¡Y la verdad es Dios, Creador, Redentor y Remunerador; la verdad es Cristo, que precisamente se ha definido como "camino, verdad, vida, luz, amor, salvación"; la verdad es la Iglesia que El ha querido y fundado para transmitir íntegra su Palabra y los medios de salvación! ¡Y vosotros poseéis, gustáis todo este patrimonio admirable!" John Paul II, "Homilía de su Santidad Juan Pablo II para Los Alumnos del Pontificio Seminario Romano" (Vatican City, October 13, 1979). Translation my own.

proclamation. The teaching of Vatican II strongly reiterates the necessity of sanctifying grace to treat this possession as Jesus's suggests the Kingdom of God is a treasure that is buried in a field. Once this treasure is uncovered, the person *is moved* to sell everything to buy that field to legitimately possess what was found (cf., Matt. 13:44).

Contrasting Visions of the Same Call to Holiness

The opening words of the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, convey the reality of the human condition when considering the ideals of holiness. The document states,

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men [sic] of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.¹¹⁹

The pursuit of holiness does not separate Christians from the difficulties of world to abide in a consoling shelter free of all that could distract a relationship with God. The teaching calls for these holy people to be lodged in the societal world to share the presence of Christ. As a community of disciples, the mode for such proclamation often varies according to the unique personality and formation of each Christian. The threefold Christian obligation understood as *conversion to*, *relationship with*, and *proclamation of* Christ encompasses the communal obligations of the Church, the Body of Christ. As a Church of humans with limited reason, communal dissensions emanate from individuals who conscientiously seek to uphold their personal obligation to holiness while also sharing in the ecclesial obligation as well. A

¹¹⁹ Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), 1.

contemporary example in the reform movement of Vatican II elucidates the challenge to discern collectively the dual obligations to God and to the mission of Church.

The ensuing implementation of Vatican II sparks debates about the necessity of reform. Arising problems and conflicts in the Church are not necessarily sinful or indications of abuse. Some conflicts reflect the diverse nature of a universal Church that is not limited by cultural differences and social structures. The perceived tension might counterintuitively be a contemplative communal exercise in patience that calls for collective listening. When the Spirit becomes muffled or out of focus, hearts that might be tepid or cold seemingly need a spark from the Spirit that enkindles deeper spiritual reflection and listening, which reorients them back toward the Divine will. In a rapidly evolving world, the Spirit guides the Church in her response to the signs and times. Yet the Spirit is not led by the signs and times of the world; rather, the Spirit seeks to reorder misplaced or confused priorities and values that pursue a lesser good than the Supreme Good. The Church prudently discerns both how to reorient these priorities while also being led by the Spirit to God through Christ. Ecclesial reform often arises from these two understandings of the Spirit's role in the reform and renewal of the Church.

Two approaches to ecclesial renewal or reform emerge from these priorities: (1) addressing and/or correcting problems and (2) attending to the dynamism of the Spirit. These seemingly harmonious approaches sprout disputes when one approach overshadows the other. The upheld value on one side suggests the evangelical mission of the Church might moderately adapt by calling for conversion according to the issues of the day; however, this adaption should not change the mode of proclaiming the Truth. For the other approach, conversion of hearts arises from an experience of God's love that is relevant to the various circumstances of daily life in the world. Neither of these approaches are inherently wrong nor do they necessarily oppose

each other; rather they express distinctive values that presumably have been instilled by the Spirit. Two prominent contributors to this conversation during and after Vatican II offer perspectives that situates the pursuit of holiness between the two positions, the French Dominican friar, Yves Congar, O.P. (d. 1995) and the German priest Joseph Ratzinger (d. 2022).¹²⁰

Both Congar and Ratzinger approach the concept of ecclesial reform with respect to a presumably discerned commitment to uphold the integrity of the Church in the pursuit of holiness. Congar presupposes a dynamic approach that is strengthened by continual conversion to Christ. In his chapter, “Prophets and Reformers,” Congar implies an underlying motivation for ecclesial reform due to his perception of the uncomfortable restlessness in the Church. He compares those who interpret this static or unanimated state of the Church to individuals and groups understood as biblical prophets.¹²¹ Congar states, “prophets always push God’s people to growth; they urge the stem to bring forth fruit. . .and urge the sign and sacrament to press in all the way to their ‘reality.’”¹²² The prophetic vision looks beyond the temporal steps needed to arrive at the eschatological effect envisioned through the Spirit. While prophets rightly identify issues that need to be addressed, “they are misunderstood because their prophetic words outpace the received ideas, the given mentality, or the perspective of their time. They are persecuted because they annoy others by disturbing the prevailing order or security. They don’t belong to

¹²⁰ Consequently, their respective support and criticism of Vatican II and its outcomes informs the affirmative and hesitant reception of the larger Church. Despite their theological differences, both men have been blessed with profound faith in the Trinity that has enriched the Church with numerous publications and insights into its mystery. Thus, I make a preliminary assumption that both their theological positions are not driven by the ego or fear; rather, they are the product of prayer, discernment, study, and a desire for authentic witness to Christ. In other words, I assume that the Spirit, rather than the respective self, motivates their passion and argumentation.

¹²¹ Yves Congar, OP, “Prophets and Reformers” in *Why and How Does the Church Reform Itself?*,

¹²² Congar, “Prophets and Reformers,” 174.

this world.”¹²³ Congar applies both these realities to the role of ecclesial reformers inspired to evoke a spiritual awakening in a seemingly fatigued Church.

Congar distinguishes between individual prophetic revelations and prophets calling for structural reform. The former receive inspiration from the Spirit to energize the call for proclamation of Christ in a world divided by fear and sin. These faithful servants resemble the crowds in Galilee, full of excitement and astonishment that compels discipleship. As spiritually inclined as they might be, these *prophets* “don’t contribute anything objectively new to the dogmatic structure of the church, but they have great importance for the way God guides the life of the Church, especially with respect to worship, spirituality, and new foundations.”¹²⁴ Thus, reform changes nothing about the revelation of God revealed in Christ. Ecclesial reform, according to Congar, emerges as an evangelical response inspired by the Spirit to manifest the presence of God in the world. For Congar, the *end*, that is, the effective proclamation of Christ, cannot be limited to its established *means*.¹²⁵ In other words, authentic evangelization entails appropriate adaptation of the methods and ways to grow in holiness according to the contextual world. While the prospect of change excites and invigorates some, many others understandingly balk at the word or question such proposals.

Among those who challenge the impending changes that arise from the teachings of Vatican II is Joseph Ratzinger. Although Congar acknowledges the timeless nature of revelation, the *necessity* for revising its proclamation appears forced for Ratzinger. The creative evangelical expressions that ensue after the council leave him and many traditional Catholics discouraged by

¹²³ Congar, “Prophets and Reformers,” 175.

¹²⁴ Congar, “Prophets and Reformers,” 185.

¹²⁵ Congar, “Prophets and Reformers,” 173.

the reform movement. While Ratzinger affirms the necessity of ecclesial reform when indeed necessary, he denounces reform for the sake of contemporary relevance.¹²⁶ Ratzinger criticizes Vatican II because of the perception of an ecclesial focal shift from Christ, the *telos* of holiness, to the human person that appeals to an emerging society devoid of religion. His concern is not for preserving the traditional Church, but for the sake of humankind. He asserts,

I must think of the fact that God has a task in mind for me in the world and will ask me afterwards what I have done with my life. Today many people maintain that thinking about eternal life prevents people from doing the right thing in this world. But the opposite is true. If we lose sight of God's standard, the standard of eternity, then all that remains over as a guiding thread is nothing but egotism.¹²⁷

The Tradition of the Church, informed and sustained by Sacred Scripture and manifested through ecclesial structures and traditions, has unceasingly directed the faithful on the path of holiness despite the many abuses and scandals of the hierarchy.¹²⁸ For Ratzinger, the purpose of reform calls for the Spirit to shine its light on structural areas of the Church that are depriving themselves of the light. The movement of the Spirit is not impeded; rather, it is shadowed by imposed obstacles, spiritual or institutional, erected by humans. Ratzinger concludes, “true reform is one that *strives* for what is truly Christian but hidden, that lets itself be challenged and formed by it; false reform is one that runs after man [sic] instead of leading him...”¹²⁹ Although

¹²⁶ Since Joseph Ratzinger has written extensively on this subject, I will quote him using a secondary source by Maximilian Heinrich Heim who synthesizes the Ratzinger's ecclesial theology according to Vatican II in a single volume: Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007). The sources for the following quotes of Ratzinger will be identified in the footnotes; however, the cited pages reflect Heim's compilation.

¹²⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *To Look on Christ: Exercises in Faith Hope, and Love*, trans. Robert Nowell (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1991), 100-101, found in Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger*, 399.

¹²⁸ Abuses extend beyond the contemporary sexual abuse crisis. These include but are hardly limited to improper disposal of indulgences, nepotism, simony, neglect of sacramental responsibilities, inciting of violence, and many other examples that have plagued the history of the Church. Scandal should also be interpreted in its ecclesial sense as causing others to sin through misconduct or false teaching.

¹²⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes: Entwürfe Zur Ekklesiologie*, 2nd ed. (Düsseldorf: Patmos- Verlag, 1977), 96, in Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger*, 426.

Congar theologically affirms this conclusion, his prophetic vision emphasizes an accessibility for all people to pursue holiness. Ratzinger's point, however, rejects taking reckless measures to be contemporarily relevant as the Gospel speaks for itself.

The positions of both Congar and Ratzinger seemingly oppose each other in the on-going conversation regarding the nature and necessity of reform. Their positions, however, might better be interpreted as paradoxical as they both emerge from a love for God and a concern for others. The temptation to politicize ecclesial ideologies into contemporary categories of conservative and progressive overlooks the evangelical character of a diverse Church. Both Congar and Ratzinger presumedly feel moved by the same Spirit to promote or criticize the reform associated with Vatican II. The simple response would be to take a position and deem the opposing one ignorant or objectively wrong. A less charitable approach might be to make unfounded assumptions or accusations about the motives for such positions. Yet the nature of ecclesial reform and renewal calls for an approach that respectively acknowledges individual priorities yet seeks to incorporate a communal pursuit to integrate these priorities seemingly marked by contradiction. Politicizing renewal into segregated positions that are unwilling to speak or dialogue puts a self-imposed burden on a Church already weighed by horrible abuses of power and trust. Reform and renewal reflect a continual desire for holiness according to the dynamic movement of Spirit. The one Spirit of God uniquely instills this desire for conversion, relationship, and proclamation. The obligations to this relationship and how they are preserved differ according to diverse priorities and values in the Church, which need continual reflection to ensure they remain Spirit driven rather than exclusive due to the perceived differences. With a paradoxical interpretation, the possibility for reconciling the two positions surfaces. The virtue of *pietas* offers this potential reconciliation with the recognition and understanding of a common

desire for relationship to God as the priority of conversion to, relationship with, and proclamation of Christ.

The Consecrated Life and the Capuchin Charism

With a profound awareness of baptismal grace, some individuals receive a calling to intensely live the relational purpose of human life by offering themselves back to God through intentional witness of the Christian ideals. Vatican II upholds the importance of this holy endeavor, which countless individuals have traditionally pursued and continue to embark upon through profession of the evangelical counsels in consecrated life.¹³⁰ The Church rejoices in the treasure of diverse members across cultures, races, and times who, “in openness to the working of the Holy Spirit, successfully interpret the signs of the times and respond wisely to new needs.”¹³¹ With the presence of numerous material and spiritual needs, many Orders and institutions arise in response to the Spirit guiding individuals who are accompanied by a supportive community. Thus the manner and mode of a communal pursuit of holiness hinges on its members’ ability to engage the Gospel prayerfully and faithfully as participants in the surrounding society without fluctuating or compromising in its resolve.¹³² This endeavor faces new challenges considering decreased religious affiliation and indifference in the modern world.

¹³⁰ cf., *LG* 44. The evangelical counsels are commonly known as the vows/promises of poverty, chastity, and obedience. The members who profess these vows are traditionally identified in the state of religious life. The language of *consecrated life* reflects John Paul II’s post-synod Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* that positions many forms of life and institutions under the broad title of consecrated life, including the mendicant orders. For the sake of consistency, the language utilized in this section, which reflects the general discussion of the consecrated life, will be used henceforth. See: John Paul II, *Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation Vita Consecrata*, (Vatican: March 25, 1996.)

¹³¹ *VC* 9.

¹³² One may question the degree to which cloistered religious participate as a member of society. Whether cloistered or active, prayer always looks outward towards God and neighbor. The interior life should never be pursued to exclude others; rather, it is an embrace of the mystical inclusivity of God that often is hidden to those who lack the capacity or desire to be still.

The Vatican II teaching on the call to holiness for all the baptized prompts further reflection on the nature of consecrated life. The Dominican philosopher, Kurt Pritzl, characterizes the consecrated life as “...a unique, distinctive, and outstanding sign not only of the ultimacy and triumph of love over hate, strife, and fear, but of the supernatural love possessed and lived now, which transcends the natural interplay of love and hate, of longing and fear, in human life.”¹³³ This invigorating description enheartens the resolve of consecrated men and women to appreciate the intimate gift they have received by devoting their lives to God. Holiness understood as *conversion to*, *relationship with*, and *proclamation of* Christ categorically delineates the essence of their lives. Yet Pritzl’s regard for the consecrated life as a *unique*, *distinctive*, and *outstanding* as Vatican II elevates the broader ecclesial call to holiness, which increases the responsibility for consecrated individuals to credibly witness Gospel values. Thus they must actively nurture their interior life according to their charism so that they live with integrity to the nature of consecration. For Pritzl, “full and authentic [consecrated] life is possible only by dependence on God’s grace and by a divine love of the life—love of the evangelical counsels, of the rule and constitutions, of the practices and way of life, and of one’s brothers and sisters in the life.”¹³⁴ If individuals willingly respond to their vocation according to the charism of the founders, the obligations and responsibilities that constitute consecrated life become the means to encounter life-giving holiness rather than a perception of imposed restrictions of freedom. The ideals, however, constantly face challenges associated with the human condition and external seductive forces that affect an individual’s vocational resolve, especially in the

¹³³ Kurt Pritzl, OP, “Apostolic Religious Life in the Post-Vatican II Church: Ongoing Challenges of Renewal – Perfect and Imperfect love,” in *Apostolic Religious Life in America Today: A Response to the Crisis*, ed. by Richard Gribble (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 132.

¹³⁴ Pritzl, “Apostolic Religious Life in the Post-Vatican II Church,” 136-137.

modern world.¹³⁵ However, the courageous and zealous witness of holy men and women, especially the canonized saints, edifies others in their own pursuit of holiness. For consecrated religious, members of their community inspire and inform a lived reality of the form of life that attracts others to partake in the same charism.

The ecclesial teaching on the role of consecrated religious in the modern world evokes a sense of excitement to intentionally demonstrate the presence of the Kingdom of God alive in the world. Without discounting the penitential and sacrificial aspects of consecrated life, the Church envisions the consecrated life as a sign that invites the world to recognize and personally respond to their own call to holiness in their own state of life. The call to strive for the ideals of religious profession are further intensified when an Order is traditionally known for the holiness of its members and rigorous form of life expressed in numerous societal settings. The Capuchin reform should humbly be identified as an example of such an esteemed reputation in the life of the Church.

After its Papal recognition with the Bull, *Religionis Zelus*, the Capuchin Order endured a series of adverse circumstances and consequential persecutions that had threatened a similar fate experienced by other Franciscan reform movements, which meant either suppression or returning to the recognized Order.¹³⁶ Through divine Providence, the Order prevails with a strong identity closely tied to Francis' original contemplative vision for his followers. Their contemplative life

¹³⁵ "Seductive" does not necessarily indicate sexual temptations; rather, it entails the broad scope of worldly enticements such as money, fame, comforts, titles, luxuries, etc. It should be noted that not all these forces are necessarily sinful or even incompatible with consecrated life. The issue being addressed is when these forces shift a person's focus away from their pursuit of holiness leading to compromises and rationalizations for behaviors and actions that might affect the integrity of their witness.

¹³⁶ For the history of the Capuchin Order's inception and beginnings, see: Callisto Urbanelli, OFM Cap., "How the Order Sprung Up and Took Root," in "The Capuchin Reform: Essays in Commemoration of its 450th Anniversary 1528-1978," trans. Ignatius McCormick, O.F.M., Cap., special issue, *Analecta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum Cappuccinorum* 94, no. 5, 1978, 13-36. Henceforth, "the Capuchin Reform."

permeates the prophetic actions they take to respond to the pleas of the poor and suffering. The reputation for holiness of the Capuchins emerges from their willingness to lay down their lives exemplified by their compassionate care for those who contracted diseases in plagues and epidemics during the 16th and 17th centuries.¹³⁷ The daring heroism of the early friars and their contemplative foundation substantiates the movement of the Spirit for their existence. Anywhere there is a need, a Capuchin willingly and joyfully goes.¹³⁸ The witness and legacy of countless heroic Capuchins epitomizes the life as a daring adventure of love for those who pursue the Capuchin form of life.¹³⁹

Because of the rich contemplative and active traditions associated with the Capuchins, the ideals defined in the *Constitutions* are carefully constructed to assist all the friars in their zeal for living the Capuchin charism with integrity. Optatus Van Asseldonk asserts that a friar deeply rooted in this holy tradition who, "...is moved by the spirit will never be content with half way measures, merely overserving the letter and external forms. Guided by the spirit he is borne on to what is new, that is to what is better and more perfect."¹⁴⁰ The pursuit of perfection mandated by Christ remains puzzling for humanity considering the reality of the human condition (cf., Matt. 5:48). The temptation is to explain this mandate as an *ideal* without the possibility of becoming *reality*. The challenge, however, recognizes that perfection is not according to standards set by the world; rather, it entails a humble recognition of the self in relationship to God. Francis

¹³⁷ Melchoir of Poblature, "450 Years of Service and Witness" in "the Capuchin Reform", 141.

¹³⁸ Although I am a Capuchin, this statement is supported by the countless ministries and tasks Capuchins have been assigned throughout their history. This is not a source of egotistical pride for the friars; rather, a confirmation of the Spirit's movement. See the many examples of Capuchin ministries in Melchoir of Poblature "450 Years of Service and Witness" in *The Capuchin Reform*, 140-153.

¹³⁹ cf., *Cap. Con.*, 186.

¹⁴⁰ "Franciscan Significance of the Capuchin reform" in "The Capuchin Reform," 41.

recognizes this intimate reality in his *Admonitions*, most especially when he states, “Blessed is the servant who does not consider himself any better when he is praised and exalted by people than when he is considered worthless, simple, and looked down upon, for what a person is before God, that he is and no more.”¹⁴¹ This essential reality calls friars to ceaselessly pursue personal holiness, which manifests the loving relationship between God and humanity. The zealous Capuchin ideals are nothing more than intentional and communal expressions of discipleship.

Since the Capuchin Order offers an ambitious witness to Gospel values for men to willingly follow, it also has a strong tradition of producing saintly figures who epitomize iconic Franciscan virtues, most iconic in simplicity, humility, patience, and austerity. The friars today celebrate the holy witness of their ancestors with reverence and devotion and revere them with those in the highest levels of the Church. For example, in his address to the General Chapter of Capuchins in September of 2018, Pope Francis shares his own sense of the Capuchin tradition,

The history of your Order is rich with many courageous witnesses to Christ and to the Gospel, many of whom have been proclaimed Saints and Blesseds. Their holiness confirms the fruitfulness of your charism and shows the signs of your identity: total consecration to God unto martyrdom, where required, a simple life among the people, sensitivity to the poor, spiritual accompaniment as closeness, and the humility that allows for welcoming everyone.¹⁴²

Pope Francis, a Jesuit, accurately characterizes these five traits of Capuchin life not only from biographical accounts of Capuchin saints, but also from a personal encounter as Archbishop of Buenos Aires with a Capuchin in Argentina.¹⁴³ Yet these conceptual acclamations underly lived

¹⁴¹ “Beatus servus, qui non tenet se meliorem, quando magnificatur et exaltatur ab hominibus, sicuti quando tenetur vilis et simplex et despectus; quia, quantum est homo coram Deo, tantum est et non plus.” *Admon. XX (FA:ED I,135)*.

¹⁴² Pope Francis, *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants at the General Chapter of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin*, (Vatican: September 14, 2018).

¹⁴³ Pope Francis recounts a story about meeting a Capuchin priest while archbishop of Buenos Aires. He says, “one day [the priest] came to see me and he wanted to talk. He said, ‘...I forgive a lot and sometimes I have doubts, I wonder if I have forgiven too much.’ We talked about mercy and I asked him what he did when he had those doubts.

realities by those who freely choose to embrace Francis' example of conformity to Christ. The life of the Capuchin Order will subsist on the foundation of holy witnesses, the challenge, however, is to identify *how* these friars responded so wholeheartedly to be able to adapt their witness to a modern context.

The reformatory vision of the first Capuchins successfully perseveres because of their explicit fidelity to the authority of the Church. The earlier Spirituals' abhorrence for the *gloss*, which Francis prohibited for interpretation of the *Rule* according to his *Testament*, exposes an irreverent attitude towards the Papal ruling. Persecution ensues that questions their fidelity to the Church. For the Capuchins, however, the emphasis on accepting a spiritual interpretation of the *Rule* through the lens of the *Testament* permits them to dismiss "carnal" rationalizations and accommodations that are inconsistent with a Spirit inspired life.¹⁴⁴ Van Asseldonk asserts, "the observance of the rule does not exclude acceptance of the declarations of the sovereign pontiffs to the extent that safeguard its pure and simple observance... Its observance is not to be considered as a juridical precept but as an ideal of perfection to be continually pursued."¹⁴⁵ In other words, the early friars freely *choose* this strict life rather than having it *imposed* on them. This commonality of desire seals the spiritual life exemplified by Francis within the fraternity since those who, by divine initiative, follow this rigorous path expect a life of strict penance

This is what he said: 'I go to our chapel and stand in front of the tabernacle and say to Jesus: Lord, forgive me if I have forgiven too much. But you're the one who gave me the bad example!'" See: Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy: A Conversation with Andrea Tornielli*, trans. by Oonagh Stansky (New York: Random House Publishing, 2016), 13.

¹⁴⁴ Van Asseldonk, "Franciscan Significance of the Capuchin reform" in "The Capuchin Reform," 46. Van Asseldonk's statement comes from his analysis of the Capuchin Constitutions of 1536. See: "Capuchin Constitutions of 1536" trans. Paul Handbridge, OFM Cap (Rome: Collegio San Lorenzo da Brindisi, 2006), Website: <https://www.capdox.capuchin.org.au/legislation/the-capuchin-constitution-of-1536/>, accessed February 12, 2023.

¹⁴⁵ Van Asseldonk, "Franciscan Significance of the Capuchin reform" in "The Capuchin Reform," 45-46.

devoid of worldly concerns. Thus, the friars uphold fidelity to the Church without compromising their observance of the *Rule*.

On a relational level, the intention of the early Capuchins to adhere wholeheartedly to the *Rule* underlies their identity as “sons” of Francis, who’s life testifies as a perfect imitation of Christ. The first Constitutions affirm, “we are sons of the Seraphic Father so far as we imitate his life and example, for our saviour said to the Jews, ‘If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham.’ Hence, if we are sons of Saint Francis then let us do the works of Saint Francis.”¹⁴⁶ This clear relational connection between the friars and Francis sets forth a mode for interpreting the *Rule* through spiritual imitation of Francis himself.¹⁴⁷ Imitation, however, presupposes intimate knowledge about someone, which is spiritually received in prayer. Thus, the Capuchins reaffirm and espouse the essential nature of the contemplative life as the prioritized commitment in imitation of Francis’ example. Ideally, this priority enhances their ministerial activity to engage with the most vulnerable in the world as commanded by Christ.¹⁴⁸ The endeavor to be closer to Francis inherently means to be closer to Christ. Conceptually, these venerable ideals seem like obvious expressions of Gospel life; however, their lived reality invites further reflection, especially for men who have committed their entire lives to strive for holiness through the solemn profession of vows in the Capuchin Order.

¹⁴⁶ Capuchin Constitutions of 1536, 6. Found in Van Asseldonk, “Franciscan Significance of the Capuchin reform” in “The Capuchin Reform,” 47.

¹⁴⁷ The precedence for this Christian method of discipleship and instruction had been set in several Epistles of Saint Paul, who repeatedly invites the early Christian communities to “imitate me” (cf., 1Cor 11:1). For further spiritual insight into this topic, see: Frank Matera, *The Spirituality of Saint Paul: A Call to Imitation*, (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press 2017).

¹⁴⁸ For a nuanced perspective of role of prayer in the Early Capuchins, see: Octavian Schmucki, OFM Cap, “Prayer and Contemplation in the Legislation and Life of the First Capuchins” in “the Capuchin Reform,” 75-96.

The high regard for the Capuchin tradition and the witness of many holy friars who have been formally proclaimed as saints continues to inspire individuals to pursue such means of holiness. Longing for similar fraternal and spiritual relationships, the form of life presented to inquiring candidates and the period of initial formation vitalizes the spirits of eager men to share in such a holy endeavor. After solemn profession, these enthusiastic friars yearn to demonstrate spiritual transparency in the life of the larger Order that has been experienced in initial formation through glimpses and word of mouth. Considering the lauded history, these recent solemnly professed friars are ideally prepared to encounter the challenges articulated in initial formation with spiritual fortitude and vigor like countless friars of the past. Yet conceptual and mediated challenges are quite different from the actual difficulties that arise after solemn profession.

For recent solemnly professed Capuchins, the prospect of upholding their austere and radical tradition often intensifies the expectations they hold for themselves and their brothers to carry on such a lauded tradition. The inherent risk of these self-imposed expectations can foster detrimental scrupulosity and slavish attachment to the letter of the law. Furthermore, the basis for this understanding is on legislation and the experience of others rather than his own call to holiness. When the ideals are perceived as a task to achieve rather than a grace to receive, they fail to lead the friar (and thus his community) to the intended end, which is union with God. This is not the mode of holiness Francis lives according to Bonaventure. Francis is so united to the unconditional Trinitarian relational love that external pressures and challenges have little effect on his disposition to be a gift of selfless love to God and others. For Brother Mauro in his Letter, “Let Us Fan the Flame of Our Charism,” this condition is the essence of Capuchin life. He writes,

What is our ideal in life, if not to make a total, unconditional gift of ourselves to God and all people? Let us be honest and ask ourselves: what is it that gives

meaning to our choice of life? In the formula of profession we say: “Since the Lord has given me the grace to live the gospel of Christ more perfectly...I vow to God and ... surrender myself with all my heart to this fraternity...” What matters and what characterizes our choice of life is total, unconditional self-giving. What is the point of saying we are consecrated, if we then set conditions and reserve for ourselves times and places where no-one has a right to comment or intervene?¹⁴⁹

Living this ideal as a gifted disposition of grace characterizes *pietas* that calls for steadfast holiness, which is an endless response of love that perseveres through disappointment or discouragement. In this way, the friar witnesses to a life of *conversion to, relationship with, and proclamation of* Christ as a *unique, distinctive, and outstanding* sign manifesting the Kingdom of God in the world.

Conclusion to Chapter II

In this chapter, I briefly review the history of division in the Franciscan Order to demonstrate the seemingly unending debate about how best to live Francis’ vision. I then discuss the call to holiness in light of Vatican II as the expression of relationship with Christ, which is informed by *pietas*. Next, I acknowledge contrasting priorities in the pursuit of holiness demonstrated through two approaches to ecclesial reform. These different approaches symbolize the priority of obligations for the Church’s fidelity to God, which are promoted by the respective values of unique individuals. I then describe the role of the consecrated life as witness to the pursuit of holiness and the lauded Capuchin ideal history and life of the Church. The rich Capuchin tradition sets a high benchmark for recent solemnly professed friars to pursue such holiness. Yet the lived experience of the Capuchin ideals often falls short of both personal and communal expectations because of perceived impediments or the experience of fatigue amidst the ceaseless challenges of life. *Pietas* disposes the friar to value and cultivate the given

¹⁴⁹ Johri, “Let us Fan the Flame,” 11.

relationships in fraternal life while also encouraging a mutual pursuit of holiness growing in relationship to and with God. In Chapter III, I acknowledge the reality of contrasting of obligation to God and the fraternity; however, I encourage the preservation of holiness in a community disposed with the virtue of *pietas* to live with steadfast holiness as a Capuchin friar in the modern world.

Chapter III Practicing *Pietas*

The Capuchin form of life presents a proven path to God exemplified by numerous witnesses of such holiness. Because of this rigorous form of life, friars are formed to appreciate the values in the *Constitutions* as ideals to be implemented according to various contexts and circumstances in each province. Many general ministers (including Brother Mauro), provincials, and other significant Capuchin figures have encouraged the friars to constantly seek renewal through multiple letters, spiritual reflections, and summaries of fraternal meetings.¹⁵⁰ The ongoing issue, as Van Asseldonk emphasizes, “lies in putting into practice what we read in all these beautiful writings.”¹⁵¹ The inevitable difficulties and trials of life that are unique to each friar’s context and experience potentially impedes his own resolve for pursuing holiness as a Capuchin friar. Yet the life of the Spirit, however dormant it may seem, cannot be extinguished by human limitations, struggles, or sin. Thus all friars, regardless of time in religious profession, are called to together by the Spirit to *be* renewed in steadfast holiness through the virtue of *pietas* that binds them together in this pursuit.

This chapter provides theological reflections for practicing the virtue of *pietas* individually and communally in response to the movement of the Spirit who guides the Order on the path towards union with God and the entire human family. I first offer a case study to set a framework for *pietas* as an obligation to fulfill duties of baptism and religious consecration. I then discuss respectively these duties that stress the relational element of *pietas* and identify

¹⁵⁰ See an extensive list of Capuchin documents written and/or translated in English provided by the Australian Capuchin Province under the web title, “Capdox.” See: <https://www.capdox.capuchin.org.au/>

¹⁵¹ Van Asseldonk, “Franciscan Significance of the Capuchin reform” in “The Capuchin Reform,” *Analecta Franciscana*, 44.

various challenges arising in the lived experience of Capuchin life that often seem burdensome. I suggest in this section that the virtue of *pietas* offers a grace to persevere through challenges by an understanding of the self and others as individuals in need of mercy and healing. I conclude the chapter with a practical theological reflection on Bonaventure's four-fold path to *pietas* that may be incorporated in communal discussions about the Capuchin form of life both on provincial and local levels of fraternity.

A Case Study: The Primacy of Conscience in the Living Out of Pietas

Presuming it is properly informed, the primacy of conscience reflects the *duty* of all people to follow it as an active response to the inner voice of God according to their understanding of a transcendent Being. Throughout the conciliar document, *Dignitatis Humanae*, the teachings uphold this liberty for all people to respond to this voice according to their inner conscience. For Christians, this freedom is expressed through fidelity to Christ.¹⁵² The universal call to holiness in the Church manifests the sanctity of a personal relationship with God that moves a person towards union with God. *Lumen Gentium* states, “every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.”¹⁵³ For Thomas Aquinas, this *duty* or obligation of justice to God reflects the virtue of *pietas*. Yet from a Franciscan perspective, the duty associated with *pietas* is understood from a relational perspective emphasizing Jesus' mission to reconcile the world to His Father and to reconcile neighbors.

Capuchins have a unique opportunity to offer witness of the virtue of *pietas* by the nature of brotherhood. In the assumed state of life as Capuchins, the personal duty to respond

¹⁵² Vatican II, *Dignitatis Humanae* (December 7, 1965).

¹⁵³ *LG* 41.

wholeheartedly to one's conscience extends to a communal obligation to accompany each other on the mission to sanctify the world. These two indispensable features for a Capuchin approach to *pietas* are not easily distinguished and must be prioritized in accordance with the interior conscience. To demonstrate this reality, I offer a case study of two individuals who both portray the virtue of *pietas*, albeit differently, according to their sense of fidelity to the Capuchin life and the *Rule* of Francis.

In a book describing the form of life of the Congregation of Friars Renewal (C.F.R.) called, *A Drama of Reform*, Benedict Joseph Groeschel (d. 2014) articulates his perception of the state of consecrated life, especially within his own Capuchin Order, after Vatican II as time of turbulence and uncertainty. Recalling the state of the Capuchin Order when he had entered, Groeschel notes they were, "...days of very serious and earnest observance. Although it was a bit repressive and needed to be adjusted to the kind of men who were joining (many former servicemen), the life was undoubtedly authentic. it was a time when authority was exercised with a heavy hand, with little or no consulting of the members, causing mounting resentment."¹⁵⁴ His understanding of *authentic* Capuchin life understandably corresponds to the ecclesial vision from which the Capuchin legislation had emerged. This legislation had endured for over four centuries without significant changes to its 16th century context.¹⁵⁵ His perception of the ensuing methods and implementation of renewal proposed by Vatican II discouraged Groeschel to a point where he assented to a recent solemnly professed friar's plea for active opposition to the growing challenges that he felt was hurting his credible witness of Capuchin life. Groeschel states, "I had

¹⁵⁴ Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., "Introduction," in *A Drama of Reform: Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R. and The Franciscans of the Renewal* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 26.

¹⁵⁵ See Appendix I for a summary of Regis Armstrong's understanding of the legislation of the early Capuchins that reflect an ecclesiology from the 16th century reformation era. Armstrong proceeds to demonstrate in the revised Constitutions of 1982 a legislation of Capuchin life that reflects the teachings of Vatican II.

a serious moral obligation to try to do something effective... If I did not do something, I knew I would commit a mortal sin of negligence and omission, a lasting and habitual sin that could be forgiven only when I had fulfilled the obligation to try.”¹⁵⁶ In other words, his duty to God informs his duty to the form of life that he believes is authentic and the path to God. He likely could not imagine at that point the consequence of acting on such duty.

As a prominent figure in the American Church, Groeschel and his companions were able to begin a form of renewal consistent with the long history of reform movements in the Franciscan tradition, which entails departing the Order to begin again. While it might seem opposed to Francis’ desire for unity among the brothers, Duncan Nimmo suggests that reform by means of structural division is not inherently contrary to the Franciscan ideal.¹⁵⁷ His perception of the diminishing ideals of Capuchin life caused him to respond according to his own conscience. Thus Groeschel and his friar companions informed the provincial of the Province of St. Mary, Fr. Gregory Reisert, of their decision that brought about a departure that he made quite public when explained his reasons for the reform movement. Despite the many nuances and speculations, the Capuchin friars were left with various sentiments about a brother who had responded (presumably) in conscience to his own sense of fidelity to holiness in a new institute.

The newly elected provincial, John Rathschmidt, began his term a few months after Groeschel informed Reisert of their decision. In a conversation I had with Rathschmidt, he shares the sentiments he felt the evening after his election of how he would proceed.¹⁵⁸ Although he

¹⁵⁶ Groeschel, C.F.R., “Introduction,” in *A Drama of Reform*, 27.

¹⁵⁷ “The unity between brother and brother which [Francis] wished to preserve at all costs was not unity of formal structure, but rather the union of respect, tolerance, in short of Christian love. Although Francis did not see, or at least did not say it, this is by no means the same as unity of organization; it is in fact quite compatible with division at the level of organization; it may even be better served by division at this level than by a fictitious and enforced appearance of unity,” Nimmo, *Reform and Division in the Franciscan Order (1226-1538)*, 657-658.

¹⁵⁸ John Rathschmidt, telephone interview by author, March 28, 2023.

acknowledges his personal anger and hurt, Rathschmidt experiences “pure grace” to proceed with integrity to his position as provincial minister to not only move the brothers forward, but also to likewise respond fraternally to assist Groeschel in his needs. Examining his responsibility in the *Rule* of Francis, Rathschmidt found his directives for how to respond,

Let the brothers who are the ministers and servants of the others visit and admonish their brothers and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything that is against their soul and our rule... Wherever the brothers may be who know and feel they cannot observe the Rule spiritually, they can and should have recourse to their ministers. Let the ministers, moreover, receive them charitably and kindly and have such familiarity with them that these same brothers may speak and deal with them as masters with their servants, for so it must be that the ministers are the servants of all the brothers.¹⁵⁹

Thus, Rathschmidt immediately met with Groeschel after the Provincial Chapter to inform him that the Capuchins would accommodate his desire for reform as fraternally as possible. Despite the subsequent years of painful division, the moment arrived when the C.F.R.s would become a canonically approved Public Association of the Faith, which formally seals the division as two separate institutes.

Both Groeschel and Rathschmidt had experienced similar formation models of the Capuchin form of life that had informed their consciences regarding the authenticity of how it should be lived. Groeschel responded to a perceived lapse in fidelity to the original vision of the Capuchins while Rathschmidt represented a Province considering and implementing the renewal envisioned by Vatican II. While their concerns may differ, both friars who are formed as consecrated individuals intuitively (albeit with grace) manifesting a Capuchin approach to *pietas* that upholds a sense of loyalty or obligation to their committed relationships. The grace of *pietas* offers the capacity for a friar to lovingly show his commitment, even if his personal convictions

¹⁵⁹ LR X (FA:ED I, 105).

or feelings would naturally resist such behavior. The result of responding to such grace is the possibility or realization of reconciliation, which reflects the reconciliation between God and humankind through the Paschal mystery of Christ. This may be exemplified by Groeschel's words that reveal his own sentiment about the fraternal gesture Rathschmidt made when the division was formally sealed.

Three years following the exodus of Groeschel and his companions from the Capuchin friars, Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, offered a Mass for them to profess new vows as Friars of the Renewal. Despite the joyous occasion, Groeschel admitted, "Fr. Andrew [Apostoli] and I were particularly saddened to leave the Capuchins, to which we had belonged for a combined total of almost seventy years."¹⁶⁰ Yet as they followed their consciences forming a new institute like many other Franciscan groups before, Rathschmidt faithfully followed his own conscience to minister as Francis had decreed. Groeschel curiously mentions, "I was gratefully consoled by the presence of [Rathschmidt,] who was kind enough to concelebrate the Mass with us."¹⁶¹ Rathschmidt reiterates that his presence reflected a sense of "obligation," which he experienced as immense grace.¹⁶² Regardless of Rathschmidt's sentiments or opinion, his fidelity to this "obligation" indicates a familial integrity not only to Groeschel, but also to his commitment to "move forward" from that time with *acceptance*. Despite yet another fracture in the history of Franciscan brotherhood, Groeschel reveals his own sense of *pietas* by his inclusion of Rathschmidt's presence in his writing, which he had no obligation to do. Fifteen years later as he reflects upon and transcribes that moment, he still shows a familial gratitude for the fraternal

¹⁶⁰ Groeschel, C.F.R., "Introduction," in *A Drama of Reform*, 41.

¹⁶¹ Groeschel, C.F.R., "Introduction," in *A Drama of Reform*, 41.

¹⁶² John Rathschmidt, telephone interview by author, March 28, 2023.

care shown to him. From this perspective, both Groeschel and Rathschmidt portray the virtue of *pietas* simply by Groeschel's public acknowledgment of Rathschmidt's participation that indicated a brief gesture of reconciliation, even if it lasted for just that moment.

This case study accentuates the complex and paradoxical nature of responding to the grace of *pietas* for Capuchins. Groeschel felt obligated to uphold his conscience according to his understanding of the authentic form of Capuchin life that he had considered lost. Rathschmidt felt obligated to set aside his personal views to carry out the responsibility entrusted to him by the friars to be their minister, including Groeschel. Rathschmidt accompanied both the friars and Groeschel through that strenuous time according to their respective needs. His fidelity to his obligation provided a moment of reconciliation that had lasting effect on Groeschel.

From this case study, two essential aspects of *pietas* emerge that recent solemnly professed Capuchins might first consider in their resolve to live the form of life: (1) the grace to listen and respond to the universal baptismal call to holiness (2) the grace to uphold and accept the filial responsibilities to the friars as a member of a consecrated brotherhood. These features assimilated together inform and direct a *communal* endeavor to embrace the concluding words of the prescribed formula for Capuchin profession, "I entrust myself with all my heart to this brotherhood, so that by the working of the Holy Spirit, after the example of Mary Immaculate, and through the intercession of our Father Francis, and of all the saints, with the help of my brothers, I may constantly strive for the fullness of love in the service of God, of the Church, and of all people."¹⁶³ With the many challenges and difficulties that are both foreseen and sudden in life, this pursuit of holiness calls for a countercultural sense of obligation to uphold the primacy of relationship to God and others when considering courses of action and life goals. Some things

¹⁶³ *Cap. Con.*, 21.

must be sacrificed for the sake of relationship; however, the consequence of such fidelity is far beyond anything the world might offer.

The Fundamental Grace of Baptism to Pursue Steadfast Holiness

The practical realization of *pietas* cannot be addressed without considering the human reality of sin. As described by Bonaventure, sin involves turning away from God, who is the Supreme Good, by prioritizing a lesser good. The tendency for sin effectively impacts every Christian. Thus, the universal call to holiness for Christians redirects each person to consistently turn towards the Supreme Good. The ceaseless experience of conversion can sometimes cause spiritual fatigue, especially when a person continually falls short of the expected result that they have hoped for themselves or have perceived as imposed upon them. Furthermore, frustrations, betrayals, loneliness, and/or discouragement that inevitably arise in life might also debilitate their ability or desire to pursue a relationship with God.

The call to holiness as a goal to achieve or something to earn reflects an unfortunately poor image of God, especially prevalent in the Church in the West. This perception of God is rooted in a legalistic society that seeks objective solutions and explanations to subjective circumstances and issues. Jesus himself faces this reality in his teaching at the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). Jesus' instructions that include loving enemies and referring to God as *our* Father astonishes those who yearn for meaning and purpose while scandalizing those who regard them as inferior. By listening to his teaching, the believer encounters a harmony of relationships characterized as radical inclusivity. The Church counterintuitively derives the universal call to holiness for all people from this Sermon, "be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is

perfect (Matt. 5:48).”¹⁶⁴ The notion of perfection does not exalt certain individuals over others based on merit or hierarchical state; rather, through the willingness to respond to grace according to a person’s respective call to imitate Christ in his relationship to the Father and his love for his brothers and sisters.

Subject to the same human condition, the pursuit of holiness as a Capuchin involves difficulties and challenges that correspond to a friar’s state of life. While friars must face these struggles like any other Christian, his identity as a consecrated public person often takes precedence over his baptismal vocation as a member of the Body of Christ. His canonical status as a consecrated religious man *informs* his fundamental call to be open to the grace that God desires to offer. This also pertains to the experience of disappointment or discouragement by the struggles or actions of others. For Francis, his sadness over the bad example of his brothers is eased when God assures him that the Order will persevere by God’s grace. Bonaventure writes of God’s words to Francis, “*I have called, I will preserve, and I will pasture... no matter how severely this poor little religion is shaken, it will always remain safe by my gift.*”¹⁶⁵ The call to steadfast holiness enables us to share in Jesus’ unwavering fidelity to the Father that leads him to the cross. As instructed by him, the friar takes up his own cross daily, that is, the various struggles, problems, disappointments, and discouragements to follow Christ, who leads all people to the Father (cf., Luke 9:23).

Bonaventure stresses an essential aspect of vocation that often is overlooked: the free choice. In his Commentary on Luke, Bonaventure reflects on the invitation that Jesus extends to anyone who “wishes” to be his disciple, which Bonaventure highlights that Jesus does not

¹⁶⁴ cf., *LG* 41.

¹⁶⁵ *Leg. Maj.* XIII, 3 (*FA:ED* II, 588). Emphasis my own.

compel them.¹⁶⁶ To interpret one's vocation as a choice offers a sense of freedom for one to be fulfilled according to God's distinctive call. The baptismal call to holiness inherently frees a person from original sin and bestows grace to participate in God's divine life. God, who intimately knows the recesses of the soul, mercifully graces people with the capacity to respond to such freedom in a manner that offers meaningful purpose and allows them to flourish. The Christian mission, however, witnesses to the paradoxical reality of the Gospel of the poor. For this reason, Francis chose to be *minor*, that is, to freely forfeit a life of privilege and ascent to assume the mind of Christ (cf., Phil. 2:5). Each person according to their own state and call has equity in this paradox to pursue holiness in light of the Gospel.

Those whom God invites to respond as consecrated religious are not superior; rather, they provide a witness so that others might also *desire* the cross that leads to deeper relationship with God. Francis profoundly understands the grace he has received as pure gift that allows him to be so captivated by God's love and mercy. Bonaventure recounts a conversion where Francis shares his self-perception with an unnamed brother. Francis tells him, "I see myself as the greatest of sinners... if Christ had pursued so great a criminal with such mercy, I surely think he would be much more grateful to God than I."¹⁶⁷ The unnamed brother might be any of us who yearn for holiness for the purposes of worldly status or privilege. Francis understands the power of grace as far superior to the reality of sin. Yet it is precisely his free and humble recognition of this grace that allows him to be so consumed by the love of God, which motivates his response to imitate Christ. The freedom to take up one's cross daily renews the friar in his own free choice to

¹⁶⁶ cf., *Comm. Lc.* 9:23.37 (Karris, 836).

¹⁶⁷ *Leg. Maj.* VI.6 (FA:ED II, 573).

always begin again.¹⁶⁸ The unfortunate temptation to capitulate to difficulties or discouragement arises when a friar has turned (on his own or by an external circumstance) from his initial fervor for the Capuchin ideals. The fount of grace never runs low or dry and is thus always available. It is the act of striving for holiness when the cross seems too burdensome to carry that we begin to recognize the grace to be steadfast in this pursuit.

The Communal Obligation to Pursue Steadfast Holiness

Lumen Gentium renews the image of consecrated life as a call to deepen a person's already established consecration to God in baptism. The attraction to a particular community ought to reflect the person's lived experience of baptismal grace. Yet the process of formation ideally refigures and shapes the identity of the individual who incorporates a unique vocational understanding into a dynamic communal family comprised of others who share an intentional way to holiness. *Lumen Gentium* states, "these religious families give their members the support of a more firm stability in their way of life and a proven doctrine of acquiring perfection."¹⁶⁹ From a Franciscan perspective, this sense of *stability* seems to oppose the essential spirit of itinerancy and minority. The on-going disputes about external observances of poverty, especially regarding living spaces, can trivialize the essential motivation for poverty, that is, union with God. The various gaps that separate generations, political and ecclesial ideologies, cross-cultural communication, ministerial priorities, and other facets of the modern world appear to cause further disputes and divisions. However, the *proven doctrine* of the *Rule* has never *achieved* the romanticized vision of the Franciscan charism. The ranges of opinions diversifies the Order to

¹⁶⁸ c.f., *Comm. Lc.* 9:23.37 (836).

¹⁶⁹ *LG* 43.

reflect the *Body of Christ*. As a sign to the world, a communal pursuit of *pietas* strives to manifest a unified sense of obligation to accompany each other on the path to holiness. The friars must be mindful that the grace received in both baptism and by virtue of religious profession has immense power to bring reconciliation and healing when things seem to be off or wrong.

Francis' novel yet attractive devotion to God and service to neighbor can serve to invigorate others to similarly respond and join him in his pursuit of Gospel perfection. In his *Testament*, he famously writes, "and after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me."¹⁷⁰ Through God's initiative and recognized by the Church, Francis discovers his own distinctive vocational identity that he not only possesses as his greatest treasure, but also freely shares with those willing to uncover this treasure for themselves. He loves the *Rule* because he is assured by God and reaffirmed by the Church that it is a path to eternal life. Thomas of Celano writes about his love for the *Rule*,

He burned with great zeal for the common profession and *Rule*, and endowed those who were zealots about it with a special blessing. He called it their *Book of Life*, the hope of salvation, the marrow of the gospel, the way of perfection, the key of Paradise, the pact of an eternal covenant. He wanted all to have it, all to know it, in all places to let it speak to the *inner man* as *encouragement in weariness* and as a reminder of a sworn oath. He taught them to keep it always before their eyes as a reminder of the life they should lead and, what is more, that they should die with it.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ "Et, postquam Dominus dedit mihi de fratribus, nemo ostendebat mihi, quid deberem facere; sed ipse Altissimus revelavit mihi, quod deberem vivere secundum formam sancti Evangelii. Et ego paucis verbis et simpliciter feci scribe; et dominus papa confirmavit mihi." *Test.* 14 (FA:ED I, 125).

¹⁷¹ 2*Cel.* 208 (FA:ED II, 380).

To use a metaphor, Francis' form of life is like following printed directions that guide a person on an evangelical roadmap leading to eternal life. His love for the *Rule* is not for itself; rather, for where it points. Yet the interpretation of the *Rule* depends on the communal effort to cultivate a relationship *to* and *with* Christ. In other words, the *Rule* guides the friars *together*. As a brother asks for a concession from the Rule, Francis responds, “far be it from *us*, dearest brother, to treat without piety [*impie*] what is in the Rule for the sake of anyone.”¹⁷² The pursuit of the highest good may not be compromised for a lesser good. The friars are commissioned to vigilantly respond to the Spirit who illuminates their obligations according to the *Rule*.

Like Cicero's concept of *pietas*, which sets a hierarchy of relational responsibility, Francis upholds the obligation to faithfully abide by the established order of obedience, which reflects his dutiful obedience to God and the Church. Yet unlike Cicero, Francis appreciates the bestowed *office* vis-à-vis the perceived *importance* of individual people. This signifies an equality among the friars to be regarded neither more nor less than others. After he resigns from his position as general minister, Francis comments on the grace of *pietas* that has been gifted to him to see the brothers through this lens. He tells those with him, “I would obey a novice of one hour, if he were given to me as my guardian, as diligently as I would obey the oldest and most discerning brother.”¹⁷³ His obedient response to his minister is not contingent on the guardian's personality or his presumed position on any aforesaid facet of the modern world.

The ministry to protect and secure the observance of the *Rule* is subject to the conscience of a friar who has been bestowed with such a task. Yet the virtue of *pietas* calls for the brothers

¹⁷² “Absit inquit a nobis frater carissime ut pro quovis homine impie agamus in regulam.” *Leg. Maj.* VII.4 (FA:ED II, 579). Emphasis my own.

¹⁷³ “Quod ita diligenter novitio unius horae obedirem si mihi guardianus daretur sicut antiquissimo et discretissimo fratri.” *Leg. Maj.* VI.4 (FA:ED II, 571).

to set aside personal opinions and differences to dutifully obey the brother in matters not contrary to an informed conscience. From a Franciscan lens, the grace to do this lovingly expresses the cross which the friars are called to take up daily. This opens the friars to be subject to the Spirit who inspires the minister provincial when making these decisions.

Francis, who profoundly understands the human condition, accounts for the unfortunate capacity for ministers and/or guardians to be intoxicated by power or pride in such positions of authority. Blind obedience does disservice to the vow, for obedience to those with legitimate authority imitates Jesus' obedience to the Father. Yet in an Admonition to the friars, Francis identifies 3 types of obedience: (1) *true obedience*, simply regarded as mutual agreement for a dutiful response between the minister and the subject, (2) *loving obedience*, which reflects conflicting interests yet not contrary to the conscience of the subject and is thus obeyed, and (3) *perfect obedience*, when a subject conscientiously opposes and refuses to fulfill the minister's request.¹⁷⁴ The notion of *perfect* obedience juxtaposes the intuitive definition of obedience, which implies compliance, and Francis' suggestion for refusal to obey. Francis defends the primacy of conscience; however, he abhors the prospect of a subject abandoning his minister because of his conscience.¹⁷⁵

The virtue of *pietas* provides the opportunity to receive the grace to suffer consequences in love for his perceived disobedience. Francis explains the perfect nature of this dual obligation to conscientiously object to violate an informed conscience while faithfully fulfilling the duty to the brotherhood. He writes, "for whoever chooses to suffer persecution rather than wish to be separated from his brother truly remains in perfect obedience because he lays down his life for

¹⁷⁴ cf., *Admon.* III (*FA:ED* I, 130).

¹⁷⁵ cf., *Admon.* III.7 (*FA:ED* I, 130).

his brothers.”¹⁷⁶ The practicality of such exceptional holiness seems rather idealized and unfeasible; however, like Jesus’ instruction to be perfect, the grace for this type of obedience calls for striving and a steadfast conviction of the fraternal duties that direct the friars to God.

***Pietas* Identified in the Lived Experience of Capuchin Life**

Friars who have lived the Capuchin form of life for an extended period can most likely attest to the difficulties and challenges that understandably could not be addressed or anticipated in initial formation. Theological ideals and theoretical approaches to various circumstances and scenarios have limited applicability when a recent solemnly professed friar recognizes for himself the competing claims and demands of not only the people of God, but also the obligations of fraternal life. In the initial period of formation, structures are established with designated formators committed to assist those who begin the Capuchin life with their discernment to be remolded according to Franciscan values in the Capuchin tradition. Ideally, these eager friars develop new skills and competencies that are strengthened by the Holy Spirit to emerge from initial formation with a contemplative vision to live as a Capuchin according to his matured interpretation of the Franciscan life. Despite the intense initial formation period, the obligation for on-going discernment depends almost exclusively on the initiative and willingness of each individual friar.¹⁷⁷ Once a friar recovers freedoms and privileges that were surrendered during initial formation, the likelihood of enforced accountability is often limited to egregious cases in which a superior must intervene. Otherwise, his daily spiritual routines and fraternal life

¹⁷⁶ *Admon. III.9 (FA:ED I, 130).*

¹⁷⁷ Although several Capuchin provinces and jurisdictions require on-going mentorship and regular meetings with the recent solemnly professed friars for at least the first 5 years after solemn profession, friars no longer receive external forum feedback formators that insists on at least adapting behaviors and spiritual practices for the time of formation. Thus, the friar’s willingness to respond to the Spirit depends heavily on his own desire for holiness.

are subject to his own sense of vocational responsibility and desire. The possibility of communal renewal is often met with resistance, especially since proposed changes might affect some friars more than others.

With countless pressures and responsibilities, each friar approaches adversity and stress differently. Unsurprisingly a friar might stumble or fall in his resolve to pursue holiness. While some friars show outstanding resilience, others downcast in their resolve that might extend for long periods of time. This potentially causes them to lose hope of ever rising again. Some are so helpless that they move beyond recognizing that they have even fallen in the first place. On the surface, these friars appear like any other; however, the interior heart that *is* filled with the Spirit of God has been veiled with a false perception of identity. The unfortunate reality is for the friars to only see this false identity, that is, the one characterized by fragilities, provocations, mental limitations, aloofness, and countless other traits that are deemed intolerable and unbearable by others. The virtue of *pietas* offers the grace for a friar to shatter the thin layer of ice coating not only the heart of the fallen brother, but especially his *own* coldness of heart. The same Holy Spirit alive in both friars radiates a fire of love that strengthens their resolve to move together towards God.

The notion of renewal often involves an assessment of the supposed problems or persisting tepidity to suggest solutions that seek to address the specific issues. The tendency to view anything short of a perceived ideal as a *problem* fails to acknowledge the Paschal Mystery. This may be exemplified by the Christmas story. Many Christians, especially in the west, romanticize a vision of the Holy Family resting comfortably in a neatly decorated stable with animals unobtrusively gazing on the newborn baby. This idealism seems much more acceptable after realizing that the Holy Family arrives in Bethlehem under oppressive circumstances

mandated by a divinely regarded emperor only to be accommodated in a cave-like shelter fitted for filthy and smelly untamed livestock. While the former image offers a scene of serenity and awe, the latter reflects the world in which God shows favor. Francis profoundly understands this reality demonstrated in the visible display of this moment at Greccio. As much as the friars reflect upon the Christmas event, their expectations for the lived experience of Capuchin life often suggest they would imagine a statelier scene for Christ to have been born. The only consistent feature in both the romanticized and realistic images of Christmas reveal the nature of love. Human perception of love often deviates from God's manifestation of love revealed in the relationship between God and the world and the world to God through Christ. To view the messiness of life as a problem needing to be solved or overcome unexpectedly disfigures the scene that God uses to reconcile the world to Godself. The true challenge is to proceed through the various issues with firm conviction that the Son has traversed similar chaos leading humankind back to the Father.

The lived experience of Capuchin life entails numerous responsibilities and commitments that offer a sense of purpose for those who strive to embrace the form of life. Furthermore, it provides moments to lovingly respond to grace through various daily experiences of communal life. Yet with the many communal, ministerial, and social endeavors in addition to the expected fraternal horarium, friars must reasonably prioritize their schedules according to their perception of need. An inevitable consequence of these judgments brings about omissions that might be perceived by other friars as neglectful or careless. The tendency to surmise reasons for such priorities or omissions raises questions among other friars that are often not communicated and thus devolve into assumptions or even speculative accusations. While friars may lack prudence in their judgment of priorities, the recurrent omission of communication together as friars in a

common pursuit of holiness might be beneficially regarded as a sin against *pietas*. By understanding this as a sin, the friars may understand the essential nature of healthy communication for communal relationship with God. Even if disagreements occur when prudently discerning the perceived non-negotiable aspect of Capuchin life, the grace of *pietas* potentially bestows a willingness for the friars to collectively identify according to the *Rule* and *Constitutions* the essential obligations due to God and each other.

The various difficulties and challenges that arise in the lived experience of Capuchin life may be articulated and discussed at length to enrich the communal experience and pursuit of renewal. The fact, however, is that most conversations and proposals that involve change or sacrifice will inevitably be countered with forms of resistance that might include rebuke, refusal, or indifference. For recent solemnly professed friars, this apparent rejection potentially causes discouragement or even despair. While the majority voice might not enthusiastically receive such aspirations, a disposition of *pietas* harmonizes an emerging collaborative effort to not only strive to fulfill the baptismal obligation to holiness, which is informed by the Rule of Francis, but also to remain steadfast in their loving duty of unconditional fidelity to the family of friars. To strive for such courageous conviction, those with similar commitments must animate each other in this pursuit that inherently requires frequent reception of the sacraments, spiritual direction, and fraternal discussions.

Apart from the grace of God, the most essential feature to this holy endeavor that *must* be upheld is transparency. Should the dissenting friars perceive this collaboration as a clandestine conspiracy against the wider body or a subcommunity within the fraternity, the practical realization of *pietas* vanishes into further generational and ideological mistrust. The goal must be to publicly *manifest* the interior joy of communal union with God that is not absent of tension

and differences; rather, distinctly unified in Christ as a body with many parts (cf., 1 Cor. 12:12). To ensure transparency, the friars who yearn for such intentional expression of holiness should journey together on the virtuous path that Bonaventure argues leads to *pietas*. Some reflections and suggestions provide a starting point for these friars to strive for holiness in this manner. The goal is not to change others; rather, the goal is to be transformed together in the pursuit to imitate Christ in his relationship to the Father through the Holy Spirit.

Theological Considerations for a Transparent Exercise in the Virtue of *Pietas*

Vatican II offers the opportunity for communities to reexamine their mode of Gospel witness according to their tradition. For those who had experienced affective repression due to rigid formation approaches, the renewal movement provides a much-needed relief from the overly structured semi-monastic understanding of Capuchin life. The pendulum of ideology had swung in favor of this reform movement to extreme levels in some cases. The call to for the Church to be more accessible for the laity and the vision of an inclusive community appealed to the generation that had been formed for a life separate from the world. As the pendulum swings back towards younger Capuchins seeking to revive traditional practices that seemingly reflect an ecclesial era before Vatican II, resistance to such notions seems quite reasonable considering the insufferable lived experience these seasoned friars once endured. Yet recent solemnly professed friars must communicate a desire not to *return* to a mid-20th century western ecclesial approach to Capuchin life; rather, to instill the timeless Gospel values attributed to Francis *today*.

The Capuchin form of life accentuates and upholds the essential nature of the relationship to the Father as brothers of Christ through the Holy Spirit. Everything else, including the vows, the charism, the brotherhood, ministries of mercy and justice, and all other values proceed from this relationship. By witnessing to this reality in a society focused on immediate gratification and

empirical evidence to define success, Capuchin life points to the reality of life beyond *this* life. The virtue of *pietas* opposes the primacy of individualism that poses worldly temptations for power, privilege, and prestige. Recent solemnly professed friars are not looking to be *unique*, *distinctive*, and *outstanding* signs of Gospel holiness characterized only by visible witness such as extreme austerity, traditional liturgical practices of devotion, and an identity defined by the cloth of the habit. Recent solemnly professed friars seek to reimagine that former rigidity in a way that is lifegiving. Features such as poverty, devotional practices, and the habit all should point *beyond* the external expressions to the interior reality as a Gospel sign of the common pursuit for holiness. As relationship is the fundamental key to unlock the hidden-in-plain-sight virtue of *pietas*, Bonaventure's four-fold path to *pietas* provides a structure for recent solemnly professed friars to communicate this desire for what Capuchin life has to offer not only each other, but also the Church and the world.

As explained in Chapter I, Bonaventure articulates in the *Leg. Maj.* a theology of *pietas* as a four-fold path that leads to a perpetual disposition of union with God through four characteristics of *pietas*: devotion, compassion, self-emptying, and universal reconciliation. Francis is so consumed into the Divine life that he experiences the original intended grace for humankind epitomized in the person of Jesus Christ, the New Adam. The grace to strive for such holiness demonstrates a capacity to live the virtue of *pietas* in a steadfast manner. Thus, using Bonaventure's four-fold path as a structure, I offer some theological reflections on the specific features of this path that might be incorporated or adapted by recent solemnly professed friars to encourage each other in the pursuit of holiness while accompanying the skeptical and/or lost brothers with their own call to be holy, which means the willingness to meet them where they are

at. A visual image of this path is available on the following page for reference that shows Bonaventure's proposed path leading to the state of innocence (see Table 1).

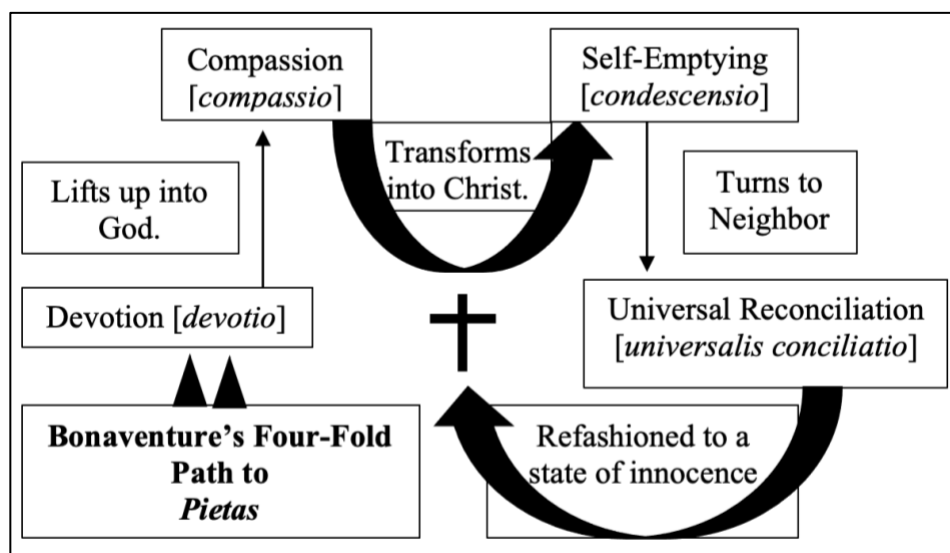


Table 1. Visual illustration of Bonaventure's path to *Pietas*.

Devotion – Bonaventure teaches this feature of *pietas* is what “lifted [Francis] into God.”

Devotion is often understood as formal reverence and awe for God. Prayer forms such as the rosary, divine mercy chaplet, and novenas exemplify practices of devotion that express formal and encouraged methods of prayer. Devotion may also be extended as a filial reverence for others. Many people have devotions to saints or living family members that portray a love for another. Although the obligation to love others reflects an essential Christian command, devotion challenges the Christian to express a spirit of reverence for *all* people. Showing respect for all creation without considering merit upholds the due of dignity of all things created in the image of God. This challenge especially applies to communal life. The ability to revere the homeless woman intoxicated with alcohol yelling derogative slurs on the subway seems far simpler than revering friars in a local community who seem to neglect their fraternal obligations. Friars often view the internal image of God in the intoxicated woman yet miss the same image in the man who resides under his same roof. For a friar to see the image of God in others, especially those

whom he dislikes, *pietas* enables him to renew his vision to see as God sees. This renewed sight lifts him into a deeper relationship not only with God, but also with the brother whom he finds difficult to share in mutual relationship.

The Trinitarian Divine life entails constant *communication* of love. As Francis is lifted into God to participate in this communion of relationship, devotional sight *at least* allows a friar to see the importance of communicating love. Formal communication with God through devotion develops a reverent friendship as conversations with God shift from formal petitions and memorized formulas to a deeper intimacy of mutual sharing. Participation in this sharing requires a steadfast resolve for a life of prayer. Chapter III of the Capuchin Constitutions on prayer profoundly articulates the indispensable nature of prayer that informs and sustains the entire life of the community.¹⁷⁸ The communal obligation for prayer *together* offers the space for a moment of single-minded attention to God as brothers. The physical presence of brothers together should be celebrated even if a friar is not mentally or spiritually present. The communal presence definitively affirms Christ in its midst (cf., Matt. 18:20). Even if hearts are separated in spirit, the presence of all the members together communicates a love beyond external appearances.

Personal communication with God is just as essential as the communal obligation. The Constitutions state, “it is of the greatest importance to form one’s conscience about the vital necessity of personal prayer. Each brother, wherever he may be, is to make sufficient time each day for mental prayer, for example, *one whole hour*.”¹⁷⁹ Considering the demands of life, the holy hour might be split to accommodate the daily hardships; however, the Constitutions

¹⁷⁸ See: *Cap. Con.*, “Chapter III: Our Life in Prayer,” 45-59.

¹⁷⁹ *Cap. Con.*, 55. Emphasis added.

seemingly leave this to the individual friar's *conscience*. While the universal call to holiness promotes a life of personal prayer for all peoples, friars may consider their conscience according to their obligation to the *Rule* that is interpreted through the Constitutions. In this manner, personal prayer might readily be seen as an obligation not just for the self, but also for his communal commitment. If a friar desires to be consumed by the love of the Trinity, then he must make himself *available* for such communication. The evidence of a life of prayer is in the fruit of the Spirit that is produced (cf., Gal. 5:22-23).

While communication with God seems rather straightforward, communication between the friars is more complicated. Communication without reverence and trust involves no sense of mutual vulnerability in the relationship. Tyrant mandates from a superior met with adolescent defiance of his subject simply exposes toxic living conditions where neither friar feels supported or fulfilled in his vocation. Thomas of Celano recounts a conversation between Francis and his guardian that conveys a mutual reverence and trust. He writes,

At the time when Saint Francis was staying at the palace of the bishop of Rieti to be treated for his eye disease, a poor woman from Machilone who had the same disease as the saint came to see the doctor. Then the saint, speaking familiarly to his guardian, nudged him a bit: "Brother Guardian, we have to give back what belongs to someone else." And he answered: "Father, if there's such a thing with us, let it be returned." And he said: "Yes, there is this mantle, which we received as a loan from that poor woman; we should give it back to her, because she has nothing in her purse for her expenses." The guardian replied: "Brother, this mantle is mine, and nobody lent it to me! Use it as long as you like, and when you don't want to use it any longer, return it to me." In fact the guardian had recently bought it because Saint Francis needed it. The saint then said to him: "Brother Guardian, you have always been courteous to me; now, I beg you, show your courtesy." And the guardian answered him: "Do as you please, father, as the *Spirit* suggests to you!"¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ "Tempore quo morabatur sanctus Franciscus in palatio episcopi Reatini pro oculorum infirmitate curanda quaedam paupercula mulier de Machilone venit ad medicum habens et ipsa similem cum sancto infirmitatem. Sanctus ergo guardianum suum familiariter alloquens talia quaedam instillat: frater guardiane oportet nos reddere alienum. Qui respondit ei: reddatur pater si quod est apud nos. Istum inquit mantellum quem mutuo accepimus a muliere illa paupercula restituamus eidem quia nihil est sibi pro expensis in bursa. Siquidem paulo ante guardianus emerat ipsum pro necessitate sancti Francisci. Dixit ad eum sanctus: frater guardiane semper mihi curialis fuisti

As articulated in the previous section of this chapter, Francis profoundly reveres the *office* of guardian. Yet his deference does not prevent him from assisting his brother guardian in the practice of poverty. Celano accounts Francis' conversation with his guardian with *familiaritas*, which means "on friendly terms."¹⁸¹ Francis neither scolds nor judges his guardian for overlooking an opportunity to share his temporal goods with the poor; rather, he *encourages* him to do so by communicating with him. Recalling the case study, Rathschmidt identifies in the *Rule* the call for ministers to be familiar [*familiaritas*] with those to whom he is a servant.¹⁸² Likewise, the subjects might have such familiarity with their guardian to have a mutual obligation to guide each other to a life of holiness. *Familiaritas* nourishes *pietas* for a growth in fraternal trust so that love and humility are the root of correction, which allows conflicts to be healthily addressed.

Compassion – Having been *lifted into* the life of the Trinity, the friar is conformed to receive a renewed vision through the lens of unadulterated love. The radical inclusivity of love instills a sense of incompleteness when others have not experienced such intimacy. One of the greatest forms of suffering occurs when a person feels unlovable, forsaken, or helpless and thus desperately searches for acceptance or purpose through other means. Those who are entrenched in oppressive or callous circumstances and conditions learn to cope with suffering through various behaviors and thus struggle to grasp the reality of God's love. For all people, however, human suffering cannot be avoided. Yet Christ reveals that it can be redemptive. Compassion unites a friar who experiences Trinitarian love with the heart of Christ to see and share in the

modo precor curialitatem ostende. Respondit guardianus: fac pro velle pater quidquid tibi spiritus suggerit!" 2*Cel.* 92 (FA:ED II, 306).

¹⁸¹ *CMLED*, 264.

¹⁸² cf., *LR X* (FA:ED I, 125).

misery of those who, for whatever reason, cannot fathom or approach such love. The mode of love that Christ shows seems to contradict the goodness of God; however, it manifests a model of compassion for all people to imitate.

The concept of redemptive suffering is far more desirable than the experience itself. Those who experience sufferings in its various forms (e.g., physical, spiritual, mental, etc.) often think these burdens *impede* or *hinder* their relationship with God. This deception leads them believe that once the burden is relieved or removed, then they will be able to partake more fully in a relationship with God and the Church. Yet the Word does not wait until sin has been eradicated before becoming flesh; rather, God sees the impediment and still desires to share the Divine life with humankind. Human suffering does not deter God from partaking in the human nature. The mode of reconciliation offered on the cross becomes the manifestation of Divine compassion characterized by a loving desire for relationship. By looking upon human suffering with compassion, Christ not only acknowledges it, but also shares in it. Thus, he reveals the essence of filial relationship that cannot be indifferent to brothers and sisters who suffer.

The reception of the stigmata clearly manifests Francis' complete conformity to Christ who shares the very nails of His crucifixion with Francis.¹⁸³ While friars show great devotion to this mystery, they often avoid or grumble when occasions for imitation arise. The illustration in Table 1 above shows how the path to *pietas* moves the friar *through* the cross of Christ to be transformed. As previously articulated, the choice to take up one's own cross daily is an obligation of discipleship. The *choice* to share in someone else's cross, especially one that appears self-imposed or self-inflicted, seems far more appealing in an academic thesis than an

¹⁸³ cf., *Leg. Maj.* XIII.3 (FA:ED II, 633).

actual act of compassion. Yet for Bonaventure, *pietas* shows no partiality to friars who seem worthy of such compassion.

The obligations articulated in the *Rule* extend to and for all the brothers. This challenging endeavor often entails being nailed to the cross for showing Christ-like love when making and implanting decisions that might be perceived by others as contrary to Christian love. The scandal of the cross reveals a resistance to such radical measures to convey God's love. Yet as a friar is called to imitate God, he cannot simply look upon someone's suffering and not seek to share in it. Whether or not the friar(s) even recognize(s) his/their suffering, the ensuing consequences for showing such compassion must be endured with steadfast holiness. The grace he receives to suffer without counting the cost expresses his loving devotion to the life he has chosen to live. Yet he can be sure that through this suffering, he continues to live in a disposition of *pietas* leading to him to deeper union with God.

Self-Emptying – The editors of *FA:ED* II translate *condescensio* as self-emptying to capture the motion of descent conveyed in Latin. As previously mentioned, the editors assert the word signifies a sense of *stooping* down that suggests negative connotations of superiority from a modern perspective.¹⁸⁴ While self-emptying often expresses the theological concept of *kenosis*, Bonaventure implies a further nuance by stating that it [turns] Francis to his neighbor. By *self-emptying*, the focus shifts from the self as the center to self that is oriented to towards others. The difficulty to move beyond self-motivated interests and pursuits at times can seem unfair if a friar is constantly evaluating his equality among the brothers. According to the path that Bonaventure identifies towards a disposition of *pietas*, friars are moved to act with loving compassion to stoop into other's disoriented perspectives to be reoriented *together* towards Christ.

¹⁸⁴ *FA:ED* II, 586.

The concept of a friar *stooping* down to his neighbor initially might be perceived in the modern negative sense as the implication is that the one stooping descends from a higher position. Yet considering the previous two features of *pietas*, the one who first stoops is Christ. Francis clearly understands an equality among the friars that calls for those with authority to treat it as one serving rather than being served. Christ epitomizes the act of stooping when he washes the feet of his disciples and thus offers them an example to follow (c.f., John 13:15). For a friar to imitate such humble service, it calls for an understanding of what Christ had done (c.f., John 13:12). Although this understanding necessarily entails grace, a friar who understands what Christ has done because he has experienced for himself his own feet being washed. In other words, the friar who seeks to serve his brother knows what it is like to have been served. He knows the vulnerability that it takes to allow someone to stoop to his own sense of shame, sadness, darkness, or any other condition in need of healing or the light of truth. By recognizing his own need to be served by the brothers, he demonstrates an understanding that conveys the compassion he feels interiorly.

A key to open a communal expression of *condescensio* calls for friars to wholeheartedly strive to enter *true* relationship with the friars who have been marginalized, avoided, or ignored because they are considered disturbed, venomous, or a nuisance. This challenge practically entails tremendous effort on the part of the brothers who choose to engage with such brothers; however, the essence of *pietas* in fact obliges at least a steadfast attempt to understand the lived reality of brothers deemed as problems. In his *Letter to a Minister*, Francis views these individuals as a grace and means for opportunities to grow in love.¹⁸⁵ Francis paradoxically insists the addressed minister should be *thankful* for being wronged or annoyed. The grace to

¹⁸⁵ *LMin.* (FA:ED I, 97-98).

practice the kind of charity that Francis describes takes trial and error; however, the steadfast nature of holiness provides the motivation to persevere regardless of the perceived results. Without the grace to be emptied of self-centered expectations, the potential perception of such love might be patronizing correction that might ensue further frustration and discouragement. As one who is emptied of pretense and guile, an opportunity emerges to communicate and share in these friars seemingly negative antics allowing him to be *understood* as he is. Yet at this stage of *pietas*, the habitual incorporation of these suggestions potentially begins to take less effort because of a greater capacity for grace that inherently shows a conformity to Christ. With a renewed sense of vocation and commitment according to what *is* rather than what *should be*, a healing of pain takes place to encounter reconciliation, which is the final aspect of *pietas*.

Universal Reconciliation – In the Vatican II conciliar document, *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church reaffirms Christ's call to be peacemakers. The teaching asserts the experience of peace is rooted in the pursuit of justice that upholds the dignity of every human being. Conflicts that involve violence objectively indicate an absence of peace; however, the deeper challenge calls for humanity to identify internal conflicts within the human family that *appear* to be peaceful but in fact harbor great violence of heart. The concept of universal reconciliation associated with *pietas* becomes an interior character of peace that binds individuals together in heart by a recognition of the intended harmonious relationship God offers to humankind. While hints of this peace are evident through grace, those who strive for holiness allow themselves to be so consumed by God that they manifest God's gentle and humble character (c.f., Matt. 11:29).

Gaudium et Spes recognizes that true loving peace cannot be attained without a persistent stance for justice, which often is accompanied with suffering and persecution. It is quite consistent, however, with the mode of reconciliation epitomized in the Paschal Mystery:

That earthly peace which arises from love of neighbor symbolizes and results from the peace of Christ which radiates from God the Father. For by the cross the incarnate Son, the prince of peace reconciled all [people] with God. By thus restoring all [people] to the unity of one people and one body, He slew hatred in His own flesh; and, after being lifted on high by His resurrection, He poured forth the spirit of love into the hearts of [people]. For this reason, all Christians are urgently summoned to do in love what the truth requires, and to join with all true peacemakers in pleading for peace and bringing it about.¹⁸⁶

As witnesses to this peace, the Capuchin vocation calls for this sense of reconciliation within the brotherhood regardless of the challenges and difficulties that are perceived to pose obstacles to strive for such peace. This pursuit of peace portrays a Capuchin sense of Kurt Pritzl's encouragement for consecrated religious to be, "...a unique, distinctive, and outstanding sign not only of the ultimacy and triumph of love over hate, strife, and fear, but of the supernatural love possessed and lived now, which transcends the natural interplay of love and hate, of longing and fear, in human life."¹⁸⁷ The love shown within the brotherhood characterized by *pietas* radiates warmth in the coldness of a world in pain searching for meaning. This potentially persuades others to believe in a possibility for reconciliation not only between nations or polarized ideologies, but also within the self who experiences an absence of love.

Although the laity may not be privy to or conscious of conflicts, divisions, and resentments within the fraternity, interior sentiments of dissatisfaction or indignation are not as concealed as friars would think or hope. A disquiet disposition often affects the capacity to be consistently prepared for the various and unpredictable moments that life presents. The movement towards *pietas* concludes through universal reconciliation because it requires the friar to straightforwardly confront his discontent with honesty and integrity for his two-fold baptismal

¹⁸⁶ GS 78.

¹⁸⁷ Pritzl, OP, "Apostolic Religious Life in the Post-Vatican II Church: Ongoing Challenges of Renewal – Perfect and Imperfect love," 132.

and religious vocation. This endeavor often causes varying emotional responses with corresponding behaviors. The consequences and outcomes of such confrontation with the self might evoke anxiety or fear; however, the grace of *pietas* should reassure the friar that he is not alone in this endeavor. He is solemnly committed to brothers who likewise are solemnly committed to him. The peace he potentially experiences might mean that some friars will not accept him in his new sense of self.

The truth of the matter is 3-fold: (1) that God unconditionally accepts and loves him, (2) that those friars who also similarly strive for holiness accept and love him, and (3) that he begins to accept what *is* rather than what *should* be. in this manner, he is refashioned in a state of innocence, that is, union with God. Holiness, however, not only involves *conversion to* and *relationship with* Christ, but also *proclamation of* Christ. By appreciating the self in relationship to God and the friars, a friar freely shares in his obligation to share the grace of being in relationship with God to the world. Inevitably he will stumble and fall in this pursuit, but the grace to strive and rise again leads him and the brothers back to God.

Conclusion to Chapter III

This chapter applies the theology and ecclesiological perceptions of *pietas* to the lived experience of Capuchin life. in the west. I begin with a case study of two Capuchin figures who experienced similar models of Capuchin formation yet differ in their understanding of obligations to the Order and the Church. This accentuates the primacy of conscience to understand the virtue of *pietas*. From the case study emerges two forms of obligation to holiness which I subsequently articulate respectively the universal call to holiness in baptism and the communal response to holiness by religious consecration. These two calls are not mutually exclusive; rather, they ought to inform and guide each other in the pursuit of union with God. As

the pursuit of holiness occurs in the world, I acknowledge the lived experience of the human condition and call for transparent renewal that ideally instills trust in relationship. I conclude with reflections on what pietas looks like according to Bonaventure's four-fold path and suggestions for individually living the virtue that has a communal effect of steadfast holiness. These reflections support the uniqueness of each individual friar in his own pursuit of holiness yet encourages all the friars to assimilate these differences into one body together with Christ as the head leading the fraternity to God.

Conclusion

Brother Mauro's expectation of the friars to live what they have professed to live calls for an examination of the meaning of holiness in the consecrated life. The theological understanding of religious consecration as being set apart no longer conveys an isolation from the world to encounter union with God; rather, it invites religious men and women to live holiness *in* the world according to the various expressions of charism. For Capuchin friars to respond to Br. Mauro's admonition, the pursuit of holiness to be united with the divine life demands a steadfast character which entails patience, an uncommon trait in society today. When the expectation for immediate gratification and satisfaction by limitless access to information seeps into the spiritual life, a person might be convinced that holiness should be attained *today* when it is desired. Yet Francis of Assisi demonstrates for us that his entire life directed him toward God, even before his identified conversion. God draws Francis through every moment as the one who is in pursuit of *Francis*. Yet Francis does not journey alone to God; company joins him on the way.

The communal expression of holiness in Capuchin life becomes a burden on individuals who focus on observed external actions rather than the interior image of God. The holy tradition of the Capuchins often signified radical simplicity of life and immense joy in the vocational pursuit of holiness. Although the friars praise the canonically recognized saints, these lauded individuals hardly ever held positions of leadership or published academic works. Their acclaimed holiness is attributed to the relationships they prioritized as the path to holiness for themselves and for others. The stories and accounts of the holy Capuchins in the history of the Order and of individual provinces accentuates the relational nature of *pietas*; however, it also involves an interest in the untold or exhibited stories of the *living* friars, which often go unheard. This obviously does not mean each friar knows everything about every friar or for friars to

publicly divulge personal details of themselves at a Provincial Chapter meeting. Instead, it calls for friars to mutually enter together the lived experience of life. This allows for friars to participate together in a common pursuit to live as the holy friars of the past have done.

In this thesis, I have sought to enter into the collective Franciscan story to claim the virtue of *pietas* as an essential aspect of the form of life. The virtue pervades the history of the Order. For example, Bonaventure's understanding of *pietas* seems to portray his own care for the friars to be moved toward God by his personal devotion to Francis. His effort to write a cohesive theological account accentuates his perception of the sanctifying virtues for Franciscans to imitate in the *Leg. Maj.* Although some friars might not agree with his perception or method, it cannot be denied that he shows a loving care for the friars by the fruit of his efforts. Furthermore, the relational obligation attributed to the common profession of vows in the Order heightens a sense of mutual accountability to accompany each in striving for virtue.

To journey together in holiness, differences and diversity must be celebrated rather than avoided. This thesis addresses the concept of *pietas* from a Western perspective. The nature of the universal call to holiness, however, crosses cultural boundaries and assumptions that likely necessitates different cultural standards for evaluating the virtue of *pietas*. The obligations to various relationships according to *pietas* might contrast with those in various cultural contexts. Capuchin friars often live in cross-cultural local communities and presumably have different expectations for relationships. The grace of *pietas* ought to transcend these cultural differences to live harmoniously that recognizes the differences without mocking or judging them. The Christian understanding of *pietas* might be most authentically expressed in a cross-cultural setting as it demands the friar to step out of himself to understand and appreciate another.

The steadfast feature of holiness appeals to all friars who yearn for God. As one who also desires union with God, I reiterate an acknowledgement of my own limitations and faults that might hurt my credibility as the author who may not live *pietas* as the ideal presented. Yet as Rathschmidt explained in his comments regarding the C.F.R. division, a moment arises when a friar must accept the past to move forward in the future. Acceptance is a deep spiritual process that allows God to heal the wounds of impractical expectations or theological differences. It breaks barriers set by anger that are contrary to the Spirit who motivates reconciliation. The Gospel call to be reconciled with neighbor entails a resolve to surrender ambitious pride, power, and prestige and to confront the various challenges and temptations of life rather than fleeing from them (cf., Matt. 4). A desire for God in steadfast holiness poises the friar to face the many difficulties of life with the virtue of *pietas* as a collective pursuit rather oppositions to holiness.

I conclude this thesis this with a tribute to the early Capuchins who demonstrated the virtue of *pietas* in their commitment to Francis' *Testament* yet remained faithful to their baptismal obedience to the Church. I share the blessing Francis offers at the end of his *Testament* that conveys his blessing upon those who strive to observe his words. This does not expect perfection, rather, steadfast holiness.

And whoever observes these things,
let him be blessed in heaven with
the blessing of the Most High Father,
and on earth with the blessing of his Beloved Son
with the Most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete
and all the powers of heaven and with all the Saints.
And, as far as I can,
I, little brother Francis,
your servant,
confirm for you,
both within and without,
this most holy blessing.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁸ *Test.* 40-41 (*FA:ED I*, 127).

Appendix 1

Regis Armstrong discusses the primacy of ecclesial fidelity that pervades Capuchin legislation according to the teachings and positions articulated in the conciliar documents of the various councils since 1536. Armstrong first explains the contextual background of the early friars that illuminates the reason for such commitment to be men of the Church. He argues that the renewed vision of the Church articulated in the documents of Vatican II reflected in the Constitutions of 1982 is consistent with the tradition of ecclesial fidelity. This inherently involves a shift in mindset by the friars to implement such renewal in the form of life that had been grounded in prior interpretations of ecclesiology. In no way does this suggest that the former modes of legislation were wrong; rather, the friars ought to live according to an ecclesiology of their given time. Armstrong succinctly summarizes the foundational sense of ecclesiology in prior Capuchin legislation,

In examining the Constitutions of our order from 1536 to 1982 it is easy to note the desires of four hundred and forty-six years of Capuchins who desire to remain faithful to the Church. These phrases immediately attract our attention in the first Constitutions of St. Euphemia (1536): The Holy Roman Catholic Church (30, 98, 119), the Church Militant (7, 43, 119), the Apostolic See, and the Roman Court (11). these images of the church continued throughout the constitutional tradition of the order so that all those brothers who read or heard then obtained an ecclesial sense that was directed by the apologetic, reformation-conscious vision of the first Capuchins...Theirs was essentially an institutional and hierarchical image of the Church, colored by a strong consciousness of the need for Papal and Episcopal authority, a strong magisterium, and a profound sense of order... As Bishop Emile de Smedt of Burges commented at the first session of the Second Vatican Council, this preliminary schema is characterized by three terms: clericalism, juridicism, And triumphalism. as we look at our capuchin history, is understandable that such an image of the Church developed and permeated our understanding not only of our ecclesial life but also our Capuchin life.

Armstrong then proceeds to identify the themes of the councilor documents of Vatican II manifested in the 1982 Constitutions. Thus, the entire form of life was considered and renewed according to ecclesiology presented in Vatican II. Those who lived through these considerations and propositions of renewal experienced the dispute about how to proceed with incorporating such renewal. While some viewed this as a betrayal of the tradition, Armstrong seems to suggest that the tradition should be viewed within the context of the Church rather than the Order before the Church. See: Armstrong, "The Ecclesial Vision of the Capuchin Constitutions," 153-156.

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