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LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD MARTIN, O.P., DIRECTOR

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COMPANIONS IN THE YEAR OF FAITH

As we look forward to the Pilgrimage we are called to make through this year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, the Rosary Center is proud to announce two new works that will provide valuable spiritual insight during these important days.

The first is a new CD by Dominican theologian Brian Mullady. Fr. Mullady is no stranger to readers of *Light and Life*, and his loyal fans will enthusiastically greet his reflections entitled *Faith*. Fr. Mullady examines Sacred Scripture, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the fruits of the Second Vatican Council, to guide us on our faith journey and to give the faithful listener a great deal to ponder as the Year of Faith unfolds.

Our second presentation is a biography of St. Francis of Assisi by Dominican historian, Augustine Thompson. This highly-readable, yet scholarly, volume has been well-received by religious, academic and popular critics. What follows are excerpts from a review by Woodeene Koenig-Bricker, a friend of both Fr. Thompson and Fr. Reginald Martin, director of the Rosary Center. It originally appeared in *Our Sunday Visitor* on May 20th of this year.

“Of all the saints of the Church, St. Francis of Assisi is one of the...most beloved. He has been adopted, or perhaps appropriated is a better word, by everyone...has had words put into his mouth that he never spoke...and had his own words ignored. Characterized as the “holy hippie,” he has inspired millions for nearly 800 years.

“Francis of the received tradition is a happy troubadour of God,” said Dominican Father Augustine Thompson, author of a new biography titled *Francis of Assisi*. ‘That’s the popular image and it’s not made up. He loved to sing in bad French and play his air violin, but the Francis I came to know experienced the deep darkness as well.’

MAN AND MYTH

“Father Thompson, professor of history at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, in Berkeley, CA, has created a two-part book. The first half is a biography written for popular readers; the second half is a scholarly treatise of the medieval sources....



THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

“The Francis that Father Thompson discovered in his research was very human. ‘Francis is not the birdbath saint, not someone...who never had any doubts...He struggled with the horrors of the battles he witnessed... he was clearly traumatized by his time in the military.’ And yet, ‘The image of him spontaneously desiring to follow God’s will wherever it would lead him; that’s the... free spirit part of Francis that is true. If he perceives God is telling him to do something, if it’s something he doesn’t expect and it’s weird, he will do it....”

DEPENDENCE ON GOD

“Father Thompson said that if we are to know the real Francis, we have to be willing to shed some of our preconceived notions. One is that of ‘Francis as a religious genius at war with the institutional Church, misunderstood by the institutional Church. ‘This is... completely anachronistic... One of the things Francis taught me is that holiness is impossible without fidelity to Catholic teaching.’

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

From Vatican II to The New Evangelization

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

AN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

On October 11th of this year, the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Benedict XVI announced the opening of a Year of Faith. The year will close on November 24, 2013, the Solemnity of Christ the King.

For half a century, successive Pontiffs have stressed the importance of the lay ministry of Evangelization and Catechesis. To commemorate this important anniversary, Pope Benedict has summoned a Synod (Assembly) of the world's bishops. The topic of their discussions will be *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*. The *Instrumentum laboris*, or document that sets out the plan and expectations of the Synod will provide the basis for the next reflection in *Light and Life*. Its topic is catechesis, and the role of the laity in this essential Church ministry. When he announced the Year of Faith in October, 2011, the Holy Father told his listeners, "You are among the protagonists of the New Evangelization that the Church has undertaken and carries for them not without difficulties but with the same enthusiasm as the first Christians."

A CONTINUING HISTORY

Earlier in his homily the Holy Father remarked "the theological meaning of history," the acknowledgment that every earthly government – however powerful – is less powerful than the kingdom of God. "No earthly power," the Pontiff stated, "can stand in his stead." And to those who might care to differ he offered the example of the many failed totalitarian states of the 20th Century.

The New Evangelization, he said, offers us – today – an opportunity to investigate what the Vatican Council stated in its documents and which his predecessors, Paul VI and John Paul II clarified and expanded in their teaching. In this present reflection, we shall conclude our remarks about Vatican II, and the work of modern Pontiffs to bring the Church and its members to this historic moment.

CATECHESIS, AN ESSENTIAL WORK

Almost as soon as the Council drew to its close Pope Paul VI began to establish organizations and systems for catechesis, especially among children and young people. The purpose of these efforts was to make certain every Catholic became familiar with the documents of the Vatican Council, which Paul VI considered "the great catechism of modern times." Pope John Paul I continued the work, and the future Pope John Paul II considered himself grateful to be a part of this effort.

When he became Pontiff, one of his first acts was to present the work his predecessor had been about to

publish. "I am doing so," he said, "...in order to fulfill one of the chief duties of my apostolic charge. Catechesis has always been a central care in my ministry as a priest and as a Bishop...I ardently desire this apostolic exhortation to the whole Church should strengthen the solidity of the faith of Christian living...and should help to spread among the communities the joy of bringing the mystery of Christ to the world."

THREE PRINCIPLES OF EVANGELIZATION

We ought to note three principles here, which we will hear stressed over and over as we journey through the Year of Faith we are about to embark upon. One is the centrality of Christ, who is the subject of the New Evangelization – as, indeed, He has been the subject of all evangelization. The second is the centrality of catechesis to the Church's evangelizing missions, and the third is the necessity of the Christian community if the Good News is to be carried to the ends of the world.

EVANGELIZATION AND TEACHING

Pope John Paul II gave us a remarkable summary of the Church's catechetical ministry. Teaching, he says, was the reason for writing down the gospel accounts, and each of them reflects "a catechetical structure." The Church's early leaders built upon the apostolic tradition by their own voluminous writings, and Church Councils gathered for the specific purpose of defining and clarifying the truths the Church would teach its members. The Pope looked back to the Council of Trent, which we may remember as a gathering called to condemn the errors of the age. Pope John Paul reminds us its purpose was also catechetical, and the catechisms that resulted from its debates served to educate and console Catholics who had spent decades painfully confused. The Pope observed,

Thanks to the work of holy theologians such as St. Charles Borromeo, St. Robert Bellarmine, and St. Peter Canisius, it involved the publication of catechisms that were real models for that period. May the Second Vatican Council stir up in our time a like enthusiasm and a similar activity.

We may not know whether the Pontiff had the *New Catechism of the Catholic Church* in mind at the time, but his desire for a teaching tool, expressed so clearly, in 1979, would become a reality fifteen years later.

TO SUMMARIZE

Before we continue, let us summarize a major point we have been considering, that of catechesis. Catechesis is the orderly presentation of Christian

doctrine, with the purpose of initiating listeners into the fullness of Christian life. The purpose of catechesis, Pope John Paul tells us *“is to reveal in the person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design...It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by him.”* (CCC, #426)

Our *Catechism* quotes the Pontiff, *“In catechesis, Christ the Incarnate Word and Son of God...is taught – everything else is taught with reference to him – and it is Christ alone who teaches.”* (CCC, #427) The *Catechism* reminds us of Our Savior’s modesty when it says, *“Every catechist should be able to apply to himself the mysterious words of Jesus: ‘My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.’”* (Jn 7:16)

TEACHING AND PERSONAL GROWTH

Catechesis, then, marks the first stage of an individual’s growth as a Christian, but it not the first step. It is, rather, the Church’s response to an individual who has already been moved by Christian example – verbal or practical – to seek identification with the Church. The purpose of catechesis, the Pontiff, makes clear, is to develop

...understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God’s word, so that the whole of a person’s humanity is impregnated by that word. Changed by the working of grace into a new creature, the new Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to do.

Lest we seem to have abandoned the topic of evangelization in favor of catechesis, Pope John Paul points out *“...there is no separation or opposition between catechesis and evangelization. Nor can the two be simply identified with each other. Instead, they have close links whereby they integrate and complement each other.”* “Evangelization,” he states, *“is the entire process by which an individual is brought into the Church; catechesis is the major, certainly the longest, step – or ‘moment’ – in this process.”*

TEACHING AND RENEWAL

In a homily to close a Synod (a special meeting of bishops) on the Church in America on December 8, 2000, Pope John Paul II returned to the themes of education in Christ and collaboration as the means to establish in America what he called *“...that much desired civilization of love, which underscores the primacy of man and the promotion of his dignity in all its dimensions, beginning with his spiritual dimension.”* He spoke of the

communion of paths, on which whole generations of Christians” in America have walked, and added “...for the new evangelization it is essential to have concrete collaboration between the different vocations, the different ministries and the various apostolates and charisms given by the Holy Spirit, whether those of traditional religious institutes or those of new movements and associations of the faithful established more recently.

As if to demonstrate how seriously – if quietly – our leaders in the faith have taken the notion of New Evangelization, and what an organized effort they have put into promoting it, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger addressed a group of catechists and religion teachers a mere four days after Pope John Paul delivered his homily to American bishops.

TEACHING AND REDEMPTION

On December 12, 2000, the cardinal identified two social ills, one within and one outside the Church. Society, he lamented, has ceased to find in the gospel the convincing response to the question: How to live?”

That is why we are searching for, along with permanent and uninterrupted and never to be interrupted evangelization, a new evangelization, capable of being heard by that world that does not find access to “classic” evangelization. Everyone needs the Gospel; the Gospel is destined to all and not only to a specific circle and this is why we are obliged to look for new ways of bringing the Gospel to all.

STEPS IN EVANGELIZATION: PATIENCE

For those within the Church, Cardinal Ratzinger, pointed out, the temptation of impatience lies in wait, *“the temptation of immediately finding the great success, in finding large numbers.”* This, he reminds us, is not God’s way. *“Success is not one of the names of God. New Evangelization must surrender to the mystery of the grain of mustard seed and not be so pretentious as to believe to immediately produce a large tree.”*

PERSONAL CONVERSION

The first essential step Cardinal Ratzinger identifies in the New Evangelization is a personal one: our own conversion. We come to Jesus by way of John the Baptist, whose message was: Convert, be changed! This means *“...to come out of self-sufficiency to discover and accept our indigence – the indigence of the Other, his forgiveness, his friendship...conversion is humility is entrusting oneself to the love of the Other, a love that becomes the measure and the criteria of my own life.”*

PRAYER

The second step of the New Evangelization is a life of prayer, which allows us to speak about the God who changes us. St. Dominic is said to have spent his life speaking either *“to”* or *“of”* God, and this is what the evangelist is called to do. Prayer, particularly the Mass, nourishes this inner life – it is God talking to us, and giving us something to talk about.

THE CROSS

The third step is embracing Christ’s cross. On the one hand, this is nothing more than embracing the reality of our Baptismal promises. On the other, it means losing ourselves in the overwhelming reality of Christ’s love and allowing ourselves to be created anew, in his likeness. The whole purpose of the New Evangelization is to enable the world to see a Christ that has gradually

become more and more imperceptible. This evangelizing process must begin with the evangelizers.

TO PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

The last element central to true evangelization is everlasting life, and Cardinal Ratzinger told his listeners we must “proclaim our faith with new vigor in daily life.” By this he meant making our lives sermons that demonstrate the presence of God. To do so acknowledges our belief in God’s kingdom and our willingness to accept God’s standard of justice as the standard by which we will treat each individual we encounter. “This,” Cardinal Ratzinger concluded, is “how we can understand the connection between the Kingdom of God and the ‘poor,’ the suffering and all those spoken about in the Beatitudes... They are protected by the certainty of judgment, by the certitude that here is a justice.”

As we move forward into the present, we see the Church’s message has not changed. The Holy Father’s Apostolic Letter remarks that in the West “*many of the baptized lead totally un-Christian lives, and although they may maintain some links to the faith, they have little or a poor knowledge of it.*”

TO CHANGE AND BE CHANGED

Thus, one of the theologians who attended the Synod that took place when the Holy Year began remarked, “The Church evangelizes, yes, but at the same time it must be evangelized, in the first place through constant conversion and renewal so that it may evangelize the world in a credible manner.” The Vatican Council was aware of the rapidity of change in our society, but it could not have foreseen – which of us could have done? – the incredible changes that have overtaken us. The New Evangelization demands that we maintain contact with a changing world, without losing our hold on the unchanging world of our faith.

THE CHALLENGE OF SECULARISM

The Pope’s concern for this challenge was marked recently, Vatican news services reported, when, on January 19, 2012, Pope Benedict warned visiting U.S. bishops that “radical secularism” threatens the core values of American culture, and called on the church in America, including politicians and other lay people, to render “*public moral witness*” on crucial social issues. The report continues,

Whether they claim the authority of science or democracy, the pope said, militant secularists seek to stifle the church’s proclamation of these ‘unchanging moral truths.’ Such a movement inevitably leads to the prevalence of “reductionist and totalitarian readings of the human person and the nature of society.”

The pope drew an opposition between current “notions of freedom detached from moral truth” and Catholicism’s “rational perspective” on morality, founded on the conviction that the “cosmos is possessed of an inner logic accessible to human reasoning.” Using the “language” of natural law,

he said, the church should promote social justice by “proposing rational arguments in the public square.”

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Coming, as they did, at the beginning of an election year, Pope Benedict’s words clearly made a connection to American politics, and he made the connection unmistakable when he spoke of threats to “that most cherished of American freedoms, the freedom of religion.”

The pope said that many of the visiting bishops had told him of “concerted efforts” against the “right of conscientious objection...” – an apparent reference to proposals opposed by the U.S. bishops, that all private health insurance plans cover surgical sterilization procedures and artificial birth control.

Moreover, he continued, an “engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity” with the courage and critical skills to articulate the “Christian vision of man and society” is essential, as is the education of Catholic laity that he has made a cornerstone of his pontificate.

CHALLENGING TASKS

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Council for the Promotion for the New Evangelization, remarks a danger that the “new evangelization” will remain nothing more than an abstract formula. He cites two Scripture passages for our meditation. The first, from the Letter to the Hebrews, tells us what the New Evangelization is: to proclaim the message “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.*” (Heb 13:8)

The second passage, what the Cardinal calls the *magna carta* of the New Evangelization, is St. Peter’s admonition that we should “*always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.*” (1Pt 3:15) This is the “method” by which we preach, the daily example of our abandoning ourselves to God and finding new words to describe this experience. “The new evangelization starts from here,” the Cardinal writes, “from the conviction that grace acts and transforms until it converts hearts, and from the credibility of our witness.” ■

COMPANIONS ... (continued from page 1)

“While this new look at Francis might prove disturbing to some people who have been weaned on such pious legends as the Wolf of Gubbio, the real saint may be even more compelling... despite it all, he shows us that the only true way to peace and eternal happiness lies in becoming the unique individual God has created each of us to be.”

Fr. Thompson’s book is available for \$29.95. Fr. Mullady’s CD is available for \$10.00. A free copy of Fr. Brian Mullady’s new brochure entitled *Faith, Heavens Knowledge Begun on Earth* will be offered with the purchase of the above mentioned new CD entitled *Faith*. To order either, please turn to the enclosed order form or visit our web page at www.rosary-center.org.