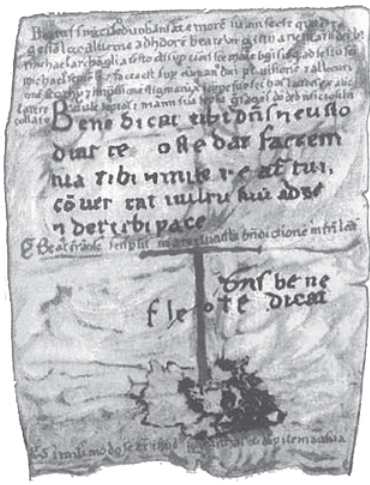


Bringing out of our storehouse the flesh and blood of our tradition in such a way as to feed future generations . . .

The Prophetic Heart (1994) — Joseph P. Chinnici OFM



The TAU

From the time of Ezekiel the sign of the TAU, marked on the forehead of those turning to God in faith and repentance has long represented faithfulness and wholehearted love. It was used for healing and victory.

Pope Innocent III, evoked the sign of the TAU from Ezekiel when opening the Fourth Lateran Council in 1216 calling for the renewal of the Church, “Mercy will be granted to those to bear the TAU, a mark of a life of penance and renewal in Christ.”

And so Francis, who was present at the Council, wanted to sign himself with the TAU, and his brothers along with him. The TAU became the sign of the little Band’s mission: the preaching of faith and repentance (Rule of 1221:23).

Thomas of Celano, writing in 1252, notes, “The TAU symbol had, above all others, his preference. Francis used it as a signature for his letters, and he painted a drawing of it on the walls of all the cells.” One of these paintings, believed to be created by Francis, is found in the little chapel of Mary Magdalen at Fonte Columbo in the Rieti Valley where Francis wrote his Rule.

Another very precious document, housed in the Basilica of St. Francis, is Francis’ own handwritten blessing for Brother Leo — signed with the TAU.

Above all else, the TAU meant mission for Francis: a mission to proclaim the Goodness of God by a wholehearted following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ because of whom all life is sacred.



“The Letter to All The Faithful - Recensio prior” from A Biblical-Theological View of Penance and Its Present Day Expression

Roland J. Faley, T.O.R.

Recent publication of an earlier recension of the Letter to the Faithful gives ample evidence that it was directed by Francis to the Penitents of his time. Whether or not this was seen by Francis as a *Rule of Life* for the Penitents remains a matter of dispute; there can be no doubt however that the document presents features of the penitential life which were important in Francis’ eyes.

There can be no doubt about the importance of the Recensio prior in understanding the beginnings of the Franciscan penitential tradition

It was for this reason that it was included as a prologue to the new (1978) Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (and later in 1982, of the Rule of the Third Order Regular).

Of particular note is the document’s strong evangelical tone. This is one of the characteristic features of the *authentic* writings of Francis, who wanted the ideas he set forth to be those of the Scriptures and not his own. This clearly distinguishes, for example, the Rule of the Minors, so heavily accented with Scriptural references, from the *Memoriale Propositi* of the Penitents, which contains little which is distinctive of Francis, with its uninspiring juridical norms.

Of particular interest for us is the extent to which the *Recensio prior* reflects the *biblical* concepts of conversion. Verses 2-5 give a description of “those who do penance.” Both the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* are present. The penitents are those who “hate their bodies with their vices and sins.” The expression is starkly medieval, but it expresses the reality of recognition of sinfulness and the need for divine mercy, the starting point for conversion. In terms of *new* direction taken, we are on open-ended Gospel terms.

Converts or real penitents are those who “love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength, and love their neighbor as themselves.” In producing “worthy fruits of penance,” the *internal* character of conversion is given its *external* expression. But notice, Francis begins with the *theological reality* and only then speaks of its visible manifestation.

There is no question of simply adopting penitential norms and practices or beginning with the “fruits” rather than the inner “turning.”

In these opening verses, the Letter epitomizes the dynamics of *metanoia*, the radical turning from self to God.

But in Christian terms all of this is impossible apart from the *action of God*. It was the power of Yahweh that cleansed Isaiah’s sinful lips. In a New Testament context, *this is the Holy Spirit*. Verses 7-8 of the document draw on Isaiah (11:2), as well as the Gospel of John (14:23) and Matthew (5:45) to illustrate the *action of the Spirit* in realizing Christian conversion. It is the *Spirit* that binds the soul to Christ and effects that ever more intense union which is central to Christian *metanoia*. This concept of an ever stronger attachment to the Lord is brought out in figures of speech which are characteristic of Francis. Together with being daughters and sons of God we are also “*spouses, brothers and sisters, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (v8-9)

The image of the divine *spouse* is biblical, found in the prophets, the Gospels, and the Pauline literature. In the penitential context, it concretizes the idea of the Spirit-effected union with Christ. The Christians who detach themselves from sin and selves are not engaged in an essentially negative exercise. It is their total surrender to Christ that makes of *detachment* a necessary concomitant. In using the *spouse image*, Francis places the emphasis on this positive aspect. (v10). With Christ becoming ever more the center of the person’s existence, then death to self is essential if the spouse is to remain faithful.

The affirmation of our *brotherhood (sisterhood)* with Christ (v11), again the fruit of conversion, is found in the Gospel and in Paul. Francis draws directly on the Synoptic tradition in his reference to those who fulfill “the will of the Father who is in heaven.” (Mt12:50). It is the celebrated passage on the true relatives of Jesus, in the Synoptic tradition that specifies the kin of Christ, not in terms of blood, but in terms of obedience to a common Father. Paul carries this relationship concept forward on an ontological basis. In Galatians (4:4-7), it is the Spirit of God’s son, which we now share, that enables us to address our one Father, “Abba,” just as Christ himself does. By reason of our adoption we are made part of God’s family and, in the Spirit, a sister or brother of Jesus.

That we are “mothers” of Jesus (v12-13) is Scriptural only by implication and a very free use of imagery. The underlying reality, however, is important. This *motherhood* is related to the twofold idea: the presence of Christ within us and the birth of Christ in our life and example. Christ lives in us (Gal2:20), not in the flesh but in the spirit, with the result that Paul can speak alternately of Christ in us or the Spirit in us, the latter making of us God’s temple.(1Cor6:19-20) But as we have already noted, this life in Christ is not hidden; it is to be made manifest, with

the *Recensio* drawing on the Synoptic “light of the world” image. We *give birth* to Christ when by our fruits his presence within us is known.

Hence the image of Christ as spouse, brother, and son are different aspects of the single reality. Conversion is positive and dynamic, unifying and intense, both in the Gospel and in Francis.

The last part of the *Recensio prior* (v27-55) is addressed to those who have neglected their penitential calling, in yielding to the interests of “sinful flesh.” The strong and rather harsh tone of the exhortation should not blind us to the fact that it is a *summons to reconciliation*. One of the main concerns of the genuinely penitential spirit is that *love of neighbor* which expresses itself in seeking the lost sheep, in reconciling the unreconciled. It is the power of God’s word that is capable of effecting this transposition, and the penitents are to consider themselves *ministers of this saving word*. As we read in the document’s conclusion: “*All those into whose hands this letter shall have come we ask in the charity that is God to accept kindly and with divine love the fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ quoted above.*” (v51-52)

It is my belief that an analysis of the *Recensio prior* of the Letter to All the Faithful , written for the penitents, clearly reflects the biblical understanding of *metanoia*. If the life of medieval penitents prior to Francis was regulated to a great extent by the type of juridical norms that we find in the *Memoriale Propositi*, it must be admitted that Francis strove to place the penitential tradition in a genuine evangelical spirit.

Francis speaks of penance in covenant terms, an engagement in the paschal mystery, which entails both a new life and a daily dying. The emphasis does not fall on penitential acts, though they unquestionably had their place in a medieval spirituality. In striking imagery, which accents our oneness with Christ, Francis places in bold relief the focal point of Christian and, we might add, FRANCISCAN penance.

Source: THE ASSISI CONGRESS ON FORMATION

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Guest Editorial

Genesis . . . The 1982 Rule — a personal remembrance

ROLAND J. FALEY, T.O.R.

It is hard to believe that a decade has passed since the present pope approved the new **Rule of the Franciscan Third Order Regular** on December 8, 1982. It is even more difficult for some of us to remember that the Rule's inception began for members of the Third Order Regular family ten years before that. I was privileged to be part of that from the start.

To pinpoint an actual date is not easy twenty years after the fact. I remember the first conversations taking place in my office in Rome on a beautiful fall day in 1972. It was a highly theoretical, unfocused talk between Thaddeus Horgan, S. A. and myself about the inadequacy of the 1927 Rule in the light of the Council and all the work that had been done subsequently on the T.O.R. charism.

In both of our communities, the work of revising constitutions had already begun and we regretted the absence of a strong basic document, owned by all Tertiaries, to give direction to the work of revision. We ruminated aloud about the possibilities of revising the Rule, the alleged sacred and untouchable character of which remained an almost undiscussed given. We had no idea of what the possibilities were. But with the undaunted and mindless courage of youth (certainly true at the time!), we decided to test the waters and attempt a revision of the Rule. Our task was gargantuan, of course, in light of the fact that several hundred congregations of Franciscans followed the Rule. Moreover, the greater number of these were women.

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*Presently, Roland is Spiritual Director for the religious and clerics of the diocese of Austin, Texas. His new book **FOOTPRINTS ON THE MOUNTAIN, Preaching and Teaching The Sunday Readings** will be published by Paulist Press at Christmas time.*

Nonetheless we began work in earnest in 1973 to produce the first draft of a new Rule based on the Order's largely rediscovered charism, conversion of life or *metanoia*. Since the congregations with which we had an historical and direct contact were the male communities, we first wanted to measure their reaction to the initiative. The men had their own organization, known as the Inter-obediential Congress, which had met periodically over the past twenty year period. Therefore, we had a structure in place through which to work. The men and women had no history of a joint organization wherein common issues were addressed. During the generalate of Louis Secondo, T.O.R., after consultation with the other men's communities, it was decided to hold another international meeting to explore the possibility of a revised Rule. There was a unanimous consensus around the idea. The meeting was set for April, 1974, in Madrid, Spain. For the first time, representatives of women's congregations were asked to join us. The enthusiastic reception which the whole idea evoked was most encouraging.

In the meantime Thaddeus and I, with the help of valuable experts in matters Franciscan, worked on the draft to be presented for consideration in Madrid. The document was wholly centered around the conversion theme; the vows were seen as an expression of conversion. There was the earnest effort to remain true to Francis' own vision as expressed in his writings, as well as the best values found in the various revisions of the Rule through history. The Madrid Congress took the draft article by article, made its own recommendations, and then gave the final version its approval. This became known as the **Madrid Statement**, which circulated widely in the Franciscan Tertiary world during the next decade. Many communities included it with their revised constitutions as an expression of charism.

As encouraging as all of this was, we were still far from a revised Rule. Little did we realize at the time how far away we were. There were landmines in abundance on the terrain still to be traveled. It became evident as work on the **Madrid Statement** progressed that other Franciscan bodies, in particular countries, had already launched their own initiatives to revise the Rule. Efforts were well underway in France, Germany and Holland. The most prominent of these, the French undertaking, was much further ahead than we. By the mid-1970's, the Tertiary congregations in France and many in Italy had lined up in support of this Rule project, which was written for women only.

We realized that to continue along separate tracks, without bringing these initiatives together, could be disastrous by ultimately splintering a centuries-old unity around a single Rule. It would be even worse if the division were along lines of gender. The Vatican had indicated that a joint undertaking should be pursued. Yet all of this was more easily said than done. We were no longer at the beginning stage. Much work had already been done and approved on both sides. After much thought, a new collaborative effort was seen as essential, one to be marked by diplomatic expertise as much as by history or theology.

At this point there were only two main contenders for Rule revision: the French document, intended only for women, and marked by strong Minorite leanings; and the **Madrid Statement**, intended for women and men, and focused mainly on the tertiary or Penitential charism. The French work had been remarkably well done, with great fidelity to Franciscan sources and largely drawing on the words of Francis himself. What it lacked was any strong reliance on the Tertiary history and tradition. What the **Madrid Statement** lacked, with all its clarity regarding charism and its inclusiveness of men and women, was that strong emergence of original Franciscan sources that the French had drawn on so effectively.

The two groups decided to come together to work out a compromise position. Most of the 1970's, after Madrid, were spent in tackling what gave every appearance of being irreconcilable differences. In his Master's thesis, **The Development of the New Third Order Regular Rule**, Paul McMullen, T.O.R. has capably outlined every step of this journey. But in recounting facts, much of the emotional investment is omitted. And that, at this point, is all for the best. Suffice it to say that more than one gathering ended in a spirit of total frustration. There were moments when both sides felt that it might be better to go it alone. But there was always some glimmer of hope. A joint working group was finally established to work out a compromise document. Both Thaddeus Horgan, and Margaret Carney, O.S.F. represented Madrid's best interest in a collaborative mode and played a vital role in the felicitous outcome.

The day finally arrived. March 1982. Ten years after **Genesis I**; eight years after Madrid. Some two hundred Franciscan major superiors of women and men, representing nearly two hundred thousand religious, gathered in Rome to debate, amend, and hopefully approve a new Rule of the Third Order Regular. I remember heading toward the large hall for the opening session with a deep sense of foreboding. We had made gains in understanding but I was by no means certain that these were sufficient. As the representative of my own Order, which takes its roots in the first group of Francis' Penitents, I could not vote in favor of a document that did not express satisfactorily the origins and charism of our Institute. I went to the opening with fear and trepidation. It was the beginning of ten vitally important days.

Ever so slowly my outlook changed. I could actually feel the answer to prayer. The Spirit was in the atmosphere. Attitudes changed; friendships were made; logic held sway. Defending one's turf was not center stage. People were searching for the good of the whole. A sense of openness prevailed. Both viewpoints had their defenders and they did it well. The value of the penitential charism never had better defenders than the Franciscan women generals from the United States, members of the Franciscan Federation. They had done their homework well and were highly qualified to address the issues. But they were not intransigent nor were the champions of the French document. Inclusion of men and women in the Rule's purview was by this time a foregone conclusion.

What began to emerge was the realization that we could have the best of two worlds. The French had drawn on four fundamental Franciscan values in constructing the Rule. These it was felt were important and shared by all Franciscans. Moreover, the French let Francis speak for himself in articulating the values, without extraneous commentary. This was a genuine plus. What Madrid proponents argued with effectiveness was the necessity of highlighting one of the four values, conversion of life, since to treat it on the same plane as the other values would betray the penitential tradition. This direction was overwhelmingly accepted by the hall. The overarching priority of conversion can be seen clearly in a careful reading of the Rule.

On the final working day, the Rule was approved article by article, chapter by chapter. There were few dissenting votes. The consensus of some two hundred participants was practically unanimous. I remember going home that final night, knowing that we had made history. This was an event not to be repeated in our lifetime and probably that of many others. There was lightness to my step and a "Te Deum" in my heart. Never before or since in my lifetime have I so concretely experienced the truth of the psalm, "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it".

The text of the rule went to the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes where it received some minor modifications. It was approved by Pope John Paul II before the end of 1982. Of course, Rules are not like books or finished projects. If the proof of the pie is in the eating of it, the proof of a Rule is in the living of it. Only history will tell how effective the work of the last twenty years has been. My own terms as Minister General of our Order ended within months after the Rule's approval. And let it be said for the record that I felt that it was a great note to end on. The 1982 Rule will outlive all of us. It has already outlived one of its prime architects, Thaddeus Horgan, who was one of the first to be called home. I was not present for his funeral. But on the day it occurred I remembered that fall day in Rome when, with leaves falling outside the window, we dreamed of a new spring. □



Thaddeus Horgan S.A. (back) in discussion with Roland Faley T.O.R. during the Rome Assembly which gave the new Rule to Third Order Regular Franciscans of over 430 congregations worldwide, March 1982.

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This TAU Series . . . TOR #7 can be downloaded for free from The International Franciscan Conference, TOR Rome, Italy, www.ifc-tor.org
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