



**A FRANCISCAN PERSPECTIVE  
ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

**April 2019  
Volume 15, Number 1**



**The AFCU Journal**  
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## About The AFCU Journal

### ***The AFCU Journal History and Mission***

On October 3, 2001, the Board of Directors of the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities approved a proposal for an annual journal to feature the peer reviewed research and writings of faculty and administrators of AFCU institutions.

The purposes of *The AFCU Journal* are

- To strengthen the vision of Catholic higher education in the Franciscan tradition
- To connect all the discrete disciplines to a Franciscan philosophy and heritage
- To encourage an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach to research and reflection from the Franciscan school of today
- To provide motivation for reflection on the breadth and depth of scholarship emanating from Franciscan institutions of higher learning.

It is hoped that this publication will offer an incentive for faculty and staff to reflect upon the distinct character of a Franciscan institution of higher education.

The publication of *The Journal* is guided by a small editorial board and assisted by contact persons within each of the AFCU institutions. The views expressed in the articles are attributed to the authors and not to the member institutions.

## **From the AFCU Board Chair**

Dear Colleagues,

As Chair of the Board of the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities, I welcome you to our first on-line edition of the AFCU Journal. It is exciting to present to you this virtual volume of writings highlighting important perspectives from our Franciscan higher education community. Our editor, Sister Roberta and her team have provided an array of published offerings to assist each of us in the ongoing work of mission integration.

During this past year our association held its biannual symposium at the University of St. Francis. Many thanks to Dr. Arvid Johnson, President of USF, and his team, for presenting an excellent program and for being exceptional hosts.

The Board has been working to strengthen the Association and to operationalize strategic goals. We were pleased to hire Mrs. Debi Haug as AFCU's Executive Director for Mission. Debi has done parish and campus ministry work and is a graduate of one of our own AFCU schools, Marian University.

With support from the Association's business consultant, Mr. Brad Baker, I am happy to report that much progress has been made on our strategic goals. Beginning this year all AFCU schools can engage with exclusive first-in-class vendors at a reduced cost.

AFCU has also adopted a new logo which you see in our journal. This new logo will be also be integrated into a new website that will be launched later this year for prospective students and families. We will also be maintaining our existing website with a focus on providing resources for AFCU members.

We are continuing to build on these accomplishments as we work to strengthen the Association. Finally, we hope you enjoy this AFCU Journal and use it as a resource in your work to advance the Franciscan tradition on your campus.

Best Regards,

Dr. Chris Domes

Chair, AFCU Board of Directors

President, Neumann University

## From the Editor

The return of the AFCU Journal is upon us—finally! With the revision of the structure of the organization, publication of the 2017-18 volume was suspended, but we are now back for the newest round of educational enrichment. This volume combines the materials selected for 2017-18 as well as new material from the June 2018 Symposium at the University of St. Francis in Joliet. I am grateful to the members of the Editorial Board for their diligence and patience.

Within the current volume we have an interesting array of perspectives that highlight the variety that marks our Franciscan heritage. The materials collected in this issue demonstrate how AFCU institutions promote Franciscan values in Higher Education. We open with two of the keynotes from June's Symposium: Sr. Nany Schreck offers insight into the Gospel roots of the Franciscan charism and challenges us to find ways to examine our educational vision; Sr. Mary Beth Ingham invites us to reflect upon the following questions—"First, how does our educational program involve an encounter with the world? Second, how does our program involve an encounter with the authentic self? And third, how might this Franciscan educational program prepare students for the ongoing encounter with an increasingly interfaith and intercultural world, as they leave our institutions?" Other writers provide essays that describe personal and/or institutional initiatives to engage the hearts and minds of our students, staff and faculty, and move us into deeper understanding of our vocation as members of Franciscan communities.

This volume is, therefore, eclectic. My hope as editor is that many will be inspired to continue to develop a deep commitment to our shared Franciscan values.

On the technical side, we are now publishing the Journal only digitally. We hope that more individuals will thereby have access to the Journal. Distribution will be to the campus contact, who will then be free to distribute the volume electronically to the campus community.

Finally, we had attempted to follow the APA style guide throughout. I have made a serious effort to do so, but not everything is perfect, for an assortment of reasons. For the sake of *actual* distribution, the Rubicon has been crossed on this last day of April.

Sr. Roberta McKelvie, OSF, Ph.D  
Franciscan Scholar in Residence  
Alvernia University  
Reading, PA

***The AFCU Journal:***  
***A Franciscan Perspective on Higher Education***

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

*The AFCU Journal* publishes a wide range of scholarly articles, book reviews, and poetry, offering a Franciscan perspective on issues confronting higher education. Contributions on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, especially those exploring its place in the curriculum and culture at Franciscan colleges and universities, are welcome. Articles should be approximately 3,000 to 6,000 words in length. Shorter articles describing unique programs and “best practices,” book reviews, and original poems are also welcome. All submissions should fit within the scope of *The AFCU Journal*’s mission.

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- To provide motivation for reflection on the breadth and depth of scholarship emanating from Franciscan institutions of higher learning.

**The deadline for submissions to the 2020 issue is DECEMBER 1, 2019.** Articles and book reviews should all be submitted electronically to Sr. Roberta McKelvie, OSF, at [Roberta.mckelvie@alvernia.edu](mailto:Roberta.mckelvie@alvernia.edu). Poetry should be submitted to Sr. Felicity Dorsett, OSF, at [fdorsett@sf.edu](mailto:fdorsett@sf.edu).

All submissions will be reviewed by the editor and then submitted to the editorial board for blind review. To ensure anonymous review, the manuscript should not contain any information that identifies the author. Please include a separate cover page with the name of the author/s, manuscript title, institutional affiliation/s, and all contact information (address, telephone, and e-mail). Do not include identification on the pages of the manuscript.

All submissions should use in-line citation and bibliography in the style of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (APA style). When citing Franciscan sources, please utilize *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents* is available on the Commission on the Franciscan Intellectual Tradition website (<https://www.franciscantradition.org/>). Identify Scripture and Franciscan sources within parentheses immediately after the cited text. Use the abbreviations provided in the *Early Documents* for Franciscan sources and acceptable Scripture abbreviations. For example:

(ER 14: 2)    (1C16: 42)    (1LAg)    (1 Cor. 13:6)

For questions about preparation and transmittal of manuscripts, please contact Sr. Roberta McKelvie at Alvernia University, 400 St. Bernardine Street, Reading PA 19607.  
Email: [Roberta.mckelvie@alvernia.edu](mailto:Roberta.mckelvie@alvernia.edu). Phone: 610-790-2876.

## **Sowing Wild Oats: A reflection on the Franciscan Tradition and Preaching the Gospel**

**Nancy Schreck OSF**

### **Introductory Comments**

I am glad to be among such fine company here. You are doing very important work in our world and I hope that the words I offer will be of some support to you. I offer special greetings to Briar Cliff University. Not that I want to show any favoritism but it was there, beginning in 1966, that both my love of scripture and the Franciscan way of being in the world were born. What I want to do in this reflection is to bring those two things together—The Word of God and the Franciscan way of being in the world. Back to the important work you are doing: Pope St. John Paul II in his Apostolic Constitution on Catholic Universities challenged all *Catholic Universities to be clear about their identity and to continue making their important and distinctive contribution to the intellectual life and search for truth in the light of faith*. He said further that *you are to give witness to the values of the founding charism*. This is no small task and I trust this symposium is helpful to you in that work. So our focus: the distinctive contribution and the values of the founding charism.

I will offer my reflection in three parts today: First, a focus on the importance of the Word of God in the founding and continuing Franciscan Tradition with the sowing of new seeds: wild oats; second, the need as well as the challenge for our universities, colleges and high schools to be places where the Gospel is helpful for those seeking their answers to a basic Franciscan question: Who are you O God, and Who am I?—Sowing wild oats today; finally, I will conclude with a wild oats story from the scripture.

We don't have to go very far into the traditions to see the importance of the gospel life in the vision of Francis: From the Later Rule: *The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of one's own and in chastity*. And from the Earlier Rule: *The rule and life of these brothers is this, namely: to living in obedience, in chastity, and without anything of their own, and to follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ....*" Clare's Rule also begins with "The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this: *to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity.*"

In addition, most of us are probably familiar with a quotation attributed to Francis: "Preach the Gospel always, if necessary use words." Dominic Monti O.F.M. says this saying is likely apocryphal even though it has circulated quite broadly. What may be more accurate is Francis saying: "Let all the brothers preach by their deeds" (ER17:3). A story surrounding these words of Francis will help us understand:

*Francis once called one of the brothers and said: "We are going to preach in the city today." So the brother followed Francis and they walked through the city. It seemed there wasn't a street they didn't walk in that town. They greeted people, stopping occasionally to help someone in need, but never took time to actually give a sermon. When they arrived back at their hermitage, the brother said to Francis: "I thought you said we were going to preach in the city today," Francis replied; "Brother, we have been seen by many people, and our behavior closed watched. It was thus that we have preached our sermon.*



Even if not literally true it's still a true and good story! It does no good to talk about Jesus' message if we do not embody it. And, as Marshall McLuhan said, "the medium is the message." (McLuhan, 1967).

So preaching the gospel is a given, but do we know what gospel, what perspectives from the scripture filled Francis' imagination when he said those words? I offer no guarantees of an answer to my own question, but I want to offer a few perspectives.

### **Francis and Clare: original wild oat sowers**

First of all, what do I mean by wild oats? In its earliest etymology wild oats refers to a weed whose seed looks a lot like certain cereal grains and thus it is hard to separate it when sowing. Some botanists think it is the wild original of the cultivated one. Wild oats were deemed rather useless, which has led to the connotation of frittering away time. I use it here in the early sense of taking a chance and sowing something whose outcome is not easily distinguishable from other things at the time of its initiation, the origin of something new—before it can easily be distinguished from its later form.

When there are shifting sands folks have to try some things. Their critics often say these folks are just sowing wild oats, those who see something new and hopeful in what is happening say—"Ah wild oats, something new is being born!"

We know that the Franciscan movement began in a chaotic time with many collapsing structures; in a very over-simplified way we note that this was a time of:

- change from the feudal world to that of the free communes.
- transformation from the rural to the urban, from a stable world linked to the land, to a world full of movement;
- from a world based on the vassal-feudal lord relationship to a world based on the idea of association.
- it was also a time when there was a lively spirit of gain, by the passion for money and by the thirst for power—which was really quite contrary to the basic inspiration behind the commune movement and proceeded to engender new inequalities and oppressions.

It was into this context with all its aspirations and contradictions that Francis and Clare appeared. It also wasn't long before the uglier side of this new world showed itself, and it was the Gospel that showed Francis a newer and better way. It was not without struggle but eventually those who followed turn their back on the power of money and the desire for domination. This world was ripe for good news, and they offered it.

In this time of chaos, Francis heard the Gospel not just with his ears but with his whole being. The example of Christ became the great light of his life and set him on a different path. That good news for him and Clare was about embracing poverty, creating a true brotherhood [community] open to all. They held a vision of people of various social classes living together without striving to dominate one another. In very deep way, the encounter between the gospel and history took place in these two figures. Filled with the perceptions of their times, they came to the gospel and succeeded in reconciling the words found there with the historical reality in which they lived. This caused an amazing thing to happen; they revitalized the Church and reconnected the youth of their world to the church.

As a Christian Francis attended to the gospel message with utter seriousness, often literally. As Thaddée Matura, OFM says; *"Faced with a church that had become established and had lost its savor, with a society wholly involved in the conquest of power and wealth, he remains poor, does not raise his voice or condemn, and challenges*

*both simply by the way he lives. He does not judge or leave the church that stands so far from the gospel he professes, he makes it his dwelling place because of Christ and Spirit he finds there."*

This, I believe, is precisely what is needed today—however, more about that later. I might add that Clare emerges as someone who amplifies and develops this Gospel intuition and in fact, preserves untarnished what the brothers were in danger of losing. (Armstrong, 1988).

LeClerq asks *"What kind of God does Francis discover in the Gospel? And answers his question by saying: "He broke with the God of feudal wars and holy crusades. For him God is no longer the Lord, in feudal terms, not even the beneficent master who from his ruling position on high dispenses his largesse on his vassals. God has left behind God's regal throne; for God there are no more vassals, since God has become one of us. Jesus walked in our midst bereft of every sign of power, as the humblest and poorest of all. Francis discovered the great humility of God. The God of majesty has become our brother."* (LeClerq p. 140 - referencing Celano Vita II 198).

What does it mean to encounter and know the Word of God in the Franciscan tradition? We can understand what motivated Francis by paying attention to some passages from his writings which express his vision most clearly. First of all, before any of the words of Scripture, Francis claims that the desire to seek and to meet God is the essence of his gospel project.

Chapter 23 of the First Rule reads *"At all times and season, in every country and place, and every day and all day, we must have a true and humble faith and keep God in our hearts and love, adore and serve...the most high and eternal God."*

In the Letter to all the Faithful we find: *"...We must love God, then, and adore God with a pure heart and mind because this is what he seeks above all else."* It seems that this theme reoccurs so frequently that we could say that he was quite preoccupied with this approach." All we have to do, above all else, is have our hearts turned toward God.

So before looking at what the word of God meant to Francis, it is a given that all of his appreciation for the texts rested on a profound experience of faith. (Faith first!)

Many of us know the role that a few verses of the gospel (Mt. 10:9-10, Luke 10:7-9) played in Francis's vocation. The fact that Francis interrogated scripture three times as he tried to find out what to do when Bernard joined him is also well-known.

The early biographers describe his concerns in reading the Bible and especially his facility in remembering the texts he hears (2 Cel 102). If we collect Francis' references to scripture we can see he was really quite selective in his choices, in choosing texts, particularly from the synoptics which became the guide for himself and the followers.

So let us do a little exploring of the way Francis' used the word of God in his most authentic writings. Of course, in the scope of time we have we can't explore everything, but we can do something. We will do a short exploration of the way place biblical texts occupy his vision. His biographers (eg., Jordan of Giano) testify that Francis obtained the help of a brother well-versed in scripture for his choice of quotations, so while he may have had help, we know the writings contain the verses he wanted and had assimilated. So an exploration of Francis's use of scripture: what does the data tell us?

In four selections (Two rules, the Testament, and the Rule for Hermitages) there are 141 different biblical passages quoted either as reminiscence or allusion. And certain passages are quoted a number of times. In the First Rule: 139 scripture references, and we might note that the Rule is composed of a total of 262 verses, one scripture quote for every

two verses. In the Second Rule: 23 out of 82 verses and in the Testament 6 of 41 verses have a scripture reference.

Just this data indicates that scripture occupies a large place in the Rules. So with that in mind, think about your most recent communication, class, web site: were there any references? Either directly or indirectly? What are your significant 139 scripture references? And remember this from Clare: "We become what we love, and who we love shapes what we become.

A little more data: among the texts quoted: 11 are from the Old Testament, 130 from the New Testament. Of the NT: Matthew, 44; Luke, 32; Mark, 5; John, 17; Paul's letters, 18 and the rest of NT 14. The text "Go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and then come follow me." Mt. 19:21 is repeated four times.

When I look at the passages quoted they seem to demand a radical response. By that I mean that they take hold of and orient the hearers at the very root of their beings. Let me just refer to those frequently used passages to describe what Francis must have valued:

One must try to:

Enter by the narrow gate - Mt. 7:13

Lose one's life in order to find it - Mt. 10:39

Renounce oneself, take up one's cross in order to follow Jesus - Mt. 1:24

For what gain is there for someone to win the whole world and lose their life - Mk 8:36

Repent - Mt 3:2

Leave the dead to bury their own dead - Mt. 8:22

Be wary of concerns other than those of the kingdom - Lk. 21:34

The believer will:

Be a peacemaker - Mt. 5:4, 9

Be free from legalistic prescriptions - Mt 12: 1-8

Not walk around with an ascetic look but rather a radiant one - Mt.16

Confess Jesus' name before others - Mt. 10:32 even if this attracts persecution - Mt. 5:11

Rather than defend him/herself or resist. Mt. 5:39 s/he will be like a lamb among wolves - Mt 10:16

Try to love his/her enemies - Mt 5:39

Be always ready to forgive - Mk 11:26

Not fear those who kill the body Lk. 12, 4

Followers will fulfill the new law from within - Mt. 5:22, 28; and be aware that evil does not come from outside but from the very heart of a person - Mt. 15:18.

Concerning their relationship with God and others:

When they have done everything, they will consider themselves slaves that one can easily do without - Lk 17:10. And if they receive positions or responsibilities which give them power, rather than accepting the title of master -Mt 23:9ff - they will consider themselves but servants, inferior to others - Mt. 20:25 ff, Lk 9:48. All this follows the example of Jesus who came to serve.

In order to join the community they will 1) Give up everything they own on behalf of those who are poor - Mt. 19:21 (This seems to be a favorite: quoted four places (Rules/ Testament. And 2) will take to the road as missionaries, free from anything that could weigh them down - Mt 10:10. Once they have put their hands to the plow they are not to look back but forward, assured of the hundredfold that awaits them - Mt. 1:19-29. And above all they will love the Lord their God with all their being - Mt. 22:37, knowing that if they persevere until the end with will be saved - Mt. 10:22.

Famously: Christian life consists in walking in the footprints of Jesus - 1 Pt. 2:21, submitting oneself to every creature - 1 Pt 2:13 - without quarreling or harsh words but in kindness and gentleness toward all - 2 Tm 2:14 and Titus 3:2.

This is the thread of Francis' teaching and I would say this is a pretty complete vision of the life of the disciple of Jesus. The poet William Stafford talks about it in this way:

*There is a thread you follow. It goes among things that change. But it doesn't change. People wonder about what you are pursuing. You have to explain about the thread. But it is hard for others to see. While you hold it you can't get lost. Tragedies happen, people get hurt or die, and you suffer and get old. Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding. You don't ever let go of the thread.*  
(Stafford, 1998).

Francis seems to have had some favorites which were repeated frequently: These are texts about selling all, one's attitude toward others: avoiding judgment, being subject to all, avoiding verbal disputes, extending peace to others, and poverty in clothing — having only one tunic.

So I probably took the long way around to express Francis' familiarity with scripture and his broad and balanced use, and his repetition regarding key concepts. You might note that few of the quotations are really *about* Jesus, rather they describe the follower *of* Jesus. When Jesus does appear in Francis' reflections he is presented as "poor without shelter," and as one who remains with us until the end of time.

In summary, what I am saying is that Francis and Clare lived in a chaotic time where many reliable structures were falling apart—a time not unlike our own. And the place they went to for their identity was to the word of God. Now where do we turn? And how do we guide and direct our university community to find their identity in something substantive? I am not talking about just quoting scripture to people—but translating the gospel for a new time. Unfortunately, some of us are imprisoned with false concepts of spirituality or clinging to the structures of the past and are not able to discern the voice of the Spirit at work in our time. So we need a fresh reading.

### **New and shifting times...sowing wild oats—speaking an encouraging word for today**

As in the time of Francis, it seems to me to be a whole different time in the handing on of the faith tradition these days. Harvard Divinity School is doing some major work in trying to determine what the formation of people for church leadership requires when the times are dramatically shifting. When the old answers just don't work and the new hasn't quite emerged enough to be seen clearly.

One of the privileged experiences I have had in the past couple years was to be invited to the first gathering of *the Nones and the Nuns*. Those identified as Nones are young people today who do not affiliate themselves with any particular religious denomination, thus "nones." A group of nones had been following and were interested in

the work of the Nuns, women religious, especially as the Leadership Conference of Women Religious negotiated the Doctrinal Assessment by the Congregation for the Defense of the Faith in Rome. They wanted to have conversations because they felt as though three things they highly valued—spirituality, community and concern for those who are poor—match so well with what the Nuns were about. They were seeking creative ways of sustainability. Now, I am telling you this not to digress; this is just the context for some important information.

Information about how we can, like Francis, sow seeds of newness in our time. In a summary publication of the learning from these gatherings, Angie Thurston, Casper ter Kuile and Rev. Sue Phillips, who are Ministry Innovation Fellows at Harvard, have put together an interesting publication called *Care of Souls*. In it they are articulating new needs: We are living in a time of massive paradigm shifts. The old is not so old as to be gone, nor is the new new enough to really be seen.

It is not now as in Francis' days a breakdown of a feudal time but certainly a time of shifting populations, cultures and philosophies from the west to the east and from the north to the south. It is not a time of movement from rural to urban—but we might say from the national to the global, and it is not a time of needing to go visit the sultan—but to respond to the rise of an anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant world right where we live. It is not a time of the emergence of the commune but of the rise of isolation and loneliness and deep polarization. We need a fresh hearing of the word of God.

What are these young people are saying they need, and how can we as Catholic Franciscan colleges and universities support their growth into the kind of faith filled adults and citizens with a strong social concern?

Institutional religious leaders live in the dance between past and present. We are stewards who carry the great traditions of song and story, theology and practice, wisdom and ritual from generation to generation. In a time of anxiety about relevance and survival we must engage confounding and age-old questions. What makes "us" us? Are we caretakers of tradition or stewards of potential? Can our organizations embrace the role of midwifing what might be? I believe a faithful response is to *shepherd emergence*. This is a time not only rich with challenges but with opportunity.

Because we are living in the crisis of in-between, where we don't have language or communities or practices to help us. We are tipping from one paradigm to the next, coming to understand the project of being human in new ways. In the meantime, it is not enough to turn to the old institutions and traditions that used to remind us of who we are and why. Like never before, we're unbundling and remixing the elements that help us make meaning of our lives.

If you can't see them it's because they belong to a future that is only just emerging. The categories they belong to don't yet exist. Remember: Google was founded only two decades ago, and Facebook and Twitter just after that.

The hope: potential to grow into the beating heart of a new cultural paradigm characterized in: Moving beyond the so-called sacred/secular/religious divide to find the sacred in the everyday; in communities bound by shared practices and goals, more than identity or belief; and in individuals unbundling wisdom and practices from ancient traditions and remixing them into a personalized spiritual life that they deepen in community.

### **How do we accomplish this?**

The reflection on what is needed now has been articulated by those Harvard Fellows in a work entitled *Care of Souls*, who say that there are seven jobs to be done.

These are certainly not the only roles needed, but the need for these is particularly acute. Their essence is not new. They descend from ancient archetypes, and humanity hold a wealth of wisdom about them. Our task now is to bridge the ancient and the emergent, discovering how to apply this wisdom to new generations.

### **The Seven Jobs to be done**

**The Gatherer:** brings people together to form communities of meaning and depth—casting a vision of who we are and who we could be together. By whatever name we might call them the Gatherer is a spiritual leader, because they care for the souls of their community. They are leaders because people seek them out, lift them up, and follow their vision. They help others go deep, providing comfort and resilience through the inevitable messiness of human life.

The Tradition: Francis the Gatherer: “When they saw and heard these things two men from Assisi, inspired by divine grace, humbly approached him. One of these was Brother Bernard, and the other, Brother Peter. They told Francis simply: “We wish to live with you from now and do what you are doing. (The Anonymous of Perugia II). And “Drawn by divine inspiration, many people, wellborn and lowly, cleric and lay, began to cling to blessed Francis’s footsteps, and after they had abandoned the concerns and vanity of this world, to live under his discipline. (Chapter XIII Legend of the Three Companions.)

Why now? As in the time of our founding vision our dominant culture isolates us from one another, our communal life is at risk. Yet from between the cracks, new light is shining, people are organizing in new ways. *Who in your campus community is a Gatherer? Are their gifts well used?*

**2. The Seer:** helps us perceive and approach the sacred, they give us language to make sense of our lives and pass on the teachings of our ancestors. They help us to understand the divine around us and our inner divinity. Seers translate spiritual experience to a world hungry for meaning. They apply ancient wisdom to the everyday. They come from all walks of life, not just paths called "religious." Most importantly they embody the wisdom they describe.

The Tradition: Clare wrote in the Third Letter to St. Agnes of Bohemia: “Indeed it is now clear that the soul of a faithful person, the most worthy of all creatures because of the grace of God, is greater than heaven itself, since the heavens and the rest of creation cannot contain their Creator and only the faithful soul is God’s dwelling place and throne, and this only through the charity that the wicked lack. (FAED v23)

Why now? We're living in a meaning making void, with almost no common language to affirm the human inquiry into life's deepest questions. As more folks are alienated from organized religion, we often end up isolated in such inquiry, cut off from both community and lineage. Without some assistance we often end up isolated in such inquiry, but off from community and lineage, this can lead to spiritual narcissism and spiritual tourism. The Seer helps point the way toward a spiritual life of integrity and depth. *Who in your campus community is a Seer? Are their gifts well used?*

**3. The Maker:** This person reminds us to be human and they bear witness to our humanity through art, and song and myth and ritual. They are a human mirror reflecting us back to ourselves. The maker is a minister of imagination. They take the ancient spiritual technological of our traditions from ritual baths, to Sabbath time to sacred reading practices and put them in service of today's questions, challenges, and transitions. They activate our imaginations to create new expressions our ancestors never had.

The Tradition: At Christmas in 1223, Francis celebrated the birth of Jesus in an outdoor pageant and mass in the village of Greccio thus giving to the world ever since the Christmas crèche.

Why now? The breakdown of many current conceptions of what it means to do a human job, and the economic and existential foundations of our society begin to shake. As more and more robots not only drive cars but express empathy we yearn for someone to help us distinguish ourselves. "Against this backdrop, the Maker reminds us that we are different from "Alexa" because we have a soul. *Who in your campus community is a Maker? Are their gifts well used?*

**4. The Healer:** breaks the cycle of violence, and teaches the tools of resilience, courage and pleasure for individuals and communities. They show up healed and whole in the world. The healer helps root us in the ground of our being. They help us move through pain knowing it contains the seeds for transformation. The healer is a balm for the wounds both within us and among us. It is so necessary because we all have trauma.

The Tradition: Francis and the wolf: In Francis' time there existed a huge wolf, terrible and ferocious which devoured animals and people to so that everyone lived in dread. Today we have our wolves as well. Who will deliver us?

Why now? Because we all have trauma and the wounds we carry are soul deep. This is not simply a private or individual work - in a world where some people have no safe place to exist the healing work is not only a matter of individual assistance but of communal justice. *Who in your campus community is a healer? Are their gifts well used?*

**5. The Venturer:** liberates resources for spiritual motivation. They prioritize transformative work over existing assumptions. The venturer funds new organizational structures, wise, but emerging leadership and collaborations that defy previous logic.

They invest in creative ways to support human flourishing. They take risks because they know that supporting new things requires work beyond our current understanding.

The Tradition: Lady Jacoba who brings almond cookies to Francis on his deathbed.

Why now? Many institutions are stuck with mandates to solve yesterday's problems along with processes that inhibit impactful funding. I am not saying that this means chasing every new idea and abandoning the previous new thing but focusing on depth before breadth. *Who in your campus community/extended community is a venturer?*

**6. The Steward:** creates infrastructures for spiritual life to survive. They work at an ecosystem level providing services that make innovations sustainable. They model servant leadership often working behind the scenes to support new growth. We could say that they provide "backend" services to the field that is the Care of Souls. This includes everything from tracking impact to accounting, legal, and fundraising support. Their own spiritual maturity places outcomes above their own personal visibility.

The tradition: Celano, Bonaventure the theologian, and all those who have gathered the story and passed it on.

Why now? Existing models lionize impossible goals, consume hefty resource, and frame change as organization led rather than ecosystemic. Thousands of small efforts replicate easily outsourced tasks and miss out on collective impact. The steward has to find the tricky balance between contextual relevance and standardized operations. Stewards live in the tension between practical need to use established categories and processes (abide by the law, attract resources etc.) while also imagining and testing new ones. The gravitational pull to older unfit structures must be resisted at every turn because these can take us in unhealthy directions. *Who in your community is a steward? Are their gifts well used?*

**7. The Elder:** The Elder is an orienter. They help us find our path and stay on it. The Elder calls forth our gifts and grounds those gifts in history and community. They provide perspective when we think all our problems are new. The Elder connects us to lineage and tradition, embodying the wisdom of the ancestors. The Elder helps a new generation of leaders to recognize themselves, be recognized by their communities and stay accountable to those they serve. They teach, guide, and bless, often recognizing someone's potential before that person knows it themselves. The Elder comforts and discomfort us in exactly the way we need it.

The Tradition: Francis' letter to Brother Leo: *"Brother Leo, your brother Francis, health and peace. I am speaking to you, my son, in this way as a mother—because all the words that we spoke on the road I place and advice briefly in this message and afterwards, it is not necessary to come to me for counsel. Because I advise you thus: in whatever way it seem better to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprints and poverty, you may do it with the blessing of the Lord God and my obedience. And if it is necessary for you for your soul for some consolation to you, and you want to come back to me, come. "*

Why now? Elders have been largely displaced by geographic mobility and religious disaffiliation. In white cultures especially the disease of disconnection devalues people as they age. An Elder must be identified and called into the role. They must summon the maturity to give their gifts in new and unfamiliar contexts. *Who are the Elders in your community? Are they engaged in the life of the campus?*

Again, I want to give credit for this articulation to the Fellows at Harvard Divinity School for providing this perspective. This work is real, needed, and worthy of our attention.

## **A SOWING WILD OATS STORY**

We couldn't do all this talking about the Word of God without a "sowing wild oats" story from scripture and its call to us today. The story is a familiar one—which is the hardest kind to speak about. It is the story of the "sower and the seed" from the Gospel of Mark 4:3-9:

"Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup>As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup>Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup>But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup>Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup>Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."

A couple things make this story difficult for us to hear. One, as I just mentioned, is the familiarity of the parable. We heard it so often with a traditional interpretation of being good soil that perhaps we hardly see what is right in front of our eyes. We hear this story so often that it gets a little dulled. Always we are reminded that we are to be good soil for the word of God, and that is not a bad thing. It's just not the only thing. A second thing that makes this story a bit difficult is our experience of farming and thus our expectations.

In lush growth states like Illinois, Iowa, Indiana and so many places in the U.S., growth is fast and everywhere. In Palestine farming is tough, the land hard, and planting is done in small patches, amid stone fences and briars. We think that the way of farming described in the gospel is rather foolish, but that was how it was done in the time of Jesus and continues in many places until today.



When I teach parables I love to say, "*What could it mean if it doesn't mean what we always thought it meant?*" as a way of inviting a second look at a passage. What if the invitation in the story is not so much about being good soil for the word of God? We know that, we try to be that, right? What could happen if we turn the story just a bit and we focus on ourselves as the sower?

The disciple's task is to sow: sow love, care, work for the good, fairness, justice, and care for the earth. And the parable's encouragement is not to be discouraged because it seems like nothing is happening. *The disciple is accountable only for the sowing—not the harvest.* God works through the sower, and invites us to sow generously. So the invitation I want to leave you with today is to see yourself as an instrument wherever you live and work, for planting the seed that is God's word.

The challenge is to sow even in the most adverse conditions: Some seed will find good soil and grow. And to make a long story short, after three scenes of misadventure the seed finally finds fertile soil. So let's just quickly seek how that happens.

The first planting is a total failure: there are reasons why folks aren't receptive: perhaps their own unwillingness to listen gets in the way, prejudices and grievances harden people, perhaps the person has to be more self-protective, there is a basic mistrust or a lack of interest. Jazz musician Louis Armstrong used to say: "Some people, if they don't know, you can't tell them."

The second soil is on rocky ground: Rocky ground in scripture most often connotes barrenness. But then remember there are all kinds of barren women who surprise us and give birth, so the lesson when you hear "barren" is "don't judge too soon!" So the plant springs up but has a hard time making it.

The third seed falls among thorns. And thorns are a common metaphor for wickedness. This one is always fun to be, because seeds here do better than elsewhere. The seeds germinate and grow—there is real progress.

Finally the fourth scene: The hearers are teased into thinking that success is possible. But also wonder about how this same field could yield 30 or 60 or 100 fold. The parable draws attention to failure. Three-to-one odds of failure. The heart is left with a Kingdom of failure. Surprise and normality are the coordinates. In the end, the harvest is very ordinary and every day. What! you are saying. I thought that fourth sower got a big return. Now listen for some real data in response to the 30, 60, a hundredfold. In Syria a hundred fold is considered a good harvest. This was true in Italy as well. Herodotus spoke about the fertility of Babylon and he said that the corn was so abundant that it yielded 200 fold. Pliny speaks of a 400 fold and tells that what was sent to Nero was 360 stalks from one grain. So 30, 60 or a hundredfold doesn't sound that outstanding, does it? So I want to say again that it is important to remember that in failure and everydayness lies the miracle of God's activity. The hearer who gets this can experience the reign of God under the most unfamiliar guises: prostitutes, sinners, tax collectors, the everyday. Both the ordinary and unclean belong to the Kingdom of God. Both the failure and success of our lives belong to the kingdom of God.

The reign of God does not need perfection nor an overwhelming harvest but faithfulness in the sowing. The important thing to remember is that we are not to worry about the harvest—that is God's work. In God's kingdom we cannot judge success and failure too soon. Even human failure will not overwhelm the power of God to take root and grow. Remember what Isaiah said: "My word will do my will. Just as the rain and snow come down from the heavens and do not return until they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful." So our work is not about success but about always sowing.

Parents, I think, are experts in this work. I'm sure many times you feel that your love and your words to your children are falling on rocky ground. Teachers and administrators looking at students sitting before you—don't you wonder if your words will take root and grow in your students? And yet you sow. It's all about sowing.

Rachel Remen, who was a medical doctor and then counselor, in her book *Kitchen Table Wisdom* (1997) tells a story of her own life. She writes of one December when as an only child in a Russian immigrant family her father had declared bankruptcy. The time was when Rachel was in her early teens and she says she felt awkward, not at home in her own body. She tells about being an odd kid, not like other teens. This year the family had decided to make each other Christmas presents. She knitted a scarf for her father and made a copper bracelet for her mother. Christmas came, the table was set, and there were very simple decorations. Among the gifts lay a small velvet box. Even at thirteen she knew that such a box was not likely to contain something homemade. She looked at it with suspicion. Her father smiled and said, *"It's for you—open it."* There in the box was a pair of 24 karat gold earrings. They were exquisite. Rachel writes, *"I stared at them in silence, bewildered, feeling the weights of my homeliness, my shyness, my hopeless difference from my classmates who so easily joked and flirted and laughed."* *"Aren't you going to try them on?"* prompted my father. She continues: "So I took them to the bathroom, closed the door and put them on my ears. Cautiously I looked into the mirror. My pimply face, and lank hair...the earrings looked absurd. Tearing them from my ears, I rushed back into the living room and flung them on the floor. *'How could you do this?'* I shrieked at my father. *'Why are you making fun of me? Take them back, they look stupid. I'm too ugly to wear them. How could you waste all this money?'* Then I burst into tears."

"My father said nothing until I had cried myself out. Then he passed me his clean folded handkerchief. *'I know they don't look right now'* he said quietly. *'I bought them because someday they will suit you perfectly.'* Rachel concludes: "I am grateful to have survived my adolescence. At some of its lowest moments I would get out the box and look at the earrings. My father had spent a hundred dollars he did not have because he believed in the person I was becoming. Now that was something to hold on to! Behind my father's gift lay the kind of double vision which is the mark of every healer. He could have told me not to cry, that someday I would be a lovely woman. But that would have belittled my pain and invalidated my experience – the truth of the moment. What he did was far more powerful. He acknowledged my pain and its appropriateness while backing my process. His belief that change would emerge, naturally, in the course of things, made all the difference. Wholeness was just a matter of time."

This parable about sowing the wild oats of a vision of a world seen through Franciscan eyes invites us to take the long view. We don't do good to someone because they deserve it and we are sure we will get a good return on our investment. We do so because we take the long view. One never knows when a seed will take root and flourish. We are invited by the Word of God today to just do our part: to sow.

### **Conclusion**

The movement that Francis would create today would probably not be the same as the one he inspired in the thirteenth century, but it would show some of the same essential characteristics: a sharing of life with the most humble; rejection of the supremacy of money and possessions (a critique of consumerism); a search for a truly inclusive human community; a commitment to peace in the face of many kinds of violence; and deep regard for nature—all of this integrated into an intimate contact with God who is very near. It

would be guided by fidelity to the gospel translated for a new time reread in light of the urgent issues of our times, contemplated in Christ.

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**Sacred encounters: the heart of Franciscan education**  
**Mary Beth Ingham, CSJ**

Hurrahing in Harvest

SUMMER ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks arise  
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour  
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier  
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,     5  
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;  
And, éyes, héart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a  
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder  
Majestic—as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!—     10  
These things, these things were here and but the beholder

Wanting; which two when they once meet,  
The heart rears wings bold and bolder  
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.

Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem, *Hurrahing in Harvest*, captures for me the essence of what it means to frame an educational endeavor within a sacred worldview. The Franciscan vision of creation is the foundation for the tradition's educational enterprise. It is in our educational practice that we encounter the world as the locus of beauty and goodness, the place where we discover the unique individuals that we are, the place where we encounter the divine in our lives and in the lives of others. This educational endeavor can be captured by the expression: sacred encounter.

In what follows, I shall frame my remarks about Franciscan education according to this notion of a sacred encounter. First, how does our educational program involve an encounter with the world? Second, how does our program involve an encounter with the authentic self? And third, how might this Franciscan educational program prepare students for the ongoing encounter with an increasingly interfaith and intercultural world, as they leave our institutions? How might we help them become more effective channels of grace and instruments of peace in whatever place they find themselves?

As a prelude to these points, I want to spend a bit of time 'breaking open' the conceptual frame we educators tend to use. We can be so caught up in the material, the syllabus, and more and more today, the assessment, that we too can overlook how our daily experiences offer rich opportunities that can be called sacrament: not only in the classroom but in athletic activities, clubs, campus ministry, housekeeping interactions... not to mention peer to peer encounters as faculty, cabinet, professional staff. Indeed, throughout campus life, every encounter can be a sacred encounter, every moment a sacramental moment.

The commitment to beauty in creation, beauty in the human person and the awe-inspiring beauty of the Incarnation—God with us!—grounds the sacramental intuition of

the Franciscan tradition. Here the term sacrament relates not simply to the theological and familiar category of seven sacraments (as signs of divine love), but to an awareness of all of reality as SIGN: a manifestation of transcendent meaning, a work of art from the hand of the loving Artist, a mirror that reflects a transcendent dimension. This Franciscan sacramental vision of meaning is both transcendent and immanent: at its heart lies an artistic vision of the relationship between the divine Artist and creation as the work of art. And it calls forth our response, our noticing, beholding, being present to what is happening around us, and within us, each day.

The human journey toward God is made possible because of Love: God has created all things out of love. Creation expresses and manifests the divine nature: it is theophany. What's more, creation is also epiphany: it reveals the brilliance of divine love and beauty. Divine love sustains and guides all beings in our journey toward the ultimate experience of communion.

To speak of sacred encounter is really to understand the Franciscan intellectual project as grounded upon such a deep commitment to sacramentality: this is a commitment to the goodness of the world precisely insofar as the world is SIGN. And a sign both communicates and signifies what it means. The world is SIGN precisely insofar as it is the place of encounter with divine goodness, divine beauty, divine mercy and love.

For the Franciscan tradition, all life is sacrament and every encounter is sacramental. All life is filled with living encounters, sacred encounters, with others, with self, with the divine. Hopkins' poetry, and all poetry in fact, captures this insight. Let's take a moment to consider how the poet expresses the deep transformation that occurs when he 'notices' what is happening around him, when he is authentically present to divine beauty in creation.

Surrounded by beauty, the poet experiences an ecstatic moment of illumination, of self-knowledge, and of emotional embrace. All mediated by creation, as the poet returned home from a day of fishing and looked out at the beautiful countryside. Like him, we are surrounded by beauty and grace. And yet, so often we fail to notice, we fail to enter into the encounter, we fail to allow ourselves to be transformed by the world around us. Our students too can be so caught into the technology of social media that they fail to notice what is happening around them. Social scientists tell us that young people are less and less able to engage in personal interactions and meaningful relationships. And we see this often: students in a group, with each one on the iphone or ipad. They might even be texting each other!

For Hopkins, the encounter with the beauty of the world moves him to greater self-awareness and generosity. He realizes how few really see what is going on, how few really take it in. And he cries out: "All this was here... But the beholder wanting...." Do our students know how to behold, how to encounter reality around them? How to respond to those in need? Do our pedagogies help them?

The poet encounters the beauty of his experience. He learns to look closely, and in looking closely, he is transformed. Like Francis in the presence of the leper or the humbled knight, at that moment his life is changed.

### **Franciscan Sacramental Worldview**

The contours of the tradition's sacramental worldview can be found in its great thinkers, in Francis of Assisi, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, and John Duns Scotus. Alexander and his brothers expound on the beauty of creation and its connection to the divine in his Summa. Bonaventure lays out the creative power of the

divine in bringing forth an order that is made in the image of Christ, the Word. Duns Scotus points to the infinite value of each creature as an expression of divine love through *haecceitas*, or the 'thisness of each being.' Together all of these voices (and many more) express the deep Franciscan commitment to a metaphysics of goodness and to the way this world functions as the place of sacred encounter with each being, and through each being, with our Loving Creator.

No one captures this sense of a sacramental worldview and its place in an educational endeavor better than Bonaventure in his *Itinerarium*. In Chapter 1, he lays out the foundations of the journey as grounded in the Wisdom, power and goodness of the Creator. He states:

The supreme power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator shine forth in created things insofar as the bodily senses inform the interior senses. This is done in a threefold way. For the bodily senses serve the intellect when it investigates rationally, or believes faithfully, or contemplates intellectually. He who contemplates considers the actual existence of things, he who believes, the habitual course of things; he who investigates with his reason, the mighty excellence of things....From all these considerations, the observer can rise, as from a vestige, to the knowledge of the immense power, wisdom and goodness of the Creator. (10-11)

The journey of ascent from this world to the Creator passes by means of this world, the world around us. So no act of rational consideration, whether it be observation in the sciences, introspection or self-reflection is blocked from moving from the world of perception to the foundation and source of this world.

The beauty of the world offers a place for encounter that reveals the first stage of reflection. In his *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure echoes Richard of St. Victor who noted that there are two Books for us to consider: the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture. Bonaventure tells us:

From all we have said, we may gather that the created world is a kind of book reflecting, representing and describing its Maker, the Trinity, at three different levels of expression: as a vestige, as an image, and as a likeness. The aspect of vestige is found in every creature; the aspect of image, only in intelligent creatures or rational spirits; the aspect of likeness, only in those spirits who are God-conformed. Through these successive levels, comparable to steps, the human intellect is designed to ascend gradually to the supreme Principle, which is God. (*Breviloquium* II, 12, 1 in Monti 2005, 96)

In the book of nature we read the message of divine love, as the created order is a medium for divine communication. In this sacramental dimension, the natural world presents itself, not as something to be grasped by the human mind or dominated by human control, but as a work of intricate beauty to be admired and reflected upon. The dignity of this world and of each being appears clearly as the result of divine rational, loving and free creativity, called "the Eternal Art." Reality is shot through with creativity and freedom, from the first moment of divine choice to create this particular world to the smallest activity of human free willing.

This notion of encounter as mediating a journey toward wholeness can inform teaching in all levels of the college or university. Whether in science, liberal arts, fine and performing arts, business or law, the journey toward human wholeness is a recognizable mark of any Franciscan university.

## Privileging the encounters as sacred

This insight into beauty as the beginning of a spiritual-intellectual journey, and its corresponding implication for the Franciscan sacramental worldview, can help us recognize how all reality is gift and ready for the encounter. As we know, encounters are richest when they are personal encounters. For many of us in higher education, the degradation of civil discourse in our social and political lives today is nothing less than a contemporary tragedy. What can we do?

I believe that if we can help our students understand the intellectual journey as an encounter that leads to truth and deeper understanding, then we can also help them seize this moment and embrace the *human* encounter it offers. It is too little to say that the world around us is sacrament for our discovery and encounter. It is now time for us to say that the persons around us, each and every one, can be called *sacrament*. Each person carries a value to be encountered, explored and understood. What is the challenge today for all universities, and particularly Franciscan universities and colleges, to “build up” a culture of sacred encounter, based upon the deep Franciscan affirmation of human dignity and giftedness?

The Franciscan affirmation of beauty in the created order implies the affirmation of the dignity of each person as created and loved by God. Duns Scotus captures the importance of divine creative love in his explanation of *haecceitas*, or *thisness*. *Haecceitas* refers to the principle of individuation: the intrinsic principle that makes any given thing what it is. *Haecceity* is the unrepeatable identity of each and every creature. It lies beyond all philosophical categories that traditionally define the individual: it is beyond the material (body), beyond the formal (soul) and beyond the embodied form (soul-body composite). *Haecceitas* is a positive principle: a *this* rather than a *not that*. Accordingly, each being possesses its own unique *haecceity*. Every existing thing, even the smallest, has its unique identity given by a loving Creator. *Haecceity* is not simply what differentiates one person from another. It is what differentiates one stone from another, one snowflake from another. Indeed, each and every being is a pearl of great price!

When he argues that the Incarnation was part of the divine plan from before the moment of creation, Scotus points to the fact that the person is “the summit of God’s *creative plan*.” Not just the midpoint, but the apex, the culmination of all that exists other than God. And this is the way God intended from the very beginning. In this way, Scotus advances and deepens the Franciscan Christological vision with an even stronger emphasis upon human dignity and human superiority over every other creature, including the angels!

In our intercultural, interfaith world there is no better time to encourage such sacred encounters. How might we do this? How might we infuse our curriculum with additional opportunities for students to reach beyond what is familiar? How might we offer additional opportunities for service learning, for intercultural exchange? And, following up on the experience, how might we and how do we help students reflect more deeply upon and internalize what they have lived and learned, in outreach to the other?

There is no better example for me than the inspiring story of Francis of Assisi and the Sultan. The saint, wishing to go to the foreign leader in order to convert him to Christianity, is himself converted by the experience. Francis sees for himself, in the midst of the encounter, what the deep faith of another human person can produce good works. In the “other,” the Sultan, the believer of another faith, Francis sees his brother. Their

encounter is sacred; it produces a change in his thinking, and in the way he looks upon the world. Isn't this what our educational institutions aspire to do for our students?

Both Bonaventure and Scotus emphasize the Incarnational and Christocentric nature of the Franciscan tradition. Moral living is not legalistic living; it is birthing authentic beauty into the world, beauty that has solid foundations in virtue and integrity. It is building bridges, not walls. It is making peace, not encouraging rivalry and conflict. For Franciscans, obedience to an impersonal law is not the most important moral characteristic. There is only one law: the law of love. Because the divine has embraced the human in the most sacred of encounters, we have clear indications of the model to follow. Because the humanity of Jesus Christ is sacrament for our humanity, we have confidence that we can follow his pattern.

Here lies the significance of the Franciscan tradition for the educational mission. The implications of an aesthetic and sacramental vision can be found in the way in which artistic creativity mirrors the divine and opens up reflection on moral goodness and beauty. Such an aesthetic involves an immanent goal of harmony and balance both within each person and within his or her actions. It also involves an expansive goal, reaching out to the moral community, throughout a lifetime, and toward divine life. Moral judgment engages all moral inclinations, sentiments, rational desires and reasoning in light of the demands of a situation for choice and action which require due reflection and proportion. Indeed, moral judgments respond in the way that Hopkins responds to his experience of beauty.

Such a vision engages each person in the totality of her personhood, as an artist bringing goodness to birth both in the concrete situation and within herself. She would see herself as a member of the symphony of what is natural and what is free, under the direction of divine love. Her autonomy would be fulfilled in communion with others.

The great Franciscan voices understand all intellectual endeavors as spiritual, transforming, transcending and creative activities, centered and framed on love, inclusivity and beauty. Here we discover how, mediated in and through educational institutions, the intellectual legacy of the Franciscan tradition, can be transformative of our society and our world. Might our colleges and universities today be called to a sacramental presence in and to our world? Might our vocation involve becoming and continuing to deepen our ability to be places of sacred encounter, channeling grace and life into a world torn by violence and mistrust? Isn't this the work of a sacrament?

### **Closing thoughts**

In closing I would like to recall a model of a sacred encounter that has inspired me for many years: the School of Toledo, Spain. The school of Toledo was a medieval school of translators, a group of scholars representing different ethnicities, faiths and languages. Together they were the bridge that made possible the rise of the great universities in Europe and, ultimately, the continuation of learning from antiquity into modernity. This intellectual group was a multicultural, multi-ethnic and interreligious 'community of dialogue and sacred encounter' at a time when those very cultures were politically and militarily at odds. Together, they changed the world and they changed history. These scholars from Christianity, Islam and Judaism tirelessly translated the great works of ancient philosophy from Arabic into Latin. From Toledo, the texts entered the life of the great centers of learning in Paris, Oxford and beyond. Thanks to these anonymous scholars of Toledo, the great minds of the Middle Ages and Renaissance could access the classic texts of human history. These minds and these texts gave birth to our time, to our day.



Why is this such an important and inspiring metaphor for me and for us as educators today? The image of a team of translators, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, representatives of great religious and cultural traditions gives us a fruitful way of reflecting on the insights of the Catholic and Franciscan Intellectual Traditions for our colleges and universities.

Why did these scholars spend so much time and energy on the writings of “dead” men? What gave them inspiration to carry on? What confidence did they have in the human spirit, the human search for wisdom and transcendence, the shared human desire for meaning and integrity? They were the *translator*, the one who conveyed the questions, discoveries, truth and insights from one culture to another, from one generation to another. It can’t have been the goal of *usefulness*, for what could be more useless than reading someone who had been dead for over 1500 years? It can’t have been the desire to impress their colleagues, or improve their earning capacity, publish an article, get tenure or advancement, or make a better life for themselves. Here there was no utility involved.

It must have been the sheer *delight* of reading and learning what another human being thought about the world. It must have had something to do with a sacred encounter, the shared human joy in the activity of inquiry, the engagement of intellectual discourse and encounter, of intellectual transcendence, in the recognition of a common human search for meaning that can be found beneath diverse cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. And let us not be naïve: they must have faced challenges of understanding one another. They must have had to draw on all the patience, spiritual generosity and imagination they could muster. How did they deal with their own differences of opinion? How did they get beyond the superficial questions to the deeper issues and values? We will never know. All we can know is what it takes for each of us, in the classroom and throughout the university to stay in the conversation, the sacred encounter, despite our differences, to move forward despite our tendencies to distrust, to have confidence in the common human search for wisdom and understanding that reaches back to the earliest days of every culture.

Franciscan education takes up these deeper questions of the common human search *one person, one student at a time*. This is both the heart of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and the spiritual legacy of the great scholars and Masters of the Franciscan order. And in this we behold our vocation to recognize and promote the dignity, the development and the integration of each student, each person, as one of inestimable value given by God. Such intellectual formation is not directed toward a career. Rather, it is an end in itself because the one who is engaged in it is an end in himself, in herself. The intellect is a spiritual faculty, not finalized by any marketability, by any career advancement, by any measure of productivity outside itself. It is a spiritual faculty drawn continuously toward meaning, toward transcendence, toward unity and toward the future.

Franciscan colleges and universities live out their mission within the world, inspired by the vision of Francis and Clare of Assisi: a vision centered on a foundational experience of Beauty and on a view of the world and all within it as *sacrament*. This vision is framed by self-transcending and self-transforming activities, an open and an ever-widening circle, inviting all to come into the conversation, into the sacred encounter. Through mutual respect, listening and working together, they seek to enter into the dynamic transformation of all creation, bringing forth even greater beauty, in joyful praise of Divine Beauty, “ever Ancient and ever New.”

## Questions for Reflection

- For Hopkins, the encounter with the beauty of the world moves him to greater self-awareness. He realizes how few really see what is going on, how few really take it in. “These things were here, but the beholder wanting...” Do our students know how to *behold*, how to *encounter* reality around them? Do our pedagogies help them? How have we/I developed ways to help students grow in their ability to recognize and respond to the beauty of the world around them?
- Each person carries a value to be encountered, explored and understood. What is the challenge today for my university/college to “build up” a culture of sacred encounter, based upon the deep Franciscan affirmation of human dignity and giftedness? How do I already see this happening? What still needs to be done? How can I help?
- In our intercultural, interfaith world there is no better time to encourage such sacred encounters. How might we do this at my college/university? What initiatives could happen through the AFCU? How do we and how might we infuse our curriculum with more opportunities for students to reach beyond what is familiar? How do we and how might we offer additional opportunities for service learning, for intercultural exchange? What do we do or what might we do to prepare students before they have the experience? Following up on the experience, how do we and how might we help students reflect upon and internalize what they have lived and learned, in outreach to the other?

## Engaging the Mind and Spirit of a University Community

**Sr. Mary Imler, OSF, and Daniel D. Schwert, Ph.D.**

Everyone at an academic institution is responsible for the education of students, whether it is students gaining knowledge within a discipline or across a broader liberal education landscape, the social and emotional development of the students, or their spiritual growth. In order to help students on their educational journey, faculty, staff, and administrators themselves need to undergo their own journeys. Institutions facilitate this through various professional development opportunities, including the formation of a book study group (Zepeda, 2008).

For the past six years, the University of St. Francis (USF) has offered at least one employee book study group per year. The group that meets in the Fall is known as the “Engaging Minds Seminar” while the spring group is the “Engaging Spirit Seminar” (“Engaging Mind and Spirit” is one of USF’s tag lines). What follows are some of the aspects to consider when starting a book group, how we addressed these factors, and what did and did not work.

### Starting a Book Group

Our groups got their start because the Vice President for Academic Affairs has long had an interest in neuroscience as it relates to learning. In an effort to increase campus interest in the topic, Carl Schoonover came to USF to present and discuss images from his book *Portraits of the Mind* (Schoonover, 2010) in early 2013. While visiting, Schoonover mentioned that he thought *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (Sacks, 1998) was a good entry-level neuroscience book. The first book discussion group then loosely formed, meeting in Spring 2013 to discuss Sacks’ book. There does not need to be a reason start a book group, though, other than a desire to learn in a community setting and a general idea of the type of topics you wish to discuss (if anyone has access to snacks, that’s a bonus, too!).

### Choosing a Book

Table 1 (next page) is a list of the books we have read and discussed. The books were chosen for a variety of reasons. For example, USF’s core values are respect, integrity, service and compassion. We celebrate one value each year so that by the time they graduate, students have been exposed to each value at least once. Some of the books were chosen to correspond to a given year’s value. *Cheating Lessons* (Lang, 2013) was read and discussed during a Year of Integrity (Lang discusses reasons students feel compelled to cheat and proposes remedies to these reasons including more lower-stakes assessments and teaching better study strategies). *Compassion* (Delia, 2011) was, of course, read and discussed during a Year of Compassion.

Books have been chosen to correspond to campus events. The 2013-14 academic year started with a presentation by Diane Dean on the ways that millennials are different from previous generations. *The Shallows* (Carr, 2011), a look at how technology, especially the Internet, is changing how we (and our students) think, was chosen for the Fall 2013 Engaging Minds Seminar to try to tie into Dean’s presentation. All incoming freshmen are, um, encouraged to read a common book. The incoming class in 2015 read *My Stroke of Insight* (Taylor, 2006). Given that the topic (Taylor’s story of her stroke and subsequent recovery) fit with the loosely-defined “brain science” theme of the Engaging Minds Seminar, the book was read and discussed in Fall 2015.

At times, the Seminar meetings are not centered around books. In Fall 2013, a chapter of *Smarter Than You Think* (Thompson, 2013) was discussed to balance out Carr's perspective described above. Instead of a service-themed book for 2017-18, a variety of readings related to items on our service learning rubric (desire to serve, social justice, humility, accountability, etc.) were presented at the Spring 2018 Engaging Spirit Seminar. A key point to remember (and that we often forget) is to get individual readings to participants far enough in advance to allow them time to read and contemplate the material.

### **Structuring Book Group Meeting**

We have tried a variety of structures with our book groups. The original group (Spring 2013), met three times to discuss chapters of Sacks' book. The group met on **Table 1**. Books read over the past six years.

<u>Academic Year</u>	<u>Engaging Minds Seminar</u>	<u>Engaging Spirit Seminar</u>
2012-13	<i>The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat</i> (Sacks, 1998)	None
2013-14	<i>The Shallows</i> (Carr, 2011)	None
2014-15	<i>Make It Stick</i> (Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel, 2014)	<i>Eager to Love</i> (Rohr, 2014)
2015-16	<i>Cheating Lessons</i> (Lang, 2013) <i>My Stroke of Insight</i> (Taylor, 2006)	<i>Laudato, Si</i> (Pope Francis, 2015)
2016-17	<i>How Learning Works</i> (Ambrose, et al, 2010) <i>Mindset</i> (Dweck, 2006)	<i>Compassion</i> (Delio, 2011)
2017-18	<i>Small Teaching</i> (Lang, 2016)	Various readings on service

The Engaging Mind Seminar focuses loosely on pedagogy and learning science while the Engaging Spirit Seminar focuses on Catholic Franciscan themes.

different days of the week at different times, a format that we found made it difficult to draw regular attendance. Since that time, most of the groups have met once per week for several weeks during the given semester, often on Friday afternoons. This meeting time was chosen because it had the fewest number of scheduled classes (ideally there would be a campus-wide "free period" with no scheduled classes, but USF does not have that option). It is inevitable that not everyone can attend the meetings, so it may be desirable to provide an online option. A room that allowed for the participants to comfortably sit in a circle was reserved and light snacks were provided.

For some of the earlier Engaging Minds meetings, chapter-specific questions were posted a week in advance to help guide the participants in preparation of the meetings. Later versions of those meetings include general questions for each chapter. For the most recent Engaging Spirit Seminar (focused on service, see above), the service learning rubric served as the focusing point of the readings.

The sessions are scheduled to last one hour and we try to respect everyone's time by sticking to the schedule. Depending on the seminar, we have tried different ways of organizing facilitators for the discussion. At times, one person has been the facilitator for the semester, introducing each chapter and making sure everyone is heard. At other times, a different facilitator is chosen each week. How the facilitators are chosen has also varied, whether it has been asking for volunteers for next week or scheduling the semester in advance. For example, when discussing *Laudato, Si* (Pope Francis, 2015), different members of the USF community were asked to discuss chapters that might relate to their area of expertise (briefly describing the small change, how they incorporated the change into their class(es), and how it worked (or didn't work). Depending on the semester and the budget, facilitators have been given a copy of the book as a way of thanking them for their service.

Starting with *Make It Stick* (Brown, Roediger, and McDaniel, 2014), we have tried to bring one of the coauthors or another expert in the field to campus each fall. While the Seminars are open to USF employees only, we try to make the visiting speakers open to the greater USF community as well as local institutions.

### **Making it Franciscan**

Probably the easiest way to make a book group "Franciscan" is, of course, to read a book about Francis such as *Eager to Love* (Rohr, 2014). As noted above, though, we have chosen several non-Francis books. We strive to incorporate many of the characteristics of a Franciscan higher education (AFCU, 2018) into our meetings.

Our groups are sacramental: everyone's opinion is welcome and everyone is encouraged to share (or not), as they feel fit. All interested faculty, staff, and administrators are invited to participate. To varying degrees of success, we have tried having online discussion groups for those that cannot attend the regular meetings. While we have not tried this, phone-in members could also be welcomed. Even if someone has not had the time to read the week's assignment, they are welcome to share in the conversation. At times, particularly vocal participants have been politely asked to allow others the opportunity to share.

Our groups are relational: having a diverse group of individuals working together and sharing their perspectives allows participants the opportunity to grow as community. Participants from a variety of department and divisions on campus have taken part, from full- and part-time faculty to members of the maintenance department to senior administrators. While the focus is often on how we can help our students learn and grow, we also discuss ways that we can help each other learn and grow. As noted above, every member is invited to share their perspectives and to ask questions of the other participants. We use the guest speakers to extend our relationships beyond our campus borders.

Our groups are Gospel-oriented: as a university community, we are always undergoing conversion as we seek to know more about ourselves and our students. The book groups provide us a vehicle to learn from each other and from experts in the field to help us help our students.

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# Assessment: A Franciscan Approach

Ryan Savitz

## Introduction

Ask three people what academic assessment means, and you are likely to get three very different answers. One person might answer that assessment is how faculty measure student achievement of learning outcomes. A second person might answer that assessment is a tool that is used to help faculty determine how they can better meet students' educational needs. Finally, a third person might answer that assessment is simply impersonal testing that penalizes and discourages some students. All three of these hypothetical people have valid beliefs. It is the aim of this paper to put forth a philosophy of academic assessment of college and university students that simultaneously measures student achievement, assists faculty in individually tailoring instruction, and respects the dignity of each student in a Franciscan manner. Indeed, the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities (AFCU) proposes that institutions of higher education assess ways they promote the characteristics of Franciscan education (AFCU, 2016). The proposed philosophy is grounded in both extant scholarly research, as well as in practices that have worked in the author's personal experience.

First, a very brief discussion of the formal meaning of assessment will be provided. Note that entire books have been written on this subject, and the discussion here will only be detailed enough to guide the conversation that follows. Generally, assessment is divided into two types—formative and summative. Formative assessment is utilized throughout an academic course to gauge student progress and help faculty adjust teaching methods in real time (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2010). Summative assessment, however, is utilized to measure what a student knows at a point in time, and is an integral component of the grading process (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2010). Summative assessments might include things such as cumulative final exams and end of semester research papers, while formative assessments include things such as classroom discussions and self-reflections. Both summative and formative assessments are important, and both will be considered in this paper. The importance of good assessment cannot be understated, because, in short, assessment assists students in the learning process (Suskie, 2009). Isakson (2004) provides a distinctively Franciscan definition of assessment. She asserts that, based on the Latin root of the word (*assidere*), the literal definition of assessment involves students and faculty sitting beside each other in a team-like approach to enhancing the teaching and learning process.

As will be seen, this notion of *assidere* underpins the philosophy of assessment that will be put forth in the coming sections of this paper. *Assidere* may play both a literal and figurative role in the assessment process. On the literal side, developing relationships with students should be one of the fundamental principles of Catholic education (Cook and Simonds, 2011), and, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is no substitute for face to face contact, when it comes to relationship building. On the figurative side, *assidere* implies a certain level of egalitarianism, and egalitarianism is certainly a component of Franciscan values. Indeed, St. Francis' biocentric world-view (Mizzoni, 2004) is the epitome of egalitarianism. It may be possible to develop more meaningful relationships with students by sitting beside them, rather than by standing above them. This allows for the possibility of better nurturing students' academic (and personal) growth.

## Franciscan Values in Assessment

The author teaches mathematics at Neumann University, which is a Catholic university in the Franciscan tradition. Neumann's core Franciscan values are reverence, integrity, service, excellence, and stewardship (RISES). All five values play a role in the assessment process. These values directly relate to the characteristics espoused by the AFCU (AFCU, 2016). Some of the more prominent relationships that exist include the following: reverence is related to the characteristic of contemplating God's goodness (as, I would argue, is manifested in the beauty of mathematics). Integrity is inextricably linked with works of transparency, which will be discussed later. Service is related to an attitude promoting social justice, which can be better understood through the statistical analysis of data. Excellence is associated with the characteristic of supporting students throughout their lifelong learning and conversion process. And, finally, stewardship relates to the characteristic of honoring all of God's creation, including the students with whom we are entrusted. At this point, a brief description of how the RISES values are related to the assessment process will be given.

Woodruff (2014) noted that reverence is more than simply respect, because reverence is deeply linked with the notion of truth. It is important that all assessments be reflective of the truth of the matter and not be subjective.

The use of rubrics in the process of grading and assessment can be helpful in achieving the goal of objectivity. According to Selke (2013), rubrics not only set clear

expectations for students, they also help to ensure that faculty assessments are consistent from student to student. A wide variety of rubrics are available for public use (e.g. The Association of American Colleges and Universities Value Rubrics), and these may be tailored to meet the academic and mission-oriented needs of any given institution or faculty member. Another technique that may be used to ensure fairness is to have

students put their names on the last page (or somewhere else not easily visible) of an assignment, so that past experiences and preconceived notions do not influence the processes of assessment and grading.

It is vital that both students and faculty act with integrity throughout the assessment process. Academic honesty is crucial for students. Clearly, the results of any assessment will be flawed in situations where students present the work of others as their own. Conversely, faculty must assess with integrity, being careful not to let their opinions (positive or negative) of students influence the assessment process. This aspect of integrity is closely linked with the preceding discussion of objectivity as a hallmark of reverence. Indeed, it should be noted that the core values under discussion do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they are inextricably linked with one another, weaving a web of guiding standards that undergird all university activities.

Regarding student integrity, it is important for faculty to model honest and transparent behavior at all times, with the hope that students will follow suit. Further, students should be well aware of the consequences of academic dishonesty at their institution. The value of such transparency and role-modelling is supported by the literature. As an example, Ford and Hughes (2011) found that many graduate students were led to consider altering their research and writing practices, after attending workshops on academic integrity. Ford and Hughes (2011) reported that attendance at assessment workshops not only changed how students planned on completing future assessments, but also affected how faculty planned to deliver future assessments. This compound effect on both students and faculty supports the Franciscan notion of *assidere* that was previously introduced.



It should ultimately be the goal of all educators to serve their students. In the Franciscan tradition, this type of servant leadership may be modeled after the relationship that existed between St. Clare of Assisi and St. Agnes of Bohemia (Bekker, 2005). St. Agnes was a daughter of royalty, but chose to lead a life of service and poverty after hearing friars preach (Bekker, 2005). After establishing a monastery for women, St. Agnes tried to find sisters who were followers of St. Clare's lifestyle. Subsequently, St. Clare acted as a servant leader to St. Agnes, when she acted as a spiritual mentor over a period of time during the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Specifically, St. Clare wrote four letters to St. Agnes, giving her religious and spiritual instruction and encouragement.

This relationship between Saints Clare and Agnes demonstrates several aspects of the *assidere* notion of assessment. First, a clear repetitive-progressive method of instruction appears in St. Clare's letters to Agnes (Bekker, 2005). This method of instruction appears both within and across letters. The across letter progression of instruction seems to imply that St. Clare was gauging St. Agnes' spiritual growth over time, thus leading her into deeper service and contemplation over time. Second, St. Clare encouraged St. Agnes to engage in deep contemplation and application of how Christ emptied Himself of his own will, in order to exhort her to greater service (Bekker, 2005). The concepts of contemplation and application are key aspects of instruction and assessment. Finally, specific instances of assessment can be seen in St. Clare's letters. For instance, in her third letter, St. Clare notes that St. Agnes appears to embrace faith and humility (an assessment of St. Agnes), and then she follows that assessment with encouragement to "rejoice in the Lord" and to not let "bitterness and confusion envelop" her (Bekker, 2005). This example of assessment followed by instruction clearly demonstrates St. Clare's use of the *assidere* notion of assessment in her instruction of St. Agnes.

Faculty may use this model of instruction and encouragement to guide our assessment of student learning outcomes. Indeed, St. Clare's example ties in Isakson's (2004) earlier relational definition of assessment. Regarding instruction, assessment and instruction clearly should be linked to one another. Indeed, the assessment process can inform instruction (Keeley 2015). As previously noted, formative assessments, in particular, play a key role in the evolution of the teaching and learning process. Rather than being static, this process should be one that evolves over time, in order to better meet student and institutional needs.

An additional aspect of assessment that allows faculty to better serve their students is seen in the use of end of semester faculty evaluations. These assessments are often conducted by students, peers, administrators, and the faculty themselves. Student evaluations of faculty appear to relate most closely to Isakson's (2004) relational notion of the assessment process, since the students and the faculty member are the individuals directly involved in the teaching and learning process. Ultimately, the goal of these evaluations is to enhance the teaching and learning process (Baldwin and Blattner, 2003). Furthermore, a correlation exists between student evaluations of faculty and faculty evaluations of themselves (Benton and Cashin, 2014). This correlation points to the validity and importance of student input in the growth of the assessment process.

The value of excellence is of great importance in the assessment process. Used properly, the assessment process can be a tool for unlocking the excellence within each student. Returning again to Isakson's (2004) model of student and faculty sitting beside one another, the assessment process may evoke images of a Socratic classroom where the

model sheds new light on the previously discussed importance of faculty utilizing the feedback contained in end of the semester student evaluations. In this scenario, faculty members question students regarding their teaching performance, and then they utilize this feedback to encourage their own growth of excellence in teaching. Naturally, one would expect this cultivation of excellence in teaching to express itself in the accomplishments of students.

Documenting the achievement of learning outcomes is another, perhaps more obvious, way in which excellence is linked to the assessment process. Indeed, this measurement and documentation is one of the key reasons why the assessment of students is conducted in higher education, and educational institutions are under more pressure than ever to provide such documentation to outside entities (Nusche 2008). Such measurement and documentation are important for reasons both internal and external to the learning environment. Internally, this measurement not only allows faculty to assess the success of the teaching and learning process, but also provides important information regarding whether or not students are able to move to the next level of instruction. Externally, it provides both accrediting agencies and potential employers with data regarding student knowledge, skills, and competencies.

The awarding of grades is directly linked to the aforementioned concept of student achievement. While grading and assessment are not synonymous, grades are generally assigned at the end of the assessment process (Sadler, 2009). Although it is possible to make the argument for a student evaluation system that is more holistic than grading (Sadler, 2009), the traditional A through F grading system appears to be nearly universal at the university level. Given the ubiquitous nature of this traditional grading model, it is natural that it should effectively recognize excellence in student achievement. Sadler (2005) provided an overview of various criteria-based methods of grading that can be of value in the college and university setting. While many discrepancies are noted, all of these methods share the common goal of measuring and documenting student

achievement based on the quality of their work, without reference to the work of other students (Sadler, 2005). The effective use of such grading methods should allow both the student and other interested parties (employers, graduate schools, etc.) to have knowledge of how well the student met the criteria proposed in the course.

Stewardship might not be the first value to come to mind when thinking of assessment. On second thought, however, stewardship should be a cornerstone of the practice of assessment. This is because faculty have co-stewardship of their students' gifts and talents throughout the teaching and learning process. Therefore, it is imperative for instructors to take this notion of stewardship seriously and to use the assessment process to develop these gifts and talents.

Additionally, faculty scholars may be thought of as stewards of the subject areas within which they teach and do research (Walker, et. al, 2013). Faculty can help to ensure the continued progress of their disciplines, in part, through assessing and documenting the knowledge and skills of the future scholars they are mentoring.

### **Putting Theory into Practice**

The relationships between Franciscan values and assessment were explored in the preceding section. This section presents a particular model of assessment that is based on these values, academic best practices, and my own personal experience. It should be noted that I am a mathematics professor, so some of the specifics in the following discussion may need to be modified to suit the needs of other disciplines. That said, any

specific model of assessment should be modified to meet the needs of students, faculty, and institution. The hallmarks of this particular model of assessment will be provided in the following subsections.

### **Setting the Tone**

One may begin the semester by setting the tone for the course, including the curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The students' responsibilities are clearly stated both in person and on the syllabus. These responsibilities include the various required assessments they will encounter. Naturally, students care a great deal about grades, and the grading system is also discussed in detail. The importance of clearly defining students' responsibilities cannot be overstated and has been documented in the literature (Johnston, 2005). For instance, McNair (2016) found that students want more transparency in their courses, as evidenced by their desire to be able to link learning outcomes and course material to their personal development. That said, McNair (2016) also reported that, in a recent AAC&U survey, fewer than 10% of chief academic officers felt their students fully comprehended these learning outcomes.

In addition to stating student (and faculty) responsibilities, it is worthwhile to introduce Isakson's (2004) notion of assessment. I do this by stressing to students that we are on the same journey and members of the same team with a common goal. This conversation emphasizes the concept that we are all "sitting beside" each other. Although not directly related to assessment, jointly setting goals for the semester with the class helps to promote the team approach to assessment.

### **Expectations**

Related to the value of excellence, it is important to let students know throughout the semester that their instructor believes in them and also has very high expectations of them. As educators, one of our primary responsibilities is to prepare young people for challenging careers. Hence, it is a disservice to our students if we expect anything less than excellence from them. Indeed, lowered expectations in the form of grade inflation (e.g. an A no longer means "excellent," but, rather, "mediocre") have been found to be related to decreased student accountability (Hassel and Lourey, 2010). A direct relationship between expectations and achievement can thus be seen.

### **Assessment Design**

It was just noted that excellence should be expected of our students; many types of assessment measure this quality, although I typically use exams, as is common in mathematics classes. I strive to ensure that these exams (and other assessments) accurately reflect the learning outcomes stated on the syllabus and in class. Depending on the course, this alignment may be done by intentionally designing test questions to address one or more specific outcomes. In other courses, this may be done by using questions specifically designed by textbook authors to address particular learning outcomes with varying levels of difficulty. This direct linkage between learning outcomes and assessment design helps to ensure that the results of student assessments reflect the true nature of what they have learned. The importance of assessments reflecting the truth of the matter relates to Woodruff's (2014) notion of reverence, as previously discussed. Naturally, the specifics of assessment design will vary greatly from discipline to discipline.

The concept of academic honesty is directly related to the aforementioned notion of truth in assessment. As noted earlier, the results of an assessment are only valid if they reflect the accomplishments of the student who took the assessment. I take a personal approach to communicating the importance of academic honesty to students (beyond simply

sharing university policies and penalties with them). I do this by asking them to reflect on the following questions: when you are old men and women in 60 years, how many people will remember your score on your math exams? When you are old women and men in 60 years, how many people will remember whether or not you have been an honest person? Over the years, I have had a number of students note that simply considering these questions gave them deep personal insight.

### **Mastery Learning**

Mastery learning and the modes of assessment associated with it are a good way to take a personal approach to instruction and assessment. While a complete exposition of mastery learning is well beyond the scope of this paper, it may be succinctly defined as a teaching philosophy grounded in the belief that all students can master the vast majority of the material they are taught (Block and Burns, 1976). This concept of mastery learning meshes nicely with the values of excellence.

A variety of methods can be used to implement this philosophy in the classroom. The methods that I employ vary, depending on the particular class that I am teaching. In developmental mathematics, I and other faculty at my institution employ a relatively comprehensive approach to mastery learning. In this course, student learning is self-paced, and exams are taken on the computer following the completion of each learning module. In order to pass, the student must surpass a certain threshold on each exam, and each student has multiple opportunities to take each exam, should that be required.

In my more advanced courses, the mastery learning piece is less obvious. For example, in nearly all of my courses, I allow students to earn back some of the points they have lost on exams by making detailed corrections with explanations on the exams. In order to accomplish this, students must reflect on their previous work, figure out exactly what they did incorrectly, and then redo the problem using the correct techniques. Students who did poorly on an exam may also be invited to reflect on how they prepared for it and to confer with me regarding the corrections. This provides students with the opportunity to discern how they might prepare differently in the future, in order to maximize the likelihood of a better outcome. Indeed, it has been shown that reflective practice can improve student judgments in the future (Lord, Chen, Cheng, Tai, and Pan, 2017).

This meta-cognitive reflective process serves several purposes. First, it replaces any curving of exams or extra credit that might be given. Personally, I do not curve any of my assessments, since I want to ensure that students do something to actively earn every point, mark, and letter grade they are assigned. This demonstrates, yet again, the infusion of the value of excellence into the teaching and learning process. Second, curving has been criticized as promoting a competitive (rather than collaborative) environment in the classroom (Wolfe and Powell, 2015). Thus, one may consider alternatives to curving, in order to foster the Franciscan *assidere* notion of assessment in the classroom. Third, the process of correcting mathematical errors both in equation and written form engages students' multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2011), thus better differentiating learning and providing each student, regardless of how they learn, with an opportunity to succeed. Finally, this process provides the instructor with an opportunity to critically reflect on their own performance by walking through the correction process with the student and determining where and how instruction might improve. Reflection, on behalf of both student and instructor, has the potential to enhance student academic growth (Patton, Renn, Guido, and Quaye, 2016).

The mastery learning approach may also be taken within the context of assigned projects. Projects that I assign are assessed using a rubric that is provided to the students prior to beginning to the project. I then allow the students to complete as many drafts of the project as they like (prior to the firmly adhered to due date), and I provide detailed feedback at each iteration. While time consuming for the faculty member, this process is grounded in the value of service, and it is rewarding to see the growth that students make from one draft to the next.

### **Criteria Based Assessment**

Criteria referenced assessment involves assessing students according to their performance relative to the relevant learning outcomes, while norm referenced assessment measures students regarding their performance relative to each other (Knight, 2001). Although there are exceptions, criteria referenced assessment is generally preferred to norm referenced assessment in higher education (Knight, 2001). This is because the goal of most in-class assessments is to provide evidence of curricular mastery, rather than to simply state how students compare to each other (McCauley and Swisher, 1984). I also see the value of stewardship in the use of criteria referenced assessment. As stated earlier, I view one of my roles as being a co-steward (with the students themselves) of my students' gifts and talents. If I were to use norm referenced assessments, I would see that as telling a certain percentage of my students that they lack mathematical gifts and talents. In essence, it would make the class a zero-sum game. While it is certainly true that some students may be more mathematically talented than others, it is my goal as an educator to guide every one of my students to success.

### **Summary**

The assessment practices I incorporate in my mathematics classes are grounded in my institution's Franciscan values as contained in RISES. I begin each semester by clearly defining the students' responsibilities, and by explaining the types of assessments that will be used to measure their achievement. The assessments that are used are tied directly to the learning outcomes for the course taught. Regarding the assessments, I take a mastery learning approach to testing (and project writing), providing all students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the topic at hand. Toward this end of topic mastery, I use a criteria referenced approach to assessment and grading.

### **Conclusions**

In summary, a Franciscan model of assessment has been presented is grounded both in pedagogical theory and Franciscan values. I use this model of assessment in the mathematics courses that I teach, but my hope is that the principles put forth will be of value to others.

One principle that has not been discussed in detail is that of intentional reflection, which might speak to my own need to reflect more on my work, a realization arrived at during the process of writing this paper. As I wrote, I found myself reflecting on my own practices, reading up on the latest scholarship, and then reconsidering particular pieces of how I engage in the assessment process. I have found this iterative process of self-reflection most valuable, and it ties into the mission assessment reflection questions posed at the end of the AFCU's Matrix of Franciscan Values and Knowledge (AFCU, 2016). While it is possible to go on in great detail regarding this document, I will report one short example related to it. With the help of an esteemed colleague, I have come to see part of my role as a faculty member as helping students in their journey of conversion. I see the conversion process as extending beyond religious and spiritual conversion. Indeed, I view

students' academic and personal growth as being part of a lifelong journey of conversion and growth, which directly supports my university's mission statement. Therefore, in the closing words of this paper, I would encourage all faculty, myself surely included, to periodically set aside some time to consciously reflect on their assessment processes.

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## Revolutionary Tenderness: Ecological Philosophy through Continental and Catholic Lenses

**Kevin Spicer**

In Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'*, he makes very clear the necessity of thinking through our current environmental situation:

What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us? It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn. (2015, para. 160).

Our current moment, clearly, would seem to suggest that things are incredibly dire. Joanna Zylinska, in her book *Minimal Ethics for the Anthropocene*, attempts to show just exactly how dire by citing a text by Stephen Emmott, a computational neuroscientist. In a book entitled *Ten Billion*, Emmott brutally claims that the situation we are in today is "an unprecedented planetary emergency" (as cited in Zylinska, 2014, p. 10). This emergency has come about because "our cleverness, our inventiveness and our activities are now the drivers of every global problem we face." For Emmott, we are the greatest threat to the earth itself, and Zylinska provides his solution to the problem of us: "Emmott's practical solution to this situation is rather blunt: given that any possible technological or behavioral solutions to the current state of events, even if theoretically possible, are unlikely to work, the advice he would give his son would be to 'buy a gun.'" Rather than become bogged down in causality—arguing about precisely why we have come to this point or wondering if Emmott's suggestion that it is humanity's "cleverness" that has been the leading culprit—it seems necessary to note, as Zylinska does, that this "practical solution" is "a powerful story, the goal of which is to shock and awe us into action" while granting as well that "there seems to be something both defeatist and narcissistic about jeremiads of this kind and those that tell them" (p. 10). Is it enough to say that we already avoid the problem of defeatism by, rather simply, refusing Emmott's suggestion with all the strength and knowledge and care that we can muster?

Clearly Zylinska is right to say there is nothing necessary nor inevitable nor even desirable about this "solution." If we cannot ever imagine telling our students or young people that Emmott's solution is the best, what should we replace it with and why? There are better options, options that the Franciscan tradition has offered and articulated well for a very long time: gentleness, tenderness, and humility. Humility, in fact, is also the key antidote in dealing with the problem of narcissism that Zylinska mentions. If our current environmental situation calls forth the twin forces of defeatism and narcissism, what I wish to suggest as responses comes from Pope Francis's increased focus specifically on tenderness, which I hope to show can be brought into conversation with the continental philosophy tradition as it is being heavily utilized by some of the leading ecological thinkers and environmental philosophers currently working today.

Back in 2015, just a few weeks after Stephen Colbert took over the *Late Show* for David Letterman, he interviewed the short story writer and essayist George Saunders, who was promoting the re-release of his short book for children, *The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip* (2000). In the interview, there was a question Colbert asked about writing for



children; Saunders mentioned his two young daughters and how what he felt they needed most to hear and read was what he called “a radical defense of tenderness” (2015 b). Of course, Saunders is not the only one who has called for such a defense—and no doubt this paradoxical language is familiar to close readers of Pope Francis’s work, especially *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), and also the recent remarks of Cardinal Turkson (2015) that ask everyone to “become revolutionaries of tenderness” (p. 14). I would like to excavate, from out of the word “tenderness” itself, a form of ethical engagement with the world (including both human and nonhuman others) that will allow the strength of that very word to work in ways that will provide a valid alternative to Emmott’s. In *Laudato Sí*, Pope Francis feels no qualms claiming that the Anthropocene period is one that still needs us to ask one of those Greek questions from antiquity: “What is the good life and how does one achieve and live it?” Although this question is still in many ways valid for us today, we cannot ask it in exactly the same way Plato and Aristotle did in their time. As the philosopher of science Bruno Latour (1999) has put it:

Are you ready, and at the price of what sacrifice, to live the good life together? That this highest of moral and political questions could have been raised, for so many centuries, by so many bright minds, *for humans only* without the nonhumans that make them up, will soon appear, I have no doubt, as extravagant as when the Founding Fathers denied slaves and women the vote. (p. 297)

It is thus not enough to ask what the good life is—especially not if this question cordons off only the question of the human being alone. We must learn not just to think of the nonhuman other, but also to welcome this nonhuman otherness itself. And the way to do this is through not just the word “tenderness,” but also the way in which this word can help us to calibrate and attune our comportment, as Heidegger would say, to both the human and nonhuman world.

“Tenderness” comes from the Latin *tenerē*, which is the adverbial form of *teneō*, which means “to hold, have, grasp,” “to bind,” “watch, guard, maintain, defend; retain, keep.” The Latin comes, of course, from the Greek, *τείνω* (*teínō*), which meant “I stretch, extend,” “spread,” “exert.” The Greek itself originates from the Proto-Indo-European root *\*ten-*, which meant “to stretch” or “draw.” Silvia Benso, in *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics* (2000), attempts to chart a course along a fine line between Heideggerian phenomenology and the Jewish ethics of Emmanuel Levinas. In that book, she develops an analysis of tenderness itself that she describes as a form of comportment that very humbly welcomes the otherness of the world:

The phenomenological analysis of tenderness as a philosophical category lets emerge a nonviolating, nonsubjectivistic, other-oriented way of responding to the appeal to existence ... coming from the way of being of things. ... tenderness is connected to a tending-to. It is both a practical attending to something, in the sense of taking care of it, and a moment of thought which, in its being attentive, does not grasp or incorporate, but rather caresses by a light touch. Tenderness is thus deeply rooted in at-tention: the respectful (and humble) attitude of a mind (or body) that waits for the other to make the first move. Whereas force, power, and strength impose, and weakness succumbs, tenderness welcomes, in its being respect, a sense of limit, and attention to nuances. (p. xxxvii).

This mode of tenderness as a component for dealing with the Anthropocene can be seen as a central element with a wide range of ecological thinking. The “Deep Ecology” of Arne Naess eschews strictly utilitarian calculations of the planet as just a resource for

human consumption in order to find its ground in tenderness. Numerous strains of the new “Object-Oriented Ontology” (OOO)—which calls for philosophical thinking that avoids an overly-narrow focus solely on the human being—also utilize the phenomenology and rhetoric of welcoming both the human and nonhuman other. It has also had a home in any number of ecopoets as well. The Buddhist poet, Gary Snyder, is a long-standing touchstone:

For those who would see directly into essential nature, the idea of the sacred is a delusion and an obstruction: it diverts us from seeing what is before our eyes: plain thusness. Roots, stems, and branches are all equally scratchy. No hierarchy, no equality. No occult and exoteric, no gifted kids and slow achievers. No wild and tame, no bound or free, no natural or artificial. Each totally its own frail self. Even though connected all which ways; even *because* connected all which ways. (1990, p. 110)

Just one of the recently mentioned OOO group of philosophers, Timothy Morton (2008), has argued on a number of occasions for what he calls “ontological hesitation,” i.e. an attunement towards the world that understands how my own freedom is always premised on the impenetrability of the other. My freedom arises out of the “positive-enabling ground and condition” of the unknowability of the world. Whereas theological traditions will speak of “tenderness,” Morton speaks of this hesitation as itself “the essence of aesthetic contemplation, which forms the basis for an ethics of non-violence....Ontological hesitation is the most profound reason why aesthetic contemplation may be the key to understanding life forms” (p. 84).

Morton suggests that we are in dire need of more hesitation, more aesthetic contemplation—we need more of a willingness not to tame, not to dominate and totalize the other. But perhaps we are moving too quickly here, equating a whole slew of words—hesitation, contemplation, tenderness, etc.—that need to be more properly quarantined. Such a worry is itself neatly undercut through the excerpt from Snyder above which, in its own way, points directly to an understanding of the frailty—the finitude and mortality—of all things as precisely the reason why one must *care* for human and non-human others. Pope Francis (2015) is correct to say that our age is one in which we more and more clearly understand each day “the conviction that everything in the world is connected” (para. 16). For Snyder—and certainly for the Pope as well—this can only be the beginning of engagement, as this interconnectedness calls for an accompanying awareness of the fragility of all of those very same connections. But why, then, a call for “tenderness”? It strikes me that tenderness is what should follow naturally from this “ecological” awareness that everything is connected to everything else. Indeed, ecological thinking is perfectly correct in trying to see and think the world in ways that have to do not only with connections, but with the ways in which everything is stretched—in that Proto-Indo-European sense of *\*ten*—; everything stretched from out of its “own frail self” to all the numerous others.

As those aware of the Franciscan tradition know, all of this will sound ripe for connections not only with said intellectual tradition, but also with St. Francis himself. A specific story from *The Assisi Compilation* comes readily to mind here—a story that I hope to use in order to illustrate the strong resonances it might possess for thinking about what words like hesitation, contemplation, and tenderness might have in common:

Another time, when blessed Francis was sitting near a fire, warming himself, a novice spoke to him about having a psalter. And blessed Francis told him: “After you have a psalter, you will desire and want to have a breviary; after you have a breviary, you will sit in a fancy chair, like a great prelate telling your brother: ‘Bring me the breviary’.” And speaking in this way with great intensity of spirit, he took some ashes in his

hand, put them on his head rubbing them around his head as though he were washing it, saying: “I, a breviary! I, a breviary!” ...The brother was stunned and ashamed....For this reason, [Francis] used to say, “A person is only as learned as his actions show; and a religious is only as good a preacher as his actions show...”(FAED, II:209-210).

There is much to unpack here in order to do full justice to this story—and even a short list of the things that would need discussion would be daunting; one would need to talk of psalters and breviaries, of ash and cinder, of desire, of Francis’s position on the *officium*; one would also need to discuss the rhetoric of personification and anthropomorphism, especially with regards to what one might call how this story stages Francis’s becoming-a-textual-object, which could easily lead one into the required meditations on Francis’s views of the glossing of texts (FAED 2:132); last but not least, we would need to talk about shame as well. Instead of all that, I would like to very humbly read this story—with the hopes that it might teach one how to deal with the problem of the Anthropocene, the time period when humanity becomes, as Freud put it in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1961), a kind of “prosthetic God”—at the center of everything in the cosmos (p. 44). It seems to me that the Anthropocene is a time period in which we all speak this exclamatory language that Francis personifies through his *becoming-an-object*, namely, the breviary, in his “I, a breviary! I, a breviary!” These words—this subjective position as it were—becomes the voice of us all, and it is in this situation that words like hesitation, contemplation, and tenderness become relevant.

Assuming that I can set aside a whole list of literary concerns regarding this story—not least of which is how the story of the breviary itself is placed within the larger story of the brother’s initial desire for a psalter—I want to explain more clearly why I want to read this story while talking about reiterating a call for a revolutionary mode of comporting with the world that fundamentally centers itself around the category of “tenderness.” The first item of notice is, like the great majority of stories about Francis, the brutal brusqueness with which the story itself functions. In a sense that is admittedly different from how ecologists would speak of the “interconnectedness of all things,” this story clearly has Francis demonstrating to his brother how profoundly aware he is of this interconnectedness. If you want a psalter, then soon you will be wanting a breviary—and if you want a breviary, next thing you will do is want to show everyone else how much you want it while you sit in your fancy chair. One thing leads to another—and it can be hard to know where such obsession stops. But stop it must—and this is no doubt one of the ways to read Francis’s dramaturgical use of ash and cinder in this story (i.e. we as well are all just ash and cinder) and how important it is to be mindful of that, especially, Francis suggests, when you get it into your head to start lording your superiority over your brother “like a great prelate.” Francis’s use of cinder and ash is powerful—and yet just as compelling is his inhabiting of the breviary as an object; Francis *becomes-an-object* in such a way that it obviously achieves its intended effect when the brother turns away in shame.

Every detail in this story strikes one as noteworthy. Francis’s brother in this story wants a psalter—hardly an unconscionable or unforgivable desire, we might admit. And yet, we need to be careful, says the Saint. There is no doubt that this story has a rather strange and yet intriguing movement to it: just as the desire for the psalter threatens to balloon or explode out of control—Francis contains that explosion by pulling back down to the actual object under discussion: the breviary. This movement of “bringing back down” is what the tradition knows as humility, bringing things back down to the mud and

earth. Humility is a virtue—and it is more necessary than ever as we enter a period where words like “earth” or even “dirt” or “mud” are all things that may not ground us for much longer—incredibly threatened and under siege as they are today. It is this feeling that the story is trying to “control a potential explosion” that is quite apropos of our moment. Francis behaves in a way that might strike us as excessive—and this is redoubled at the level of the story itself, the tale itself is excessive. Timothy Clark (2012) highlights how one of the recurring themes in our new age of environmentalism and ecological consciousness concerns a particular way we have of talking—especially about climate change. He writes:

One symptom of a now widespread crisis of scale is a derangement of linguistic and intellectual proportion in the way people often talk about the environment, a breakdown of “decorum” in the strict sense. Thus a sentence about the possible collapse of civilization can end, no less solemnly, with the injunction never to fill the kettle more than necessary when making tea. A poster in many workplaces depicts the whole earth as a giant thermostat dial, with the absurd but intelligible caption “You control climate change.” A motorist buying a slightly less destructive make of car is now “saving the planet.” (pp. 150-51)

The same phenomenon is at work here, arguably, between Francis attempting to teach his brother about humility and Clark’s degradation of what he calls the “decorum” of our speech. Clark’s investigation of the rhetoric we use to talk about our relation to and impact on the planet makes very clear how difficult it might actually be to try to teach someone to be humble without this very humility turning directly into its opposite—i.e. either a profound assertion of narcissistic selfishness and privilege (“Look how humble I am—look how you all pale in comparison”) or a kind of self-loathing that thinks filling my tea kettle up is on the same level as “the possible collapse of civilization.” Revolutionary tenderness as a potential solution to this rhetorical and linguistic excess will become clearer after situating its historical genealogy.

Clark’s essay draws a historical link between this “crisis of scale” and some of the “rhetoric associated with the atomic bomb in the 1950s and after” (p. 151). Although Clark does not explicitly mention Heidegger, grasping precisely how bleak things are in the atomic age (or, on a slightly larger scale, in the Anthropocene age) requires understanding Heidegger’s own suggestions for dealing with what Clark calls the “deranged jumps in scale and fantasies of [human] agency” in our rhetoric around climate change. Although Heidegger would not necessarily favor a “lack of humility” as the major culprit in the atomic age, I would like to show how tenderness is a word that might be acceptable to use in bridging the lessons of St. Francis with the power of Heidegger’s thinking.

In 1955, Martin Heidegger gave an address that has come to be known under a couple of different names, either the “Memorial” or *Gelassenheit* (“Releasement”) address. In it, Heidegger notices that the atomic age is one that brings about “a completely new relation of man [*sic*] to the world and his [*sic*] place in it” (1966, p. 50). The atomic age gives us a picture of the world wherein “[t]he world now appears as an object open to the attacks of calculative thought, attacks that nothing is believed able any longer to resist. Nature becomes a gigantic gasoline station, an energy source for modern technology and industry.” For Heidegger, to see the world as little more than an “energy reserve,” a “gigantic gasoline station,” is hardly a world at all, but, as Andrew J. Mitchell (2015) calls it, an “unworld” (p. 63). Seeing the world itself as an object to be exploited—an object that gets its being, in some sense, merely from the fact that we humans cognize it—generates a strange kind of loop. Heidegger’s argument about humanity’s power not only to destroy

the planet, but to turn our very world into an "unworld" would seem to require us to pull the scales back down to a humbler level. It is possible to say that the Cold War was a period when humanity learned to do just this: to be a little humbler and tread more carefully with our power. Another way to read it is to notice, as Mitchell summarizes it, how, after the atomic age, "the very fact that something does indeed exist is testament to the equally brute 'fact' *that we have not destroyed it*. That is to say, the entire world, all that exists, now shows itself as *indebted to us in its very existence....* Whatever now exists does so thanks to the fact *that we have not annihilated it*. It exists as utterly at our disposal...." Indeed, the atomic age shows us how "[w]e only have purely technological conditions left. It is no longer an earth on which human beings live today" (2015, p. 66, 69).

A Franciscan focus on humility—both as it appears in *The Assisi Compilation* stories and *Evangelii Gaudium*—sets us the task of stretching out towards the human and nonhuman other in ways that refuse to produce the same incessant drive for more grasping, more control, more domination. It is hard—perhaps even impossible—to try to be tender with the object that we recognize so unbelievably well when we look at photos like the infamous 1968 "Earthrise" or 1972 "Blue Marble" photographs of the planet. If Morton is correct to suggest "ontological hesitation" as a fundamentally *aesthetic move*, then it behooves one to try such a move out on those photos themselves. For many, those photos were indicative of what Stewart Brand said about them in his *Whole Earth Catalog*, published in 1969 just a year after "Earthrise" was taken, namely that "We are as gods and might as well get good at it" (Gere 2011, p. 46). But one can legitimately hesitate and ask if these quintessentially unforgettable images are not a profound symptom of Heidegger's argument that "[i]t is no longer an earth on which human beings live today." The Earthrise photo can easily lead one to believe that the human being is lord and master of the Earth and the Globe—we even have pictures to prove it—rather than steward or caretaker of anything at all. The utter fragility of the blue marble: is that what we see—or do we not see, as Brand wanted, ourselves as gods that had better get good at it? To look at these photographs and still try to keep in one's head Francis covering himself in ashes and cinder; to keep in one's head that when we are humble and tender we do not balloon outward towards the Earthrise photo—instead, we pull closer to the earth, closer to what we can feel with our hands and hearts, with what we can feel for the human and non-human other. A derangement of scales, to be sure! Can the call to tenderness help us to pull back towards the dirt and the mud of the earth itself? Can a stretching out towards the otherness of the other help forestall the ceaseless ballooning outwards towards higher and higher scales that force us to lose so much singular and unique detail? Tenderness suggests a reaching out that lets the other be—suggesting that ecological thinking may not at all be simply about the interconnectedness of everything, but, as Gary Snyder puts it, an awareness of the fragility of everything—fragile precisely because of its interconnectedness.

To be gentle to the other: perhaps that's just another way of letting go of our narcissistic drive to get a hold of things, to be master and controller of all. Heidegger's *Gelassenheit* address called for humanity to, in the words of Sean McGrath (2014) "surrender to the unfathomable granting of Being (*Gelassenheit*)"—a fundamentally meditative (or contemplative or tender-hearted) attentiveness to the fragility of things that would let go of the drive for control, manipulation, and mastery. "Let beings be ..." is the way many have tried to translate that thoroughly untranslatable word, *Gelassenheit*. It

is hard to *let go*—and it is hard precisely *because* we know how finite and fragile everything is, including both the human and nonhuman other. But let go we must, according to McGrath’s reading of Heidegger, as this is all that might produce “a reversal of the attitude of critique, calculation, and control, which has granted us apparent dominion over the emergence and withdrawal of beings into presence, but at the expense of a living experience of being itself” (224). McGrath goes on to note how numerous scholars have accused Heidegger’s *Gelassenheit* of being misunderstood and thoroughly misappropriated into sounding just like so much other green lovey-dovey hippie-environmentalist rhetoric; however, “*Gelassenheit* was never offered as a *method* of environmental practice; it is, rather, an undermining of techno-scientific-capitalist thought itself, an overturning of its basic assumption, that the human is or ought to be the master of time” (p. 224; see also Spicer, 2017 for another angle on McGrath’s intervention).

In a seminar from 1951 given in Zürich, Heidegger quite famously quipped that “[t]he atomic bomb exploded long ago; namely at the moment that the human stood in insurrection against being and posited being from out of himself and made it the object of his representing” (as cited in Mitchell, 2015, p. 66). McGrath’s essay rightly notes that to ask meditative and contemplative thinking to be a method of some kind to serve our own ends is to misunderstand precisely how such thinking is meant to undermine and destabilize what has given rise to our current ecological and environmental crisis in the first place. Again, as McGrath (2014) notices: “Morton’s mistake is to assume that a contemplative approach to the question concerning nature has been tried and found wanting. On the contrary, it has been found wanting without ever being tried” (p. 66). No call for a “revolution of tenderness” can do so, one imagines, out of some kind of calculation—out of a clear and perfectly rational or rationalizable cost-benefit analysis. Pope Francis’s use of the word “revolution” might itself suggest to us that such cannot become some kind of tool or method with which to calculate—quite similar to how *Gelassenheit* itself is not a kind of “method.”

It seems to me that the numerous environmental philosophers who dismiss such contemplative thinking assume that, in some sense, such a mode has already been done and we have determined it to have been useless (through some kind of calculation) and not at all a viable solution to our looming environmental disaster. The same might equally be said by skeptics of Pope Francis’s own “revolution of tenderness.” But what if it is far more likely, as McGrath’s essay might suggest, that tender-hearted and contemplative thinking has not yet ever been fully tried by all of us? *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) states that “We do not live better when we flee, hide, refuse to share, stop giving and lock ourselves up in own comforts. Such a life is nothing less than slow suicide.” Stewart Brand was all wrong about the “Earthrise” photograph, saying that it showed us we were gods and that we had better get good at it. The photograph seems to pose us a much more difficult question: have we yet been properly human and have we gotten good enough at that yet? Have we actually managed to say, as D. H. Lawrence put it, “Drink and carouse with Bacchus, or eat dry bread with Jesus, but don’t sit down without one of the gods” (as cited in Snyder, 1990, p. 111)? Perhaps it is better to start small, with our being cinder and ash, as Francis enacts, than to think ourselves like a great prelate telling all of our brothers (both human and nonhuman): “Bring me a breviary!”

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## **First Catholic Work College Has Franciscan Focus**

### **Sr. Lorita Gaffney, OSF**

Silver Lake College of the Holy Family in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, is the only Catholic Work College in the United States, and is, therefore, singular in this regard among its colleague Franciscan colleges and universities. At Silver Lake College, the Work College program aligns a Franciscan spirituality with its liberal arts emphasis and career preparation; furthermore, it embraces Catholic social teaching on the value of work.

### **What is a Work College?**

With the rising costs in higher education, most students need to work, in addition to their academic pursuits. For some students “Working in College” means earning money through an outside job to pay for a portion of college expenses. Other students participate in a “Work-Study Program” by earning money within the institution to offset college expenses. Silver Lake College offers a third option: a “Work College Program.” This model, called SLC Works, adopted in the fall of 2016, means that all residential undergraduate students work an average of ten hours a week as a condition of enrollment.

The philosophy of a work college is the three-fold integration of learning, working, and serving. Students learn to critically balance their academic studies, manage work expectations, and serve the community. Work positions are assigned or applied for, and they are limited to 8-15 hours per week. Jobs serve the operational needs of the college and fulfill its overall mission of service integrated with personal growth and professional preparation. Administrative and campus support, such as food service, maintenance, or landscaping positions, are typical entry-level jobs. At the end of the academic year, there is a job fair for students to submit job applications and interview for positions of their choice for the following year. Student supervisors include regular performance reviews, whereby students gain feedback and the opportunity to advance and tailor work positions to meet career goals (About Work Colleges, 2014-2015).

*Work Colleges are federally funded and are recognized for helping students reduce higher education costs through an active commitment to work, learning and service. Every member college has a distinctive approach, but shares common values and guidelines. Silver Lake College will apply for federal recognition in Spring, 2019. At that time, the College will have completed two years of full participation by residential students and will have met the following Work College requirements: “Residential students, including at least one-half of all students who are enrolled on a full-time basis, are to participate in a comprehensive work-learning-service program for at least five hours each week, or at least 80 hours during each period of enrollment” (e-CFR).*

Earnings are directly applied to their tuition, enabling students to gain a valuable four-year degree with reduced student debt. Students’ work activities are purposefully designed to complement their academic program, providing them with practical experience and on-the-job training. This program intentionally integrates work responsibilities, supervisor evaluations, and community service activities into every student’s education. The work experiences are on-campus for the first couple of years and can shift to off-campus internships for upper class students.

Unlike work-study programs where participation is limited to students that are eligible, SLC Works is open to all students. Work-study jobs tend to be low-level positions without the feedback and progression to managerial positions that are so integral to a Work College program. Guidance offered within the curriculum of a Work College includes



formal supervision, evaluation, and helpful feedback to students as they progress to higher level job placements. As students progress into higher skilled positions, they become managers and mentors to lower classmates who are advancing into positions their mentors once held. These opportunities encourage servant leadership values, such as empowering and inspiring others to grow, succeed, and lead. Upon graduation, students receive a work transcript in addition to their academic transcript. (Weiss, 2016). A Work College degree, therefore, represents much more than academic success. When graduates enter a chosen career, they are already equipped with many of the skills that employers desire: proficiency in communication, adaptability, complex problem-solving, leadership skills, as well as personal integrity and dedication (*Silver Lake College Magazine* 2016, p. 4).

### **Five Principles of SLC Works**

The five guiding principles of SLC Works demonstrate the College's mission of holistic education, one that integrates the liberal arts with professional preparation. These principles are consistent with the vision of Silver Lake College of developing students to serve, lead, and transform the world:

**Principle #1: *Respect Work as a Learning Opportunity.*** While on the job, students learn a variety of skills, as the work environment is in itself a learning laboratory, similar to that of the classroom. Additionally, students begin to develop a portfolio of real-world skills and experiences that they carry into the world of work.

**Principle #2: *You Cannot be the Boss on Day One.*** Rather, from day one, the students are on a journey of discovering their leadership skills and the kind of leader they wish to be. Working helps students to manage career expectations and develop a realistic professional development plan.

**Principle #3: *Quality Academics + Professional Preparation = Successful Life.*** Developing the *whole person* is what the Work College philosophy is all about. It means instilling in students the mindset that work needs to be included in their educational environment to be more successful in life. Success means having a decent job, being able to pay back student loans, and being able to live on one's own without relying on mom and dad for support.

**Principle #4: *Give 100% Effort Every Day.*** It is important for students to develop and maintain a passion for the work they are doing both as a Work College student, and in their real-world jobs outside the college. Graduates who are passionate on Day 1 and sustain that level of commitment will move up the ladder more quickly.

**Principle #5: *Embrace Stewardship and Personal Responsibility.*** Having a job helps students address issues of debt and inability to manage resources in their personal lives. It is hard for students to understand financial resources if they leave college without ever working or having to manage their own money (Weiss, 2016).

Achieving the goals set by these five principles may seem impossible to an incoming freshman with no previous work experience. But the time and energy provided by faculty and staff supervisors to mold, guide, and encourage students eventually increase their accountability and professionalism.

### **SLC Works builds on a Franciscan Heritage**

Working and developing the skills and ethics associated with work are fundamental to the Franciscan tradition from its earliest beginnings. St. Francis in his *Early Rule*, Chapter VII, says the following on the manner of serving and working: "Let the brothers who know how to work do so and exercise that trade they have learned... performed

honestly...let all the brothers strive to exert themselves in doing good works....Idleness is an enemy of the soul. Servants of God, therefore, must always apply themselves to prayer or some good work.” [FAED, I:68-69]. In his *Testament* #20, Francis states: “And I worked with my hands, and I still desire to work; and I earnestly desire all brothers to give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how to work learn, not from desire to receive wages but for example and to avoid idleness.” (FAED: I: 125) David Flood in his book *The Daily Labor of the Early Franciscans* (2010) explores a variety of Franciscan sources that illustrate how the early brothers incorporated work-related values into their lives. In particular, they worked for the inclusion of people in great need and for the just distribution of goods provided by God.

Recognizing the spirituality of St. Francis, we note that working also means giving good example through proper behavior. In Chapter XVII of the *Earlier Rule*, Francis exhorts his brothers: “In the love that is God, therefore, I beg all my brothers—those who preach, pray, or work, cleric or lay—to strive to humble themselves in everything, not to boast or delight in themselves or inwardly exalt themselves because of the good words and deeds, for that matter, because of any good that God sometimes says or does or works in and through them...beware of all pride and vainglory...strive for humility and patience, the pure, simple and true peace of the spirit.” (FAED, I: 75-6)

Though invited to roles of leadership, the early friars were advised that it was more important to “serve” and be “subject to all” wherever they labored. (Rule of 1223, Chapter VII, 1-2) The early Franciscans defined work as service; they were servants through whom the Spirit of God worked. The Brothers, as they worked with others, were able to rise up their co-workers, ennobling their efforts so as to experience dignity in their labors (Flood, 2010, 2-3).

In Chapter VII of *The Earlier Rule* (1209-1222) and Chapter VI of *The Later Rule* (1223), St. Francis was quite explicit on the manner of serving and working. He directed the brothers who know how to work to do so honestly and humbly as is fitting for servants of God and followers of holy poverty. For their work, they were to have the tools and instruments necessary for their trades. In payment, they may receive whatever is necessary for their bodily support and that of their brothers. Today, this payment would be of a monetary nature, but not for the early friars (FAED, I:68,103).

Celano, in *The Remembrance of the Desire of the Soul* (Chapter CXX) speaks of how Francis, often critical of idleness, would call those “lukewarm” who did not apply themselves constantly to doing work. Francis always worked with his hands so as not to let the gift of time to be wasted or to be a burden to others. He would often say, “I want all my brothers to work and keep busy, and those who have no skill to learn some” (FAED, II: 350).

Engaging in meaningful labor by First Order Franciscans has continued to be modeled by Franciscan men and women throughout history. Cecily Hallack in her book, *These Made Peace*, presents the lives of several Third Order Franciscan saints of the thirteenth through nineteenth centuries. For example, Blessed Peter of Siena (d. 1289) was a married man with demands on his time and domestic responsibilities. In his humility, he recognized his vocation as a comb-maker, working daily at his bench in his shop. Inspired by the friars who frequently passed by his store, he was moved by their teaching and example. He did not join the Friars Minor, but became a Tertiary, preferring to continue making and selling combs. He set aside only enough earnings to live on, and gave the rest to the poor. (Hallack, 1957, 24). Blessed Lucius Modestini (1174-1241) is the first known

member of the Third Order. Born in Florence into a merchant family similar to that of St. Francis, he later married and with his wife opened a business for curing fish and exchanging money. Riches came quickly as did his desire for glory and fame. Soon the life and teachings of St. Francis and the early friars changed his heart. He did not join the Brotherhood, but instead sold his business, bought a piece of land to cultivate to support his family, and then set himself free to serve the sick and poor in hospitals and on the streets. (Hallack, 1957, 4-5).

Clearly, the Work College program provides Silver Lake College of the Holy Family an opportunity to build on a long Franciscan tradition that values work. When the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity established the forerunner of Silver Lake College, the Sisters all worked to keep the institution running. From the time of its founding in 1935 as a liberal arts college, Silver Lake College (then called Holy Family College) was staffed and operated solely by the Franciscan Sisters, who not only taught the courses, but administered, cooked, cleaned, and maintained the campus.

### **Work Aligns to Catholic Social Teaching**

Engaging in some type of work is an important part of Catholic social teachings, as it emphasizes the dignity of work, the duties and responsibilities that we have to one another and to society, and the idea that we are all created equal in God's eyes. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops phrased it, "Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a continuing participation in God's creation." The Work College model creates a sense of common purpose and forges Christian relationships as members of the college community serve one another (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops).

With the College's launch of SLC Works, the significance of the Work College model to our Franciscan Catholic heritage has become quite evident. The College promotes a culture of collaboration, community, respect, and servant leadership, all of which are core to its mission and vision that center on a holistic education for all students. The program

- Keeps the cost of higher education affordable to all students.
- Assists students connecting classroom learning to real work experiences throughout their education,
- Enhances core liberal arts skills by integrating them into practical experiences,
- Provides opportunities for students to practice student leadership.

As we promote Franciscan higher education in all of our institutions, the value and dignity of work is integral to a holistic educational experience. Be it a Work College or not, all of our students participate in programs such as College Work Study, internships, laboratory assistants, etc. All of these opportunities educate students to value the dignity of work as well as providing valuable service to the community.

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### Meet Our Contributors

**Sister Lorita Gaffney, OSF**, is a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity from Manitowoc, Wisconsin. She is an Associate Professor of Biology at Silver Lake College of the Holy Family where she served as a science faculty for 25 years. Her current role at the College is Vice-President for Mission Integration.

**Sr Mary Elizabeth Imler, OSF**, has been Vice President of Mission Integration and University Ministry at the University of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois for the past nine years. She is a leader in the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities, on staff for the Franciscan Pilgrimage Program, and lectures widely and facilitates in religious institutes in the United States and abroad. Sr. Mary Elizabeth is author of *The Franciscan Solitude Experience: A Pilgrim's Journal* and several articles in "The CORD". Considered a "translator of the translations," her enthusiastic Franciscan style spills out in simple practical applications as well as in deep theological understanding .

**Sr. Mary Beth Ingham CSJ**, is a Professor of Philosophical Theology at the Franciscan School of Theology, Oceanside, California, and is a noted expert on the thought of John Duns Scotus. Using the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins to break open various aspects of Scotus' philosophy and theology, she provides an alternate way of envisioning these topics, comparing and contrasting it with that of St. Thomas Aquinas, which has tended to frame much of Catholic thinking.

**Emilie Lindemann**, Associate Professor of English at Silver Lake College, is the author of a full length poetry collection titled *mother-mailbox* (Misty Publications, 2016) and several chapbooks. Her poems have recently appeared in *Hummingbird Magazine of the Short Poem*, *Solitary Plover*, and *Stoneboat*. Emilie lives on a dairy farm with her husband and their son. Besides writing, her interests include the poetry of Lorine Niedecker, yoga, visiting art museums, and time outdoors.

**Gina Martinot Quinn** holds a Bachelor degree in English Literature and a Masters degree in Education. Currently a high school English teacher, she is pursuing a Masters degree in Theological Studies from the Franciscan School of Theology in Oceanside, California. She has spent her lifetime advocating for those without a voice, which she feels has been her calling. She is married with five children. Her poem, "Her Story is My Story" is a celebratory homage to having been blessed to be a woman.

**Ryan Savitz** is a Professor of Mathematics at Neumann University, in Aston, PA. His research interests range from economic applications of statistics to developing new measures of central tendency to the pedagogy of mathematics. He is the 2017 winner of Neumann University's "Growth in Scholarship" award.

**Sister Nancy Schreck, OSF**, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque, IA, currently serves as the Program Director for Excel in Okolona, MS. She has served her congregation in formation ministry and in elected leadership, including as President from 2008-2014. Additionally, Sister Nancy served in the Presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious from 1994-1997, and as the United States Delegate to the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) from 2008-2011. She holds a M.A. degree from Boston College and a D. Min. from the Pacific School of Theology in Berkeley, CA. Sister Nancy is a frequent presenter both nationally and internationally.

**Kevin Andrew Spicer** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at the University of St. Francis in Joliet, IL. His research interests run a wide gamut from environmental philosophy to Medieval Literature, Shakespeare, and post-Kantian Continental Philosophy.

**Daniel D. Schwert, Ph.D.**, has been teaching at the University of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois, since 2012. He teaches primarily organic chemistry and medicinal chemistry and is interested in anything that will help him become a more effective teacher. While he didn't set out to work at a Franciscan institution, he's found that the Franciscan mission suits him perfectly. A family man and father of two girls helps him understand *haecceitas* and the distinctiveness of every individual. Dan brings this contemplative seeing to his teaching style along with a holy reverence for the wonder of life down to the molecular level.

## Watching caterpillars

*A letter to St. Francis composed in the Reflection Garden  
while my students write nature poems*

When pink shoes  
and pink hydrangeas  
now golden.

Tell me this organ music  
is crashing  
through stained glass windows.

Tell me you're listening  
to the needles of a blue spruce bristling  
though we can name few  
of these flowers and plants.

Tell me  
even if the last whispers  
of daffodils  
are drowned out by  
industrial air conditioning units.

Even if when I reach for roots  
I am left crunching  
tear-drop-shaped leaves  
you'll send a sign  
or a caterpillar.

**EMILIE LINDEMANN**

## Her Story is My Story

1

Her story is my story

The pain, the joy, the longing

The dreams, the desires, the destiny

Grandmothers, aunts, mother, sister

Immigrating to the U.S., enduring wars, suffrage, the Depression, and

*Gloria Steinem*

Ancestry of countries, cultures, and gender

Angelina, Marietta, Anna, Genevieve, Mabel, Joan, Christine

*Hail Mary, full of grace*

2

Her story is my story

The pain, the joy, the longing

The dreams, the desires, the destiny

Childhood friends, cousins, class mates

Playing dolls, exploring nature, creativity and dreams with abandon

Coast to coast, Connecticut and California

Diane, Sue, Terri, Carolee, Janine, Karen, Jeanette

*The Lord is with thee*

3

Her story is my story

The pain, the joy, the longing

The dreams, the desires, the destiny

Stay at home mothers, working mothers

Losing homes to fire, children to cancer and husbands to infidelity and  
drugs

Meeting for play groups, PTA and prayer

Delphine, Lara, Karen, Debbie, Nyna, Doedee, Victoria

*Blessed art thou, amongst women*

4

Her story is my story

The pain, the joy, the longing

The dreams, the desires, the destiny

Workers and volunteers in solidarity  
Planting grass roots, court advocacy and children's Christian ministry  
Action for change, progress and peace  
Debbie, Laura, Maria, Gen, Sharon, "T", Teresa  
*And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus*

5

Her story is my story  
The pain, the joy, the longing  
The dreams, the desires, the destiny  
Generations of women, children and babies  
Responding to distress by securing safety, education, and spiritual  
presence  
Lives restored with shelter, food and courage  
Yesenia, Rose, Kim, Cristina, Barb, Sonya, Ellie  
*Holy Mary, Mother of God*

6

Her story is my story  
The pain, the joy, the longing  
The dreams, the desires, the destiny  
Single, divorced, widowed working mothers  
Building new lives, establishing resources, definition and hope  
Care groups for grief, inspiration and the will of God  
Joan, Dori, Laura, Raquel, Janine, Yvonne, Ruth  
*Pray for us sinners*

7

Her story is my story  
The pain, the joy, the longing  
The dreams, the desires, the destiny  
Daughters and nieces  
Redefining a future, finding freedom in voice, deed and desire  
Established empowerment, bounty and grace  
Giselle, Geneva, Hannah, Caitlyn, Camilla, Brooke, Hali  
*Now, and at the hour of our death*



Workers and volunteers in solidarity  
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Giselle, Geneva, Hannah, Caitlyn, Camilla, Brooke, Hali  
*Now, and at the hour of our death*

8

Her story is my story

I hear the voices of the women who have come before me

The whispers of their spirits summoning Divine grace

Lifting me, cradling me, moving me forward

Through the journey with my sister companions today

I have inherited a presence that sustains me and binds me

To remember, to know, to tell her story as my story

*Amen*

***GINA MARTINOT QUINN***

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