

OUR CHARISM



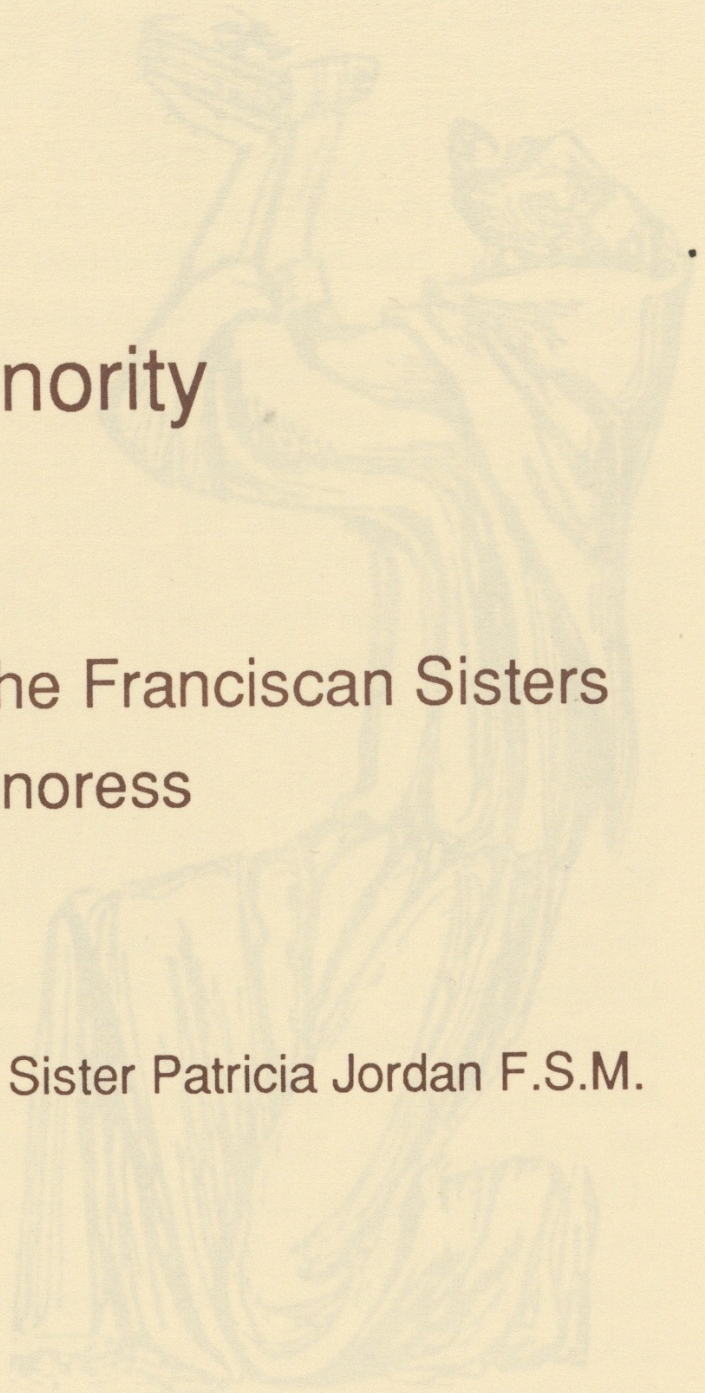
FRANCISCAN SISTERS
MINORESS

Sr Joseph

Minority

The Most High Himself Revealed to me
The Charism of the Franciscan Sisters
live according to the form of the Holy Gospel (St. Francis)
Minoreess

By Sister Patricia Jordan F.S.M.



The Most
High
Himself
Revealed to
me
that I should
live
according to
the form
of the
Holy Gospel
(St. Francis)



INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this little study was born during a Formation Personnel Course in Ireland. An Assignment given by Sister Patricia Sweeney called forth in me the desire to delve more deeply into my Franciscan roots. That was in 1982-1983. At the time I wrote to each Sister in our Congregation asking for prayer and co-operation to enable me to explore our particular charism within the Franciscan Family. I was further encouraged by Father Thaddeus Horgan during a Study Week on our Third Order Regular Rule in Dundalk in 1983. It was Father Thaddeus who assured me we had something very precious as Franciscan Minoresses and it was he who inspired me to explore my subject of Minority through the two channels of Childlikeness and Servanthood. I am deeply grateful to Father Thaddeus.

In 1984 at a Franciscan Seminar given by Sister Kathleen and Sister Anne, I became more and more excited and challenged by the four Fundamental Values of our Franciscan Gospel life, namely conversion, contemplation, poverty and minority. These four Fundamental values are, as you know, the family heritage of the four hundred and thirteen Franciscan Congregations of the Third Order in thirty five different countries. I was particularly drawn to the Gospel value of minority and felt even more determined to complete what I had set out to do in 1982-1983. Earlier this year when Sister Maria, our Mother General, invited us to make a personal contribution towards the centenary celebrations, I decided to complete my study. In presenting it to you, Sisters, I acknowledge my total dependence upon your sharing and co-operation. I wish to thank each Sister who willingly and generously shared with me her life and experience as a Minoress Sister.

'We must always remember that the original charism is a LIVING force, an impulse of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of LIFE, given to enliven

the entire history of our Congregations, and their activities and even the choices made by the members today and tomorrow. Besides being protected, a dynamic charism must also be deepened and constantly developed. Every Congregation must know its charism because we, all together, and each one of us, are its trustees, its responsible bearers, accountable to God and the ecclesial community for it'.

(R. M. Mainka UISG Bulletin)

Sisters, having interpreted and collated all your contributions, I now present to you our corporate experience of our charism of Minority. The first part deals with our very personal and intimate relationship with the Trinity, a living experience of what it means to be a Child of God. The second part deals with our very real relationship with one another and indeed with the whole of creation. The many and varied ways in which Childlikeness and Servanthood express themselves have come from our own lived experience. These will reveal themselves as you read through my study. When St. Bonaventure completed his short and mystical work 'Bringing Forth Christ: Five Feasts of the Child Jesus' he said:

'Should anyone grow but a little in devotion towards our most sweet Jesus, from reading or meditating on this short and modest work, then let him praise and bless the Author, Fount and Origin of all Goodness'.

Sisters, I am not presuming to compare my humble study with the genius of St. Bonaventure, but his wish and prayer find an echo in my own heart as I return to you our shared reflections on our precious heritage and unique gift of the Spirit.

Sister Patricia
Centenary Year 1988

'Let us take a good look at our vocation.

God in His mercy has called us not for our own good alone but for the good of the many.'

(St. Francis)

OUR CHARISM OF MINORITY

'You have been entrusted to look after something precious. Guard it well with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us'

(2 Tim. 1:14)

Our Charism is indeed a precious gift of the Holy Spirit; a family heritage experienced and passed on from generation to generation. In this gifted year of our centenary, we, with our Brother Francis, proclaim:

'All good things belong to the Lord, Most High God, Master of all things, giving thanks through all and in all, for all things come from Him'. (St. Francis)

We are, therefore, especially indebted to God, through St. Francis and our Foundress, Mother Francis, for the charism of Minority. To be a Franciscan Minoress, is a special way of relating to the Lord and a special way of being present within the People of God.

Minority has been described as **CHILDLIKENESS** and **SERVANTHOOD** and our history has embraced and witnessed to both expressions. It is still a living witness in our Congregation today, and, significantly, it is the corporate experience of our Sisters to follow Christ with this particular emphasis on minority as found in the way of Francis. Like Francis, who was faithful to the call of the Church through the

Fourth Lateran Council, we too, like him, have responded to the call of the Church through the Second Vatican Council to strive for a deeper knowledge of our particular charism:

'It redounds to the good of the Church, that Institutes have their own particular character and work. Therefore, let their FOUNDER'S SPIRIT and special aims be faithfully held in honour'. (P. C. 2)

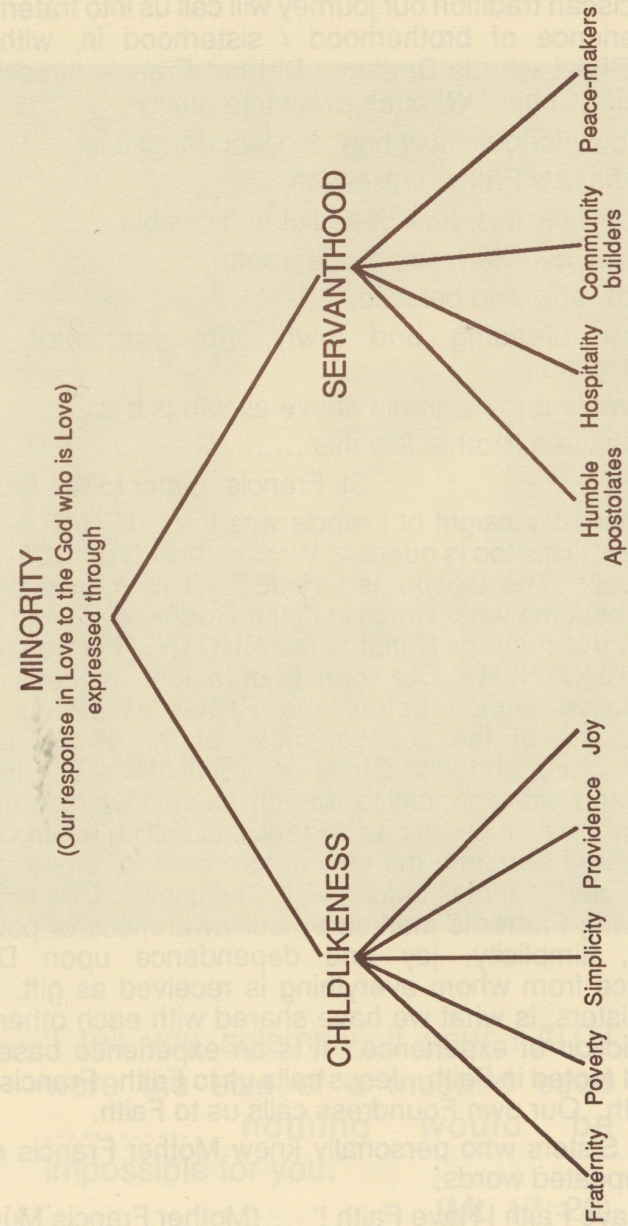
In another Document, Ecclesiæ Sanctæ (16.3) we read:

'Institutes should strive for a genuine knowledge of their original spirit'

What follows, Sisters, is our shared reflections in response to the call of the Church as we gratefully receive our particular gift of the Spirit to be a blazing light for our times as Francis was for his. St. Bonaventure says of Francis:

'The unquenchable fire of love for Jesus had become a blazing light of flame (in him).'

This little presentation, Sisters, is born of our prayerfully reflective and lived experience of our charism. In the light of the Gospel, the teaching of St. Francis and the experience of Mother Francis and ourselves, ours is the call to **Minority**, the call to be like Christ, both Child and Servant. I present to you, first in diagrammatic form, an outline of our findings and then I will explore these findings in a little more detail as they affect who we are and who we are called to become. It is in a sense a journey from our origin to our destiny seen from the perspective of our grace-filled present moment in history.



Rooted in the life of the God who is experienced as Father, Son and Spirit, ours is a life originating in the Trinity and within our Franciscan tradition our journey will call us into fraternity to the experience of brotherhood / sisterhood in, with and through Christ who is Brother. Did not Francis himself call Christ, Friar Christ. What an awesome reality !

'How glorious, how holy and wonderful it is to have a Father in Heaven.
How holy it is, how beautiful and lovable to have in Heaven a Bridegroom.
How holy and beloved,
how pleasing and lowly, how peaceful, delightful,
lovable and desirable above all things it is to have a Brother like this

(St. Francis: Letter to the Faithful)

The charismatic insight of Francis was the LITERAL living of the Gospel. This too is our call. What is this LITERAL living of the Gospel? The Gospel is CHRIST. This means we are called to become what Christ is in the Godhead. Christ is the CHILD of the Father. Christ is our BROTHER — really and truly our BROTHER ! Our charism of Minority places us in a contemplative stance before the Father as Child. Our understanding of the consequences of this reality is our stance in Christ and with Christ as SERVANT. The two go hand in hand within our call to Minority as our love response to the God of love. It seems as if Francis is calling us, in Christ, into the very heart, into the very nature of God Himself. Our inner life, our life that is hidden with Christ in God, as children of the loving Father is marked by our awareness of poverty, fraternity, simplicity, joy and dependence upon Divine Providence from whom everything is received as gift. This reality, Sisters, is what we have shared with each other with the conviction of experience. It is an experience based on Faith and rooted in Faith. Jesus calls us to Faith. Francis calls us to Faith. Our own Foundress calls us to Faith.

Our own Sisters who personally knew Mother Francis recall her oft-repeated words;

'Have Faith ! Have Faith !' (Mother Francis Murphy)

JESUS CALLS US TO FAITH



'I tell you solemnly, if your FAITH were the size of a mustard seed nothing would be impossible for you.'

(Mt. 17: 20)

FRANCIS CALLS US TO FAITH



“PERSEVERE IN THE TRUE FAITH”

(St. Francis)

OUR FOUNDESS CALLS US TO
FAITH



“HAVE FAITH! HAVE FAITH!”

(Mother Francis Murphy)

Faith is the foundation for our evangelical Franciscan life. Faith in our call to become Child as Jesus is; faith in who Jesus is for us personally. In faith, St. Francis experienced Jesus as the Father's GOOD GIFT. Jesus is the love of the Father made flesh and given for us, so that we can become what He is — the Father's child.

“Through FAITH you are all sons of God in union with Christ; baptised into Him, you have put on Christ”.

(Rom. 8: ¹⁶26)

Christ, the Goodness of God; Christ, love made flesh; Christ, brother to us, now calls us to realise our identity through our God-given charism of Minority which in turn calls us to be both Child and Servant. Our Constitutions reflect this call in saying:

“Gifted by the Holy Spirit through St. Francis and our Foundress, Mother Francis, we are trustees of our Congregational charism. We praise and thank God for the precious gift of Minority which enables us to live as Minoresses, ‘little ones’. In joyful, childlike trust and humility we embrace a life of poverty and simplicity, entering into the self-emptying of Christ, Who took on the form of a Servant”.

(Constitutions Ch. 1)

Ours is not a call simply to COPY Jesus, but ours is a call to bring to our life-in-relationship the love of God. Again, our Constitutions capture this reality in saying:

“Led by the Lord, we incarnate our Minority in the spirit of the Beatitudes Because Minority places us in communion with God and all creatures, and unites us particularly with our Brothers and Sisters, we live in the joy of the Lord”.

(Constitutions Ch. 1)

Our charism, the call to childlikeness and servanthood, is an unchanging reality — a gift to be embraced and lived. Social, moral and religious circumstances may change but the love of God who is Father, Son and Spirit is an unchanging and unfailing reality for all times and circumstances. We are called to become that love for our brothers and sisters in humble service, like our Brother Christ, who came not to be served but to serve.

Mother Francis and so many of our Sisters whom God has already called Home, and those of us still on the journey, expressed and continue to express utter faith in our surrender in childlike simplicity and trust to Divine Providenceto that God who is

“ ... the Fullness of Good,
all good, every good, the true and supreme
good
Who alone is Good ...”

(St. Francis)

In the Gospel we read:

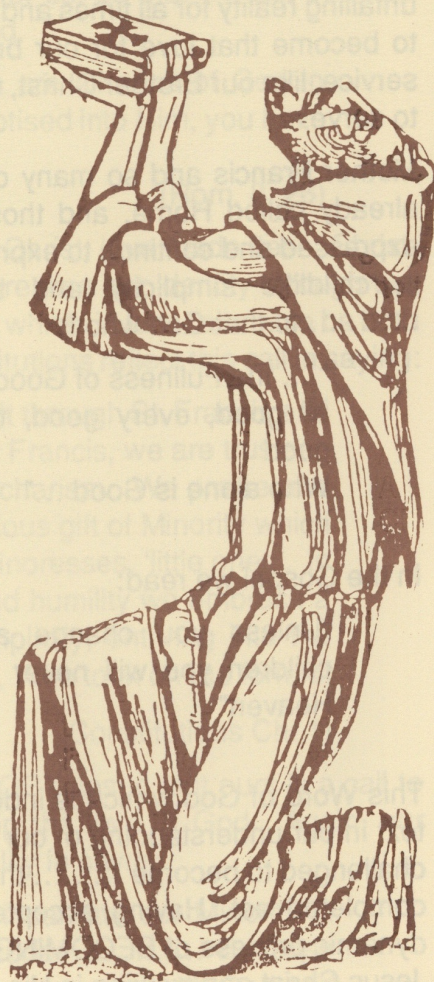
“Unless you change and become as little children you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven”

(Mt. 18.3)

This Word of God, which is indeed alive and active, is a key text in our understanding of our charism. We are invited and challenged to become the process is not a once-for-all completed act. Having accepted the invitation we enter a dynamic process of BECOMING putting on the Lord Jesus Christ and walking in His footprints.

PUTTING ON CHRIST

MINORITY
OUR GOSPEL
CALL TO PUT
ON CHRIST
CHILD OF THE
FATHER AND
SERVANT OF
ALL.



It is a process whereby we become smaller — little children.
Are we not here touching upon the very nature of God Himself
Who

'...Did not cling to His equality with God
but emptied Himself
to assume the condition of a slave,
and became as men are.....'

(Phil. 2: 6-7)

Whatever is meant by God and the nature of God is contained
in powerlessness, in littleness, in minority. We are invited to
share in this littleness, this humbleness in the experience of
what it means to be child and what it means to be servant.
Like Christ, it will involve the helplessness and dependence of
the Babe; it will involve the powerlessness of the Cross and
the humility of the bread broken as Eucharist — thanksgiving
for the world. The Crib, the Cross and the Eucharist are
interwoven into our spirituality, especially as expressed in
Minority.



Crib. 14th century fresco at Greccio where Francis re-enacted the first Christmas.

Cross. Entrance to the cave at Pontecolombo where Francis wrote the Rule.

Eucharist. Altar in the chapel of San Damiano where Francis heard God's call to rebuild his house.

**Hold back nothing of yourselves
for yourselves
so that
He Who gives Himself totally to you
may receive you totally.**

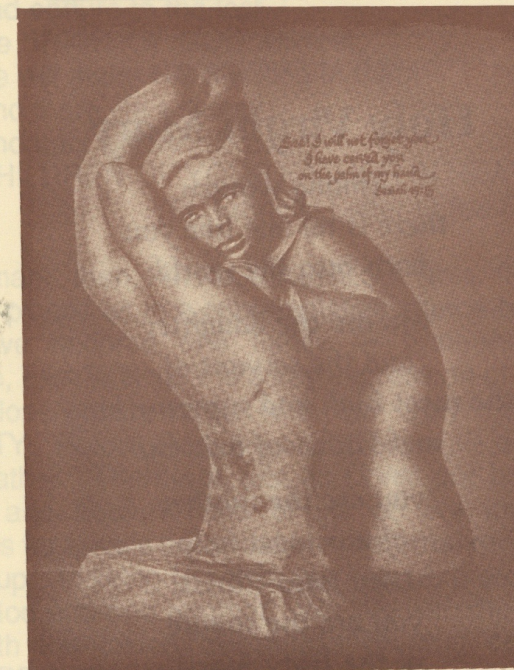
LETTER TO THE ENTIRE ORDER, 29

In our littleness is the awareness of just how special we are to God:

'It was not that you were the largest of the nations that the Lord set His heart on you, for you were really the smallest of all nations. It was because He loved you ...'

(Deut. 7.7)

According to human wisdom, we as a Congregation, should have dwindled out of existence years ago through poverty in fact and poverty in number. Yet, to the humble and poor God-made-man, we have been cherished and held in the palm of His Hand like the Remnant of Israel.



In our littleness, we like Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord, praise and thank God for looking upon us, his lowly handmaids.



Cimabue's fresco of Our Lady of Angels and St. Francis
Basilica of St. Francis (Lower Church), Assisi.

Holy Virgin Mary

Among women
there is no one like you
born into the world:
you are the daughter
and the servant of
the most high and supreme king
and Father of heaven,
you are the mother
of our most holy
Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the spouse
of the Holy Spirit.

St. Francis of Assisi — Antiphon from
his "Office of the Passion"

Like Mary, we are happy to accept our Divine call to live the radical and paradoxical message of the Gospel:

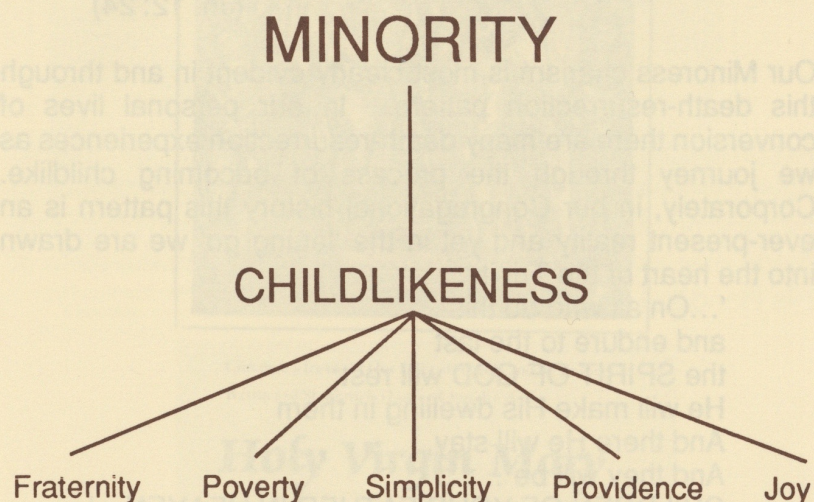
'Unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest'.
(Jn. 12: 24)

Our Minoress charism is most clearly evident in and through this death-resurrection pattern. In our personal lives of conversion there are many death-resurrection experiences as we journey through the process of becoming childlike. Corporately, in our Congregational history this pattern is an ever-present reality and yet in the 'letting go' we are drawn into the heart of the Trinity:

'...On all who do this
and endure to the last
the SPIRIT OF GOD will rest;
He will make His dwelling in them
And there He will stay,
And they will be
CHILDREN OF YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN...'
(St. Francis: Letter to the Faithful)

In summary then, CHILDLIKENESS, this first aspect of Minority, places us in a contemplative stance before God. In Christ, we become one family — brothers and sisters, therefore, FRATERNITY is a key expression of our Trinitarian life. Closely connected with our truly fraternal life is POVERTY. Before God, we are all equal — all children of a loving Father. Therefore, just as Christ our brother emptied Himself and became one of us, so we too, dispossess ourselves for Love's sake that true fraternal relationships may be built up. In living like this, our lives express SIMPLICITY before God and one another. We live with the simplicity of a child with the loving awareness of total dependence on DIVINE PROVIDENCE from Whom everyone and everything is Gift. This, Sisters, is our way of life within the Trinity which has caused us deep JOY in the lived experience of being Franciscan Minoress Sisters.

Diagram of one of the two aspects of our Charism of Minority.



This rich, precious inner life which we share has its consequences for us, as it did for Jesus, as it did for Francis, as it did for Mother Francis. This special way of relating to God also embodies a special way of relating to one another and all God's people — to the whole of creation. As we read in our Constitutions:

'Minority places us in communion with God and all creatures, and unites us particularly with our brothers and sistersin the joy of the Lord.'

(Constitutions Ch. 1)

The second aspect or expression of our Franciscan Minoress Charism is SERVANTHOOD. Jesus came as Servant and created fraternity — this is our special call, our special ministry, hence our grace filled recognition and choice of 'humble apostolates'. In our life of service, this actually rated top in our findings on our Congregational charism. It seems to me that this is a direct and natural consequence of our experience of who we are in the Trinity. To be within the Trinity what Christ is, will necessarily express itself in humble service, and humble service will be rooted in the experience of kenosis, that death-resurrection pattern which is so characteristic of our little Congregation.

Born in a time of crisis, emerging from a people in crisis — the poor, the little ones of this world — our charism continues to breathe life into poverty-stricken situations. Our present response in Africa and Ethiopia and in the inner city of London illustrates this reality. Poverty, be it spiritual or material, has always been the place of encounter for us as Franciscan Minoresses. Whether at home or abroad, in whatever Parish we find ourselves, we have been privileged to be with the people and of the people. Like our brother Christ, and after the example of Francis, we place ourselves before the Father, like our Blessed Lady, joyful, lowly, humble and totally open to receiving and revealing the Goodness of God.

St. Francis states in his Testament:

'No one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel.'

Francis wanted to be a Friar Minor because he experienced Jesus as a brother who did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied Himself to assume the condition of a servant (Phil. 2.) Francis must have dearly loved and deeply taken to heart another Scripture passage which presents Jesus as a servant:

'If I then, the Lord and Master
have washed your feet,
you should wash each other's feet'

(John 13: 14-15)

The essence of this text reappears in various ways in the writings of St. Francis. This aspect of servanthood, therefore, is rooted in Scripture, in Christ Himself and in St. Francis. In his Testament, Francis refers to himself as:

'Your poor little servant' (Testament 14)

Again in his first Letter to the Custodians, Francis presents himself as:

'Your servant and little one in the Lord God'

In his second letter to the Custodians he presents himself as:

'BROTHER Francis, the LEAST of the
SERVANTS of God'

That quotation from the Second Letter to the Custodians seems to capture in one sentence the essence of our minority charism. It brings together the two important aspects of our experience as Minoresses, namely, the relationship of brother/sister which is the consequence of being a child in the Trinity and the experience of servanthood taken to its most radical in being the LEAST. Jesus identified Himself with the LEAST.

'I tell you solemnly,
in so far as you did this to one of the LEAST
of these brothers of mine,
you did it to Me'

(Matthew 25:40)

Sisters, in our shared response and lived experience of our charism, we seem to have grasped the truth that being the least and serving the least form one reality. This surely is our link between minority and servanthood, expressed in our humble apostolates. Earlier I said that to be a Franciscan Minoress, is a special way of relating to the Lord and a special way of being present within the People of God. It is obvious that in and through our humble apostolates we are present as 'minores', as servants. It is from within our stance as servants that we have exciting, challenging, and, dare I say it, infinite possibilities for creating community. To be in the stance of a servant is a non-threatening position. This was the position of Christ, this was the position of St. Francis, this was the position of Mother Francis who identified with the poor in London in those dark days of the 1800's. In introducing the Spirit and Purpose of our Congregation, our Constitutions embody this attitude in saying:

'Led by the Lord, we incarnate our minority in the spirit of the Beatitudes by offering our service to all, but especially the poor and those in need.'

(Constitutions Ch. 1)

Today in 1988, the year of our Centenary, one of our Sisters who is serving the poorest of the poor in famine stricken Ethiopia, expressed her experience of ministry or service which is rooted in our Minoress charism:

'Christ, the suffering Servant, and after Him,

Mary and Francis they were always at ease with the poor. They moved easily within their world. So, like Christ, like Mary, like Francis, we try to believe where faith is dark; where hope is painful; where love is crucified. The poorest of the poor here in Ethiopia they are such a lovely courteous people, I feel it a great privilege to be among them

(Sister Annunciata)

The whole emphasis on being servant embodies real situations where we express our love and fraternity. The text already quoted from St. John (13: 14-15) calls us to actual expressions of love, welcome, help and service. In other words, our Congregation in being faithful to our gift and charism of minority, in turn witnesses to the hospitality which is one of the hallmarks of our Congregation. This hospitality is an attitude of the heart in which we seek not only to open our doors but also our hearts to welcome everyone as brother and sister. It is a recognition of the bond of love which already unites us in Christ within our Trinitarian life in relationship. This attitude then is our corporate experience, Sisters, both within our communities and in our places of work where we ourselves help to create the bond of fraternity. In our Constitutions we read in the Chapter on the Apostolate:

‘As Minoresses, God’s little ones, we work in simplicity and humility, to build up God’s Kingdom by extending the love, peace and joy of Christ to all whom we meet; but especially will we love the poor, the sick, the neglected and the rejected, keeping in mind Our Lord’s own words: ‘As long as you did it for one of these, the least of my brothers, you did it for Me’.

(Constitutions Ch. V)

Our experience seems to echo St Francis’ own feelings about work which he referred to as a grace. Daily in our communities we pray:

‘It is in giving that we receive ...’

Our experience in service verifies this reality, a Gospel truth that all is indeed Gift. Our mission as ‘Minores’, as little ones, poor ones, is to reveal to our brothers and sisters the goodness of God and the beauty of brotherhood and sisterhood with one another and with all creation. In and through our work we create fraternal relationships. We can do this because of ‘the spirit of prayer and holy devotion’ which inspires and permeates our work. It is, therefore, our Trinitarian relationship which enables us to devote ourselves to one another and to our world in a love that unites, restores and transforms. In and through our work we become community-builders. As our Rule so clearly states — it is not really what we do but how we do it that matters:

‘The brothers and sisters should be meek, peaceful and unassuming, gentle and humble, speaking courteously to everyone, as is right. Wherever they are and wherever they go in the world, they are not to quarrel, get into arguments or condemn others. Rather they should show that they are joyful in the Lord, good-humoured and gracious, as is right. When they greet others they should say: The Lord give you peace.’

(T. O. R. Ch. 5)

This brings us to our final consideration of the fact that we see ourselves as people who are called to be peacemakers; people who are called to announce God’s peace to all. In and through our minority we create an atmosphere where peace can flourish.



Entrance to the Church of San Damiano. Assisi

*As they announce **peace** with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts. No one should be roused to wrath or insult on their account, rather all should be moved to peace, goodwill and mercy because of their gentleness.*

THIRD ORDER REGULAR RULE 9:30

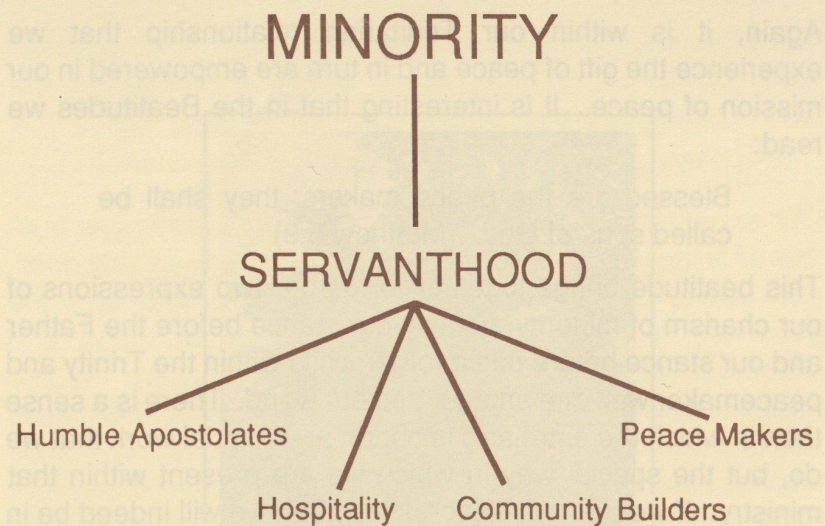
Again, it is within our Trinitarian relationship that we experience the gift of peace and in turn are empowered in our mission of peace. It is interesting that in the Beatitudes we read:

Blessed are the peace makers: they shall be called sons of God. (Matthew 5:9)

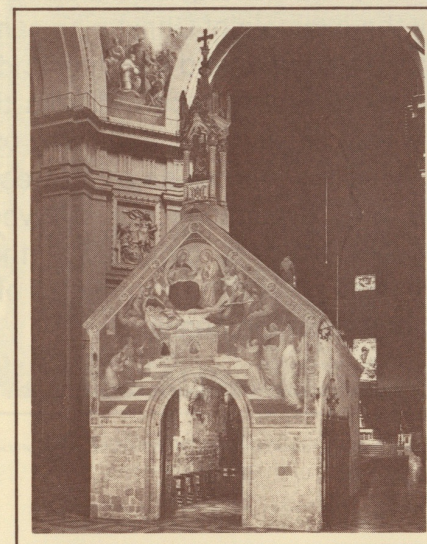
This beatitude brings together for us our two expressions of our charism of minority, namely our stance before the Father and our stance before one another: child within the Trinity and peacemaker with one another and our world. There is a sense then in which the emphasis is not on any special work that we do, but the special way in which we are present within that ministry. If we are truly Minoresses, then we will indeed be in a position to create a relationship of brotherhood/sisterhood. This in turn leads to peace because we are then in a right relationship before God who is the one Father of us all, and we are in a right relationship with all people who are in reality our brothers and sisters.

In summary then, this second aspect of our charism of Minority places us in relationship with all people as servants in our HUMBLE APOSTOLATES. In this spirit of oneness with all with whom we live and work, ours is an attitude of welcome and openness which creates a spirit of Franciscan HOSPITALITY. The natural consequence of such a stance is the realisation and joyful recognition that we are all brothers and sisters, having one Father in Heaven. With such a gracious awareness we are a sign to the world of the fraternity of Christ and thus we are by our very presence COMMUNITY BUILDERS. This is rooted in our Trinitarian relationship and empowers us in the Holy Spirit of God to be instruments of PEACE in our world. Each day of our lives, in all our communities we pray:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.



To live like this is indeed to 'Put on Christ'. The whole history of our little Congregation has been compiled in a centennial publication under the title: 'Growing Unto Christ' with emphasis on 'Putting on Christ'. This additional little study has tried to look in depth at the particular gift or charism which has enabled us to 'Put on Christ' in our unique way within the rich diversity found within the Franciscan family. The image that comes to mind when I think of our place within the Franciscan Family is that of the Portiuncula or 'Little Portion' as the word means when translated. Somehow, we, as Franciscan Minoresses, are like the 'Little Portion' within the great 'Basilica' of the Franciscan Family. We are told by Thomas of Celano 'This Holy Man [Francis] loved this place [the Portiuncula] above all others'. Could it be that this precious place — the portiuncula in our hearts — is loved by Francis and treasured by us because it is the meeting place with the God of Love who chose littleness, minority, as the place of intimacy and identification with each one of us. Our response can only be one of love, praise and thanksgiving.



Portiuncula, Assisi. Birthplace of the Franciscan Order

*All-powerful, most holy,
most high, and supreme God:
**all good,
supreme good,
totally good**
You Who alone are good,
may we give You
all praise, all glory,
all thanks, all honour:
all blessing,
and all good things.
So be it. So be it. Amen.*

St. Francis: "Praises To Be Said at All the Hours"

Our very identification as Minoresses comes from the word Minor, an old Latin word which means 'smaller than'. Our experience tells us, Sisters, that we are DOING the Gospel by following closely the example of Christ who came to show us how to be a child of the Father and a brother and servant to all. This is the revelation Francis received from the Most High about his Gospel way of life. This is the way our Foundress, Mother Francis, lived out her call as a Minoress. Today, we continue to live and experience our beloved charism of Minority in a world that is hungry for the Franciscan experience of Evangelical life, the experience of fraternal love gifted in service and radiating peace.



Scene of the ANNUNCIATION, Portiuncula Chapel, Assisi

Oh, how happy and blessed are these
men and women when they do these things
and persevere in doing them, since the
Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them
and He will make His home and dwelling
among them. They are children of the
heavenly Father whose works they do,
and they are spouses, brothers, and
mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Francis' FIRST VERSION OF THE
LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL 5-7.

In conclusion I would like to bring together our two expressions of Minority and see this presentation as a whole. Sisters, the basis of our life in relationship is our experience of God who is Father, Son and Spirit. Consequent upon this experience is our gifted awareness of a special charism of Minority which we express as childlikeness and servanthood — our chosen way to follow Christ. This life in relationship with the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit, issues in brotherhood/sisterhood, poverty, simplicity, providence, joy — all as gifts to us from the Father in Christ. All of this makes sense only in Faith.

Minority is in a way a summary of Christ's own life as we find it described in Phil. 2. and it is Christ we follow. It is through Minority that we become ever more perfectly children of the Father and sister/brother to all creatures, issuing in joy. Servanthood in the sense of our humble apostolates is typical of Christ's life (e.g. the washing of the feet which was the great symbol of this for St. Francis). Being the least and serving the least equal the same reality. Our relationship with the Blessed Trinity motivates and gives depth to our work, making our work a 'grace'. The same applies to peace and peace making as we live the life of the Beatitudes and enter the process of becoming 'sons/daughters of God'.

Minority then, as childlikeness and servanthood, summarises and unites together 'the two great commandments of the Lord' — love of God as His Child in Christ and love of neighbour as servant taking the lowest place, as Christ did. Minority thus understood is 'the marrow of the Gospel', our way of life and our family inheritance.

'May the Lord
Bless you and keep you;
May He show His face to
you and be merciful to you.
May he turn His
countenance to you
and give you peace.
May the Lord bless you.'

(Blessing of St. Francis).

In conclusion I would like to bring together our two expressions of Minority and see this presentation as a whole. Sisters, the basis of our life in relationship is our experience of God who is Father, Son and Spirit. Consequent upon this experience is our gifted awareness of a special charism of Minority which we express as childlikeness and servanthood — our chosen way to follow Christ. This life in relationship with the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit, issues in brotherhood/sisterhood, poverty, simplicity, providence, joy — all as gifts to us from the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit. This makes sense only in Faith.

Minority is in a way a way of life which we find it described in the Gospels. It is through the Father and Son, in joy, Servanthood is typical of Christ's life. The washing of the feet which was the great symbol of the least and serving the least actual the same thing. Our relationship with the Blessed Trinity motivates and gives depth to our work, making our work a service to peace and peace making as we live the life of the Beatitudes and enter the process of becoming 'sons/daughters of God'.

Minority then, as childlikeness and servanthood, summarises and unites together 'the two great commandments of the Lord' — love of God as His Child in Christ and love of neighbour as servant taking the lowest place, as Christ did. Minority thus understood is 'the marrow of the Gospel', our way of life and our family inheritance.

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