The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul by Thomas of Celano

(1245-1247)

The prologue of Thomas of Celano's *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* presents two almost independent approaches. "Our memory, like that of ignorant people, is blunted by the passage of time," the first paragraph laments, "and cannot attain the heights of his profound words. . ." It was clearly Thomas's task to write down those events and insights of the first followers of Francis that were not contained in his *Life*. But we must wonder at his profuse modesty that belies his literary expertise. The Prologue's second paragraph, however, offers another perspective maintaining that the *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* was written to state "the good, pleasing, and perfect will of our most holy father [Francis]…both for himself and his followers." Thus the work contains more than new hagiographical material; it also attempts a synthetic presentation of the spiritual theology of the saint. If Thomas's *Life* was built upon the strong foundation of an ecclesial theology of reform, this second portrait relied on the same basic principles of reform to strengthen the life of the Order of Lesser Brothers as the fraternity faced the developmental crises of its first decades.

It is clear that Thomas used those memoirs and documents sent to the Minister General, Crescentius d'Iesi, upon the request of the General Chapter of 1244, and wove them into his own tapestry.

The Second Book

HERE BEGINS THE SECOND BOOK REGARDING JUST TWO YEARS OF THE LIFE AND THE HAPPY DEATH OF OUR BLESSED FATHER FRANCIS

Chapter I

[THE CHARACTER OF THIS BOOK, THE TIME WHEN SAINT FRANCIS BLESSEDLY DIED, AND HIS ACHIEVEMENTS]a

88 In the previous book, which by the Savior's grace we have brought to a fitting conclusion, we have written down the story of the life and deeds of our blessed father Francis up to the eighteenth year of his conversion. In this book, we shall add a brief account of his remaining deeds, beginning with the next to last year of his life, as we have been able to determine them. For now we intend to note only those things that seem more important so that those who wish to say more about them may always find something to add.

For in the one thousandth, two hundredth, and twenty-sixth year
of the Incarnation of the Lord,

in the fourteenth year of the indiction,b
on the fourth day before the Nones of October,c
a Sunday, our most blessed father Francis departed from the prison of the flesh
and soared to the dwellings of the heavenly spirits. This happened in the city of
Assisi where he was born
at Saint Mary of the Portiuncula
where he first planted the Order of Lesser Brothers,

twenty years after he embraced Christ completely
following the life and *footsteps* of the Apostles,
bringing to perfect completion what he had begun. 1 Pt 2:21
In that city,
with hymns and praises,
his holy and sacred body was laid to rest
and honorably enclosed.
There it glitters
with many miracles
to the glory of the Almighty.
Amen.

89 From the first flower of his youth, he was given little or no instruction *in the way of God* or knowledge of Him. Bar 3:13 He remained for quite some time in natural simplicity and the heat of vices. By the *change* brought about in him by the power of *the right hand of the Most High he was justified from sin.* And by the grace and *power of the Most High* he was filled with divine *wisdom* beyond all others of his time. Rom 6:7; Lk 1:35 Dt 34: 9 As the teachings of the gospel had declined seriously in practice—not just in some cases but in general everywhere—*this man was sent* from God so that everywhere, throughout the whole world, after the example of the Apostles, *he might bear witness to the truth.Jn 1:6:7* And so it was, *with the Christ leading,* that his teaching showed clearly that all *the wisdom of the world* was *foolish,* and quickly, he turned all toward the true *wisdom of God through the foolishness of his preaching.Dn 9:25 1 Cor 1: 21*

In these last times,1 Pt 1:5
a new Evangelist,
like one of the rivers of Paradise,Gn 2:10
has poured out
the streams of the gospel
in a holy flood over the whole world.Is 44:3 a
He preached the way of the Son of God
and the teaching of truth in his deeds.Est 13:4
In him and through him

an unexpected joy and a holy newness
came into the world.

A shoot of the ancient religion
suddenly renewed the old and decrepit.
A new spirit was placed in the hearts of the elect
and a holy anointing *has been poured out in* their *midst.*Ez 11:19; 36:26
This holy *servant of Christ,*Gal 1:1:0
like one of the *lights of heaven,*Gn 1:14
shone from above with a new rite and new signs.
The ancient miracles have been renewed through him.
In the desert of this world a
fruitful vine has been planted
in a new Order but in an ancient way,
bearing *flowers, sweet*
with the *fragrance* of holy virtuesSir 24:23; Ps 52:10
and *stretching out* everywhere *branches* of holy religion.Ez 17:6,7

90 Although *like us, subject to suffering,* he was not satisfied with observing the ordinary precepts. Jas 5:17 Rather, overflowing with burning charity, he set out on the way of full perfection, reached out for the peak of perfect holiness, and *saw the goal of all perfection.*Ps 119:96 That is why every order, sex, and age finds in him a clear pattern of the teaching of salvation and an outstanding example of holy deeds. If people intend to put *their hand to difficult things,* and strive *to seek the higher gifts* of a more excellent way, let them look into the mirror of his life, and learn all perfection.a Prv 31:19; 1 Cor 12:31 There are some who tend to lower, more level paths, fearing to walk the steep route and climb to the summit of the mountain: they too shall find in him suitable reminders. Finally, those who *seek signs* and miracles, let them ask his holiness, and they will receive what they request.Est 13:4

Yes, his glorious life reveals in even brighter light
the perfection of earlier saints;
the passion of Jesus Christ proves this,
and His cross shows it clearly.
For the venerable father was in fact marked in five parts of his body
with the marks of the passion and the cross,

as if he had hung on the cross with the Son of God.
This is a great sacrament,
and evidence of the grandeur of a special love.
But there is hidden here some secret;
here is concealed some awesome mystery,
one we believe is known to God alone,
though it was partly revealed by the Saint to one person.
For this reason it is useless to try to praise him,
whose praise is from the One Who is
the praise of all, their origin and greatest honor,

the giver of the gifts of light.
Now *blessing God, holy, glorious,* and true,
let us return to our story.Lk 24:53; Is 58:13

Chapter II

THE HIGHEST DESIRE OF BLESSED FRANCIS AND HOW IN OPENING THE BOOK HE UNDERSTOOD THE LORD'S WILL FOR HIM

91 At one time the blessed and venerable father Francis, with worldly crowds gathering eagerly every day to hear and see him, sought out a place of rest and secret solitude. He desired to free himself for God and *shake off any dust that clung to him*Lk 10:11 from the time spent with the crowds.a It was his custom to divide the time given him to merit grace and, as seemed best, to spend some of it to benefit his neighbors and use the rest in the blessed solitude of contemplation. *He took with him* only a few companions—who knew his holy way of living better than others—so that they could shield him *from the interruption and disturbance of people,* respecting and protecting his silence in every way.Lk 9:28; Mk 14:33 Ps 91:6; 30:21

After he had been there for some time, through unceasing prayer and frequent contemplation, he reached intimacy with God in an indescribable way. He longed to know what in him and about him was or could be most acceptable to the *Eternal King.Ps 29:10* He sought this diligently and devoutly longed to know in what manner, in what way, and with what desire he would be able to cling more perfectly to the *Lord God,* according to His *counsel* and the *good pleasure* of His will.Ps 73:28 Sir 40:25 This was always his highest philosophy; this was the highest *desire* that always *burned* in him as long as he lived.Nm 11:4 He asked the simple and the wise, the perfect and the imperfect, how he could reach the *way of truth* and arrive at his great goal.Ps 119:30

92 Since he was the most perfect among the perfect, he refused to think he was perfect and thought himself wholly imperfect. He could *taste and see* how pleasing, *sweet and good* the God of Israel is to those who are of sincere heart and who *seek Him* in true purity and *in* pure *simplicity.*Ps 34:9 Ps 73:1 Wis 1:1

He felt pouring down on him from above a sweetness and delight rarely given to even a few, and it made him lose himself completely. He was filled with such joy that he wished by any means to pass over entirely to that place where, in passing out of himself, he had already partially gone. This man, having *the spirit of God,* was ready to endure any suffering of mind and bear any affliction of the body,1 Cor 7:40 if at last he *would be given the choice* that the *will of the heavenly Father* might be *fulfilled* mercifully in him.Jos 24:15 Mt 6:14 So one day he approached the sacred altar which had been built in the hermitage where he was staying and, taking up the volume where the holy Gospels were written, he placed it reverently upon the altar.

Then he prostrated himself with his heart as much as his body *in prayer to God,* asking in humble prayer that *God in His kindness*Lk 6:12; Jl 2:13 *—the Father of mercies*

*and the God of all consolation*2 Cor 1:3 —be pleased to show him His will. He prayed earnestly that at the first opening of the book he would be shown what was best for him to do, so that he could bring to complete fulfillment what he had earlier simply and devotedly begun. In this he was led by the spirit of the saints and holy ones, as we read they did something similar with sincere devotion in their desire for holiness.a

93 Rising from prayer in a spirit of humility and with a contrite heart, he prepared himself with the sign of the holy cross.Lk 22:45; Dn 3:39 He took the book from the altar, and *opened it with reverence* and fear. *When he opened the book,* the first passage that met his eye was the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ that tells of the suffering he was to endure.Rv 5:7; 5:8 To avoid any suspicion that this was just a coincidence, he opened the book a second and a third time. Every time he found either the same text or one that was similar. This *man filled with the spirit of God*Gn 41:38 then understood that he would *have to enter into the kingdom of God through many trials,*Acts 14:21 difficulties and struggles.

The brave soldier *was not disturbed by oncoming battles,*Eccl 8:8 nor was he downcast in his spirit as he was about to *fight the wars of the Lord*1 Sm 25:28 in the camps of this world.

He was not afraid that he would yield to the enemy
since he had long struggled beyond human strength
not even to give in to himself.
He was so filled with fire that, even if in preceding ages
there had been someone with a purpose equal to his,
no one has been found whose desire was greater than his.
He found it easier to do what is perfect
than to talk about it;
so he was constantly active
in showing his zeal and dedication in deeds, not in words,
because words do not do what is good,
they only point to it.
Thus he remained undisturbed and happy,
singing *songs of joy in his heart* to himself and to God.Eph 5:19
For this reason he was found worthy of a greater revelation,
since he rejoiced over a small one;
faithful in a small thing,Lk 19:17
he was placed over greater ones.Mt 25:21

Chapter III

THE VISION OF A MAN HAVING THE IMAGE OF A CRUCIFIED SERAPH

94 While he was staying in that hermitage called La Verna, after the place where it is located, two years prior to the time that he returned his soul to heaven, he saw *in the*

vision of God a man, *having six wings like a Seraph, standing over* him, *arms extended and feet joined,* affixed to a cross. *Two of his wings* were raised up, *two were stretched out over his head as if for flight,* and *two covered his* whole *body*.Ez 1:1; 8:1 Is 6:2 When the blessed servant of the most High saw these things, he was filled with the greatest awe, but could not decide what this vision meant for him. Moreover, he greatly rejoiced and was much delighted by the kind and gracious look that he saw the Seraph gave him.a The Seraph's beauty was beyond comprehension, but the fact that the Seraph was fixed to the cross and the bitter suffering of that passion thoroughly frightened him. Consequently, he got up both sad and happy as joy and sorrow took their turns in his heart. Concerned over the matter, he kept thinking about what this vision could mean and his *spirit was anxious* to discern a sensible meaning from the vision.Ps 143:4

While he was unable to perceive anything clearly understandable from the vision, its newness very much pressed upon his heart. Signs of the nails began to appear on his hands and feet, just as he had seen them a little while earlier on the crucified man hovering over him.

95His hands and feet seemed to be pierced through the middle by nails, with the heads of the nails appearing on the inner part of his hands and on the upper part of his feet, and their points protruding on opposite sides. Those marks on the inside of his hands were round, but rather oblong on the outside; and small pieces of flesh were visible like the points of nails, bent over and flattened, extending beyond the flesh around them. On his feet, the marks of nails were stamped in the same way and raised above the surrounding flesh. His right side was marked with an oblong scar, as if pierced with a lance, and this often dripped blood, so that his tunic and undergarments were frequently stained with his holy blood.b

Sadly, only a few merited seeing the sacred wound in his side during the life of the crucified servant of the crucified Lord. Elias was fortunate and did merit somehow to see the wound in his side.c Rufino was just as lucky: he *touched it with his own hands.*1 Jn 1:1 For one time, when the same brother Rufino put his hand onto the holy man's chest to rub him, his hand slipped, as often happens, and it chanced that he touched the precious scar in his right side. As soon as he had touched it, the holy one of God felt great pain and pushed Rufino's hand away, crying out *for the Lord to spare him.*Gn 19:16

He hid those marks carefully from strangers, and concealed them cautiously from people close to him, so that even the brothers at his side and his most devoted followers for a long time did not know about them.

Although the servant and friend of the Most High saw himself adorned with such magnificent pearls, like *precious stones,* and marvelously decorated *beyond the glory and honor of all others,* still his heart did not grow vain. *2 Chr 9:9 Sir 3:19; Ps 8:6* He *did* not *seek* to use this to *make himself appealing* to anyone in a desire for

vainglory.Gal 1:10 Rather in every way possible he tried to hide these marks, so that human favor would not *rob him* of the grace *given* him.Mt 6:18; 6:19

96 He would never or rarely reveal his great secret to anyone. He feared that his special friends would reveal it to show their intimacy with him, as friends often do, and he would then lose some of *the grace given to him.*Rom 12:3; 2 Cor 7:9 He always carried in his heart and often had on his lips the saying of the prophet: *"I have hidden your words in my heart to avoid any sin against You."*Ps 119:11

Whenever some people of the world approached him and he did not wish to speak with them, he would give this sign to the brothers and sons staying with him: if he recited the verse mentioned above, immediately they would dismiss politely those who had gathered to see him. He had learned through experience that one cannot be a spiritual person unless one's secrets are deeper and more numerous than *what can be seen on the face* and by their appearance can be judged in different ways by different people.2 Cor 10:7 For he had met some people who agreed with him outwardly but inwardly disagreed, applauding him to his face but laughing behind his back. These brought *judgment upon themselves* and made honest people seem somewhat suspect to him.1 Cor 11:29

So it is that malice often attempts to smear
sincerity and because of the lies of many,
the truth of the few *is not believed*.2 Thes 2

Chapter IV

THE FERVOR OF BLESSED FRANCIS AND THE DISEASE OF HIS EYES

97 During this same period his body began to be afflicted with different kinds of illness, and more severe than usual. Since he had *over many years chastised his body and brought it into subjection,* he suffered infirmities often.Rom 15:23; 1 Cor 9:27 During the course of the eighteen years which by then had passed, his *flesh* rarely or never *had any rest,* as he traveled through many *distant regions,* so that the *willing spirit,* the devout spirit, and the *fervent spirit which dwelt within him* might scatter everywhere the *seed of the word of God.2 Cor 7:5 Gn 41:46 Acts 18:25; Rom 8:11 Lk 8:11; Mt 26:41 He filled the* whole *world* with the gospel of Christ; in the course of one day often *visiting* four or five *towns and villages,* proclaiming to every one the *good news of the kingdom of God,* edifying his listeners by his example as much as by his words, as he made of his whole body a tongue.Wis 1:7 Mk 6:6 Lk 8:1

There was in him such harmony of flesh with spirit
and such obedience that,
as the spirit strove to reach all holiness,
the flesh did not resist
but even tried to run on ahead,
according to the saying:

For you my soul has thirsted;
and my flesh in so many ways!Ps 63:2
Repeated submission became spontaneous,
as the flesh, yielding each day,
reached a place of great virtue,
for habit often becomes nature.a

98 According to the laws of nature and the human condition *day by day* the body must *decay* though *the inner being is renewed.2 Cor 4:16* So the precious *vessel* in which the heavenly *treasure was hidden* began to shatter all over and lose all its strength.Mt 13:44 Yet *when a man has finished, then he will begin* and when he has finished, then he will start to work.Sir 18:6 And so the *spirit* became *willing* in the *flesh that was weak.*Mt 26:41 He so desired the salvation of souls and longed to benefit his neighbors that, even though he could no longer walk on his own, *he went through the towns* riding on a little donkey.Lk 9:6

The brothers often advised him, urging him to give some relief to his frail and weakened body through the help of doctors. But he absolutely refused to do this. His noble spirit was aimed at heaven and he only *desired* to be set free and *to be with Christ.*Phil 1:23 But he had not yet *filled up in* his *flesh what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ,* even though *he bore the marks on* his *body.*Col 1:24 So *God multiplied* his *mercy* on him, and he contracted a serious disease of the eyes.Gal 6:17; Ps 36:8 a Day after day the disease grew worse and seemed to be aggravated daily from lack of treatment. Brother Elias, the one he chose for the role of mother to himself and had made a father of the other brothers, b finally forced him not to refuse medicine but to accept it *in the name of the Son of God.*1 Jn 5:13 Through Him it was created, as it is written: *The Most High created* medicine *from the earth and the wise will not refuse it.*Sir 38:4 The holy father then gladly agreed with him and humbly accepted his direction.

Chapter V

HOW HE WAS RECEIVED AT THE CITY OF RIETI BY THE LORD HUGOLINO, BISHOP OF OSTIA, AND HOW THE HOLY MAN DECLARED THAT HE WOULD BE BISHOP OF THE WHOLE WORLD

99 Many came with their medicines to help him but no remedy could be found. So he went to the city of Rieti where a man was staying who was said to be the greatest expert in curing that disease. When he arrived there he was received kindly and respectfully by the whole Roman Curia, which was then staying in that city. He was especially well received by Lord Hugolino, the bishop of Ostia, who was renowned for his upright conduct and holy life.

Blessed Francis, with the consent and approval of the Lord Pope Honorius, chose this man as father and lord over the whole religion and order of his brothers because

blessed poverty greatly pleased him and holy simplicity received his greatest reverence.

1C 99-108 relate that at the end of his life Francis travelled through Tuscany and the Duchy of Spoleto. After receiving the stigmata on Mt. LaVerna (1), Francis travelled to several places in the region: to Rieti (2), then north and west to Siena (3), then back to Celle de Cortona (4), on to Assisi (5), and finally to the Portiuncula (6).

imagem

That lord conformed himself to the ways of the brothers.
In his desire for holiness
he was simple with the simple,
humble with the humble,
and poor with the poor.
He was a brother among brothers,
the least among the lesser,a
and in his life and habits strove to behave
as one of them
as much as was possible.

He took care to plant this holy religion everywhereIs 50:4
and in faraway places his glowing reputation,
from an even more glowing life,
helped greatly to spread the Order.
The Lord *gave* him *a learned tongue.*Phil 3:18
With it he confounded the opponents of truth,
refuted *the enemies of the cross of Christ,*
led the strangers back to the way,Dt 22:1
made peace between those in conflict,
and bound together those in peace
in a stronger *bond of love.*Hos 11:4
In the Church of God
he *was a lamp burning and shining,*Jn 5:35
a *chosen arrow*Is 49:2
ready *at the right time.*Ps 32:6
Many times he took off his fine clothes
and, dressed in rough garments
and with bare feet,
like one of the brothers,
he went *asking for terms of peace.*Lk 14:32
He used to do this with great care whenever necessary
between neighbor and neighbor,Jer 7:5
and always between God and the people.

For this reason
God *chose him*Sir 45:4

to be the pastor *of all His* holy *church*Acts 5:11
and *lifted up his head among the tribes of the people.*Ps 110:7; Rv 13:7

100 The blessed father Francis foretold this in words and foreshadowed it in action so that it would be recognized as *inspired by God* and done by the will of Christ Jesus.2 Tm 3:16 It happened in this way. The Order and religion of the brothers had begun to spread by the grace of God. Like a *cedar in the garden of God* it lifted its crown of merit *into the heavens,* and like *a chosen vineyard* it stretched out its holy *branches to the ends of the earth.* Ez 31:8; Ps 110:3 Jer 2:21 Ps 80:12; 18:20 a

At that time Saint Francis approached the lord Pope Honorius, who was then at the head of the Roman Church, humbly asking him to appoint the lord Hugolino, bishop of Ostia, as father and lord for him and his brothers. The lord Pope bowed to the holy man's request, and kindly agreeing, entrusted to the bishop his authority over the Order of the brothers. Like *a prudent and faithful servant set over the family* of the Lord, the bishop accepted it reverently and devoutly. He strove in every way to administer the *food* of eternal life *in due season* to those entrusted to him.Mt 24:45; Ps 145:15 The holy father for this reason subjected himself to him in every way and venerated him with wonderful and reverent affection.

Blessed Francis was *led by the Spirit* of God with which *he was filled*.Mt 4:1 Acts 13:9 Therefore he saw long before what was later to appear *in the sight of all.*Is 52:10 For whenever he wanted to write to him, impelled by the needs of the Order they both served, or, more often, moved *by the love of Christ* which he felt so strongly toward him, he would never allow him to be called in his letters "Bishop of Ostia and Velletri" as others did in customary greetings. Instead, taking up the topic, he used to say; "To the Most Reverend Father, Lord Hugolino, Bishop of the Whole World."2 Cor 5:14

Often he would greet him with unheard-of blessings, and although he was a son in his loyal submission, he would sometimes console him with a fatherly word at the prompting of the Spirit so that he could *strengthen* him *with the blessings of the fathers until the desire of the everlasting hills should come.*Gn 49:26

101 That same lord also felt great love for the holy man and therefore was pleased with whatever the blessed man did or said, and was deeply moved at the mere sight of him. He swears that no matter how disturbed or troubled he became, when he saw or talked to Saint Francis the clouds inside him would break up and clear weather would return; his depression would vanish and joy would pour down over him.

This man *ministered* to blessed Francis, *as a servant to his lord,* and, whenever he saw him, he offered the reverence due to *an apostle of Christ.*Lk 12:37 1 Cor 1:1 Bowing

before him both outwardly and inwardly, he would often kiss his hand with his consecrated lips.

With devotion and care, he tried to find a way for the blessed father to regain the earlier health of his eyes, knowing he was *a holy and just* man, *very much* needed and useful to the Church of God.Acts 3:14 Neh 2:2 He shared in worrying about him with the whole assembly of the brothers, *pitying the sons* because *of their father.*Ps 103:13 Then he advised the holy father to take care of himself and not to refuse the things needed to treat his illness, because neglecting them would not be considered praiseworthy but sinful. Saint Francis humbly observed what such a revered lord and a beloved father told him. From then on he more carefully and freely did what was needed for his treatment. But now the illness had grown so bad that any relief at all required the greatest expertise and demanded the most bitter medicine. This is what was done: his head was cauterized in several places, his veins opened, poultices applied, and drops poured into his eyes. Yet *he had no improvement but kept getting steadily worse.*Ps 89:23 Mk 5:26

Chapter VI

THE CONDUCT OF THE BROTHERS ATTENDING SAINT FRANCIS AND THE WAY HE DECIDED TO LIVE

102 For nearly two years he endured these things
with complete patience and humility,
in all things giving thanks to God.Tb 2:14; 1 Thes 5:18
But in order to be able
to devote his attention to God more freely,
he entrusted his own care to certain brothers,
who with good reason were very dear to him.
Thus he could more freely explore in frequent *ecstasy of Spirit*
2 Cor 5:13 the blessed dwelling places of
and, in the abundance of grace, stand *in heavenly places*
*before the gentle and serene Lord of all things.*Eph 1:3 2 Mc 14:35

These brothers were *men of virtue,* devoted to God,1 Mc 5:50
pleasing to the saints, and well-liked by people.
The blessed Father Francis *rested* upon them
as a *house* upon four *pillars.*Jgs 16:29 a
I omit their names for
the present, out of regard for modesty,
which is a close friend of these spiritual men.
Modesty is the beauty of all ages,
a witness of innocence,
the sign of a pure mind,

the rod of correction,Prv 22:15
the special glory of conscience,
the protector of reputation,
and the mark of thorough integrity.

This virtue graced those men and made them loveable and kind to people. This grace *they all held in common*, but a particular virtue also adorned each one.Acts 2:44 One had outstanding discernment, another had extraordinary patience, one was famous for his simplicity, and the last had great physical strength along with gentleness of spirit. These men vigilantly, zealously, and eagerly protected the peace of mind of the blessed father, cared for him in his illness, and spared no pain or labor in offering themselves completely to the saint's service.

103 In the sight of God and the people of this worldJn 11:9
the glorious father had been made perfect in grace.
In all that he did he glowed brilliantly,
yet he always kept thinking
about how to undertake even more perfect deeds.
Like a soldier, well-trained in *the battle camps of God,*Gn 32:2
challenging the enemy,
he wanted to stir up fresh battles.
With *the Christ as leader,*Dn 9:25
he resolved "to do great deeds,"
and with weakening limbs and dying body,
he hoped for victory over the enemy in a new struggle.

True bravery knows no real limits of time,
for its hope of reward is eternal.

He burned with a great desire to return to his earliest steps toward humility; *rejoicing in hope* because of his boundless love, he planned to call his body back to its original servitude, although it had now reached its limit.Nm 11:4; Mt 2:10 Rom 12:12 He cut away completely the obstacle of all cares and silenced the noise of all concerns. When he had to relax this rigor because of illness, he used to say: "Let us begin, brothers, to serve the Lord God, for up until now we have done little or nothing; *He did not consider that he had already attained* his goal, but tireless in pursuit of holy newness, he constantly hoped to begin again.Phil 3:13

He wanted to return to serving lepers
and to be held in contempt, just as he used to be.
He intended to flee human company
and go off to the most remote places,
so that,

letting go of every care
and putting aside anxiety about others,
for the time being
only the wall of the flesh would stand between him and God.a

104 He saw many rushing for positions of authority. Despising their arrogance, he strove by his own example to call them back from such sickness. Indeed, he used to say that it was a good and acceptable thing in God's sight to take care of others. He held it was appropriate for some to take on the care of souls as long as in this *they sought* nothing *of their own will,* but in all things constantly obeyed God's will.Phil 2:21 Such people should consider in the first place their own salvation and aim for the growth of their subjects, not their applause. They should seek *glory* before *God,* not honor from people, never desiring but fearing the office of prelate.Rom 4:2 If given to them it would humble them, not exalt them; were it taken away, it would not leave them dejected, but uplifted.

He maintained it was dangerous to direct others and better to be directed, especially in these times when malice is *growing so much* and wickedness *is increasing.*2 Thes 1:3 It hurt him that some had abandoned their *early deeds* and, in the midst of new discoveries, had forgotten their original simplicity.Rv 2:5 That is why he grieved over those who now sank to the level of what was low and cheap, although they once had striven for higher things with all their desire. They had abandoned true joy and were running here and there, wandering through the fields of an empty freedom. So he prayed for God's mercy to set his sons free and fervently begged that they be preserved in the *grace given to them.*Rom 12:3

Chapter VII

HOW HE CAME TO ASSISI FROM SIENA AND CONCERNING THE CHURCH OF SAINT MARY OF THE PORTIUNCULA AND THE BLESSING OF THE BROTHERS

105 Six months before the day of his death, he was staying in Siena for treatment of his eye disease. But then all the rest of his body started to show signs of serious illness. His stomach had been destroyed, and his liver was failing. He was vomiting a lot of blood, so much that he seemed close to death. On hearing of this in a place far away, brother Elias rushed to his side. At his arrival the holy father had recovered so much that they left that area and went together to Le Celle near Cortona.a After reaching the place he *stayed for a while,* but then the swelling began in his abdomen, his legs, and his feet.Mt 25:5 His stomach became so weak that he could hardly eat any food at all. At that point, he asked brother Elias to have him carried to Assisi. The good son did what the kind father commanded and, when everything was ready, led him to the place he longed for. *The city rejoiced at the arrival*Est 8:15; 2 Cor 7:6 of the blessed father and all the people with one voice *praised God,*Dn 3:51since *the*

whole multitude of the people hoped that *the holy one of God*Lk 1:10; Mk 1:24would die close to them, and this was the reason for such great rejoicing.

106 And so it was also the *will of God*Jb 26:11
that his holy soul, freed from the flesh,
would pass over to *the kingdom of heaven*Mt 3:2
from that place
where, while *still living in the flesh,*Phil 1:24
he had first been given the knowledge of higher things
and had the oil of salvation poured out upon him.

He knew that the *kingdom of heaven*Mt 5:3
was established in every *corner of the earth*Ez. 34:13
and he believed that divine grace was given
*to God's chosen ones*Rom 8:33 in every place.
Yet he knew from his own experience
that the place of the church of Saint Mary of the
Portiuncula
was especially full of grace
and filled with visits of heavenly spirits.
So he often told the brothers:
"See to it, my sons, that you never abandon this place.
If you are driven out from one side,
go back in from the other,
for this *is truly a holy place*Eph 1:18
and *the dwelling place of God.*1 Chr 29:1
Here the Most High increased our numbers
*when we were only a few;*Ez 42:13
here He *enlightened the hearts*1 Chr 16:19 of his poor ones
with the light of His wisdom;
here He kindled our wills with the fire of His love;
here all who pray wholeheartedly will receive what they ask,
while offenders will be severely punished.
Therefore, my sons, hold this place, *God's dwelling,*1 Kgs 8:30; 8:33
as worthy of all honor
and *here praise God*Jer 29:13
*in cries of joy and praise*Ps 42:5
*with your whole heart."*Jer 29:13

107 As his illness grew worse, he lost all bodily strength, and deprived of all his powers, he could not even move. One of the brothers asked him what he would prefer to endure: this long-lasting illness or suffering a martyr's cruel death at the hands of an executioner. "My son," he replied, "whatever is *more pleasing to the Lord my God*Dt 13:18; Rom 12:1 to do with me and in me has always been and still is

dearer, sweeter, and more agreeable to me. I desire to be found always and completely in harmony with and obedient to God's will alone in everything. But to suffer this illness, even for three days, would be harder for me than any martyrdom. I am not speaking about its reward but only of the *pain* and suffering *it causes."* Dn 3:50

O martyr,
martyr laughing and rejoicing,
who endured so gladly
what was bitter and painful
for others to see!

Not one of his members remained without great pain and suffering; his bodily warmth gradually diminished, and each day he drew closer to his end. The doctors were amazed and the brothers were astonished that the spirit could live in flesh so dead, since with *his flesh all consumed* only skin *clung to his bones.* Jb 19:20

108 When he saw his final day drawing near,
as shown to him two years earlier by divine revelation,
he *called to him* the brothers he *chose.* Mk 3:13
He blessed each one as it was *given* to him *from above,* Jn 19:11
just as Jacob of old, the patriarch, blessed his sons.
He was like another Moses
about *to ascend the mountain*
that the Lord had shown Dt 32:49 him,
when imparting blessings on the children of Israel.

When brother Elias sat down on his left side with the other brothers around him, the blessed father crossed his arms and *placed his right hand on* Elias' *head.* Gn 48:14 He had lost the sight and use of his bodily eyes, so he asked: "Over whom am I holding my right hand?" "Over brother Elias," they replied. "And this is what I wish to do," he said, "I bless you, my son, *in all and through all,* Eph 4:6 and just as the most High has increased my brothers and sons in your hands, so too, upon you and in you, I bless them all. May the king of all *bless you in heaven and on earth.* Ps 113:6; Tb 9:9 I bless you as I can, and more than I can, and what I cannot do may the One who can do all things do in you. *May God remember* Dn 14:37 your work and labors, and may a place be reserved for you among *the rewards of the just.* Heb 2:2 May you receive every blessing you desire and may your every worthy request be fulfilled."

"Good-bye, all my sons. Live *in the fear of God* Eccl 9:22 and remain in Him always, for a great *test* Sir 27:6; Ps 22:12 will come upon you and tribulation is drawing near! Happy are those *who will persevere* Mt 10:22 in what they have begun: many will be separated from them by the scandals that are to come. But now I am hurrying to the Lord *and I am confident that I am going to my* Ps 30:9; Rom 1:19 God whom I have served in my spirit."

He was staying then in the palace of the bishop of Assisi, and he asked the brothers to carry him quickly to the place of Saint Mary of the Portiuncula. For he wanted to give back his soul to God in that place where, as noted above, he first came to know perfectly *the way of truth.*Ps 19:30

Chapter VIII

WHAT HE DID AND SAID AT HIS BLESSED DEATH

109 Twenty years had now passed since his conversion, and his time was ending just as it had been shown to him by God's will. For, once the blessed father and brother Elias were staying at Foligno, and one night while they were sleeping, a priest of venerable appearance and great age dressed in white clothing appeared to brother Elias. "Get up, brother," he said, "and tell brother Francis that eighteen years have passed since he renounced the world and clung to Christ. He will remain in this life only two more years; then he will go *the way of all flesh when the Lord calls*Jos 23:14; Gn 3:9 him to Himself." So it came to pass that, at the established time, the *word of the Lord* spoken long before now *was fulfilled.*2 Chr 36:21

After he had rested a few days in that place he so longed for, knowing *the time* of his death *was close at hand,* he called to him two brothers, his special sons, and told them to sing *The Praises of the Lord*Heb 9:9 with a loud voice and joyful spirit, rejoicing at his approaching death, or rather at the life that was so near.a He himself, as best he could, broke into that psalm of David: *"With a loud voice I cried to the Lord; with a loud voice I beseeched the Lord."*Ps 142:2-8

There was a brother there whom the holy man loved with great affection. Seeing what was happening and realizing the saint was nearing the end, he grew very concerned about all the brothers and said: "Oh, kind father, your sons will now be *without a father,*Lam 5:3 and will be deprived *of the true light*1 Jn 2:8 of their eyes! Remember the orphans you are leaving behind;b forgive all their faults, and gladden them all, whether present or absent, with your holy blessing." The holy man answered: "See, my son, I am being called by God. I forgive all my brothers, present and absent, all their faults and offenses, and I absolve them insofar as I am able. When you give them this message, bless them all for me."

110 Then he ordered the book of the Gospels to be brought in. He asked that the Gospel according to John be read to him, starting with the passage that begins: *Six days before the Passover,*Jn 12:1 Jesus, knowing that the hour had come for him to pass from this world to the Father.Jn 13:1 a This was the very gospel his minister had planned to read, even before he was told to do so; that was the passage that met his eye as he first opened the book, although he had the complete Bible from which to read the gospel. Then he told them to cover him with sackcloth and to sprinkle him with ashes, as he was soon to become *dust and ashes.*Sir 10:9; 17:27

Many brothers *gathered* there, for whom *he was* Dt 31:11 both father and *leader.* They stood there reverently, all awaiting his blessed *departure* Acts 14:11 and happy *end.* Sir 33:24 And then that most holy soul was released from the flesh, and as it was absorbed into the abyss of light, his body *fell asleep in the Lord.* Acts 7:60

One of his brothers and followers, a man of some fame, whose name I will conceal for now since he does not wish to glory in such fame while still *living in the flesh,* Gal 2:20 saw the soul of the most holy father *rise straight to heaven over many waters.* It was *Jos 8:20; Ps 29:3; like a star* Sir 50:6 but as big as the moon, with *the brilliance of the sun,* 1 Cor 15:41 and *carried up* upon *a small white cloud.* Rv 14:14 b

111 Let me cry out therefore:
"O what a glorious saint he is!
His disciple saw his soul *ascending into heaven:* Acts 2:34; Sg 6:9
beautiful as the moon,
bright as the sun,
glowing brilliantly as it ascended upon a white cloud!
O true *lamp* of the world,
shining more brilliantly than the sun in the *Church of Christ!* Mt 5:15; Rom 16:16
Now, you have withdrawn the rays of your light,
as you withdraw into that luminous homeland.

You have exchanged our poor *company*
for that *of the angels* Heb 12:22 and saints!
In your glorious goodness and great renown,
do not put aside care for your sons,
though you have put aside flesh like theirs.
You know, you truly know,
the danger in which you have left them;
for it was your blessed presence alone
that always mercifully relieved
their countless labors and frequent troubles!
O truly merciful and most holy father,
you were always kind and ready
to show mercy and forgive your sinful sons!
We bless you therefore, worthy father,
as you *have been blessed* Tb 8:17; Gn 27:27 by the Most High,
Who *is God over all things blessed forever. Amen."* Rom 9:5

Chapter IX

THE LAMENT OF THE BROTHERS AND THEIR JOY WHEN THEY PERCEIVED THAT FRANCIS BORE THE SIGNS OF THE CROSS IN HIS BODY AND ABOUT THE WINGS OF THE SERAPH

112 At Francis's death,
a whole crowd of people praising God
*came together and said:*Acts 21:30; Mi 5:7; Lk 2:13
"You, *our Lord and God, be praised and blessed,*Dn 3:57; Ps 41:14
for you have given us unworthy ones so precious a remnant!
Praise and glory to you, O ineffable Trinity!"

*The whole city*Mt 8:34 of Assisi rushed down *as a group* and *the entire region* hurried to see *the wonderful works of God*Mt 3:5; Acts 2:11 which *the Lord of majesty*Is 2:10 gloriously displayed in his holy servant. Each person burst into a song of joy at the urging of a *joyful heart,*Lam 5:15 and all of them had their *desire fulfilled*Phil 4:19 and blessed the almighty Savior. Still his sons were mourning, bereft of so great a father, and showed the deep feeling of their hearts in groaning and tears.

Then incredible joy lightened their grief!
A new miracle
turned their minds to amazement.
*Their mourning turned*Est 13:17 into song,
their weeping to jubilation.
For they had never heard or read in Scripture
about what their eyes could see:
they could not have been persuaded to believe it
if it were not demonstrated by such clear evidence.
In fact,
there appeared in him
the form of the cross and passion
*of the spotless lamb*1 Pt 1:19
*who washed away the sins of the world.*Rv 1:5
It seemed
he had just been taken down from the cross,
his hands and feet pierced by nails
and his right *side*
wounded *by a lance.*Jn 19:34

They looked at his skin which was black before but now shining white in its beauty, promising the rewards of the blessed resurrection. They saw *his face* like *the face of an angel,*Acts 6:15 as if he were not dead, but alive. All his limbs had become as soft and moveable as in childhood innocence. His muscles were not taut, as they usually are in the dead, his skin was not hard, his limbs were not rigid but could be easily moved back and forth.

113 *All the people*Ex 33:10 saw him glowing with remarkable beauty and his flesh became even whiter than before. It was even more wonderful for them to see in the middle of his hands and feet not just the holes of the nails, but the nails themselves formed by his own flesh, retaining the dark color of iron, and his right side red with

blood. These signs of martyrdom did not provoke horror, but added great beauty and grace, like little black stones in a white pavement.

His brothers and sons hurried to him and, weeping together, kissed the hands, the feet, and the right side of their dear father who had left them. The wound in his side made them remember the One who poured out *blood and water* from His own side and *reconciled the world*Jn 19:34; 2 Cor 5:19 to the Father.

People considered it a great gift to be allowed to kiss or even to see the sacred *marks of Jesus* Christ which Saint Francis *bore in* his own *body.*Gal 6:17

And seeing them,
who would not be moved to joy rather than tears?
And if moved to tears,
would that not be more
from gladness than sadness?
Whose heart would be so iron-hard
that it would not be moved to groan?
Whose *heart* would be so much *like stone*Ez 11:19
that it would not break with sorrow,
that it would not burn with divine love
or would not be strengthened with good will?
Who would be so dull-witted and senseless
as not to realize the obvious truth?
He is a saint!
If he was so honored with a unique gift on earth,
he must *be exalted* with unspeakable glory *in heaven.*Is 33:5
114 This is a unique gift,
a sign of special love:
to decorate the soldier with the same arms of glory
that in their great dignity belong to the King alone!a
This is a miracle worthy of *everlasting remembrance*Ps 112:7
and a sacrament to be remembered
with unceasing and wondering reverence.
It presents to the eyes of faith
that mystery in which *the blood of the spotless lamb,*1 Pt 1:19
flowing abundantly through the five wounds,
washed away the sins *Rv 1:5 of the world.*
O sublime splendor of the living cross,
giving life to the dead!
Its burden presses so lightly and hurts so sweetly
that through it dead flesh lives
and the weak spirit grows strong.

You have made radiantly beautiful
this man who *loved*Lk 7:47 You *so much!*
Glory and blessing to God,
*who alone is wise,*Rv 5:13; Rom 16:27
and *gives new signs and works new wonders*Sir 36:6
to console the weak with revelations
and to raise their hearts to the love of things unseen
through *wonderful works*Ps 139:14 that are seen.a
O wonderful and loving plan of God!
To allay suspicion about the newness of this miracle,
there first appeared mercifully in the One *from heaven*Jn 3:13; 3:31
what later appeared wondrously in the one who lived on earth.
The true *Father of mercies*2 Cor 1:3
wanted to show how worthy of reward is the one
who strives *to love* Him *with his whole heart;*Mt 22:37
worthy to be placed closer to Himself
in the highest order of supercelestial spirits.b

We too will certainly be able to reach these heights if, like the Seraphim, we *spread two wings over our heads:*Ez 1:22; 1:23 that is, following blessed Francis's example, in every good work we have a pure intention and upright conduct, and, directing these to God, we strive untiringly to please God alone in all things.c These two wings must be joined for us to cover our heads because *the Father of lights*Jas, 1:17 will not accept our ac- tivity as upright without a pure intention nor vice versa, since He says: *If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness.* That *eye* is *not sound*Mt 6:22-23 if it does not see what should be seen, because it does not know the truth, or if it looks at what should not be seen, because it does not have a pure intention. An open mind will judge neither as sound; the first is blind and the second evil. *The feathers* of *the wings*Ez 1:23-24 are the love of the saving and merciful Father and the *fear of the Lord*,Sir 1:11 the terrible judge. These lift the souls of the chosen above things of earth while restraining evil thoughts and ordering chaste affections.

The *other two wings*Is 6:2 are for flying: showing a double charity to our neighbor, refreshing the soul with the *word of God*Lk 4:4 and nourishing the body with material aid. These *wings* are rarely *joined together,*Ez 1:11 since one person could hardly do both. The*feathers* of these wings are varied works of counsel and help offered to our neighbor.

The last *two wings* are *to cover the body*Ez 1:11 that is bare of merits. This happens regularly as it is stripped naked whenever sin breaks in, but is then clothed again in innocence through contrition and confession. The feathers of these wings are the wide range of affections arising from hatred of sin and developing a longing for justice.

115 Our blessed father Francis fulfilled all these things completely: he had both the image and the form of the Seraph and, remaining on the cross, he merited to fly away to the highest order of spirits. He was always upon his cross, never shirking labor or pain, fulfilling to the utmost the Lord's will in and about himself.

The brothers who lived with him know
that daily, constantly, talk of Jesus was always on his lips,
*sweet and pleasant*Ez 33:32 conversations about Him,
kind words full of love.
*Out of the fullness of the heart his mouth spoke.*Mt 12:34
So the spring of radiant love that filled his heart within
gushed forth.
He was always with Jesus:
Jesus in his heart,
Jesus in his mouth,
Jesus in his ears,
Jesus in his eyes,
Jesus in his hands,
he bore Jesus always in his whole body.
Often he sat down to dinner
but on hearing or saying or even thinking "Jesus"
he forgot bodily food,

as we read about another saint:
"Seeing, he did not see; hearing, he did not hear."a
Often as he walked along a road,
thinking and singing of Jesus,
he would forget his destination
and start inviting all the elements to praise Jesus.
With amazing love he bore
*in his heart and always held onto*Lk 2:19
*Christ Jesus and Him crucified.*1 Cor 2:2
For this reason,
he, above others, was stamped with Christ's brilliant seal
as, in *rapture of spirit,*2 Cor 5:13
he contemplated in unspeakable and incomprehensible glory
the One sitting "at the right hand of the Father,"
the Most High *Son of the Most High,*Lk 1:32
Who, with the Father, "in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
lives and reigns," conquers and commands,
God eternally glorified *throughout all the ages.*
*Amen.*Dn 3:52; 3:90

Chapter X

THE MOURNING OF THE LADIES AT SAN DAMIANO AND HOW HE WAS BURIED WITH PRAISE AND GLORY

116 His brothers and sons had assembled with *the whole multitude of people*Ez 27:33 from the neighboring cities, rejoicing to take part in such solemn rites. They spent that entire night of the holy father's death in the praises of God. The sweet sound of jubilation and the brightness of the lights made it seem that angels were keeping vigil.

When day was breaking, the multitude of the city of Assisi *gathered*Jn 21:4; Acts 2:6 with all the clergy. They lifted his sacred body from the place where he had died and carried it with great honor to the city, singing hymns and praises with trumpets blaring. *They all took branches*Jos 6:20 of olive and *other trees*Jn 12:13; Mt 21:8 and solemnly followed the funeral procession, bringing even more candles as they sang songs of praise in loud voices.

With the sons carrying their father and the flock following the shepherd who was hastening to *the Shepherd of them all,*Ez 37:24 he arrived at the place where he first planted the religion and the Order of the consecrated virgins and Poor Ladies. They laid him out in the church of San Damiano, home to those daughters he gained for the Lord. The small window was opened, the one used by these servants of Christ *at the appointed time*2 Sm 24:15 to receive the sacrament of the Lord's body. The coffin was also opened: in it lay hidden the treasure of supercelestial powers; in it he who had carried many was now carried by a few.

The Lady Clare!
Clearly a woman of true brilliance and holiness, the first mother of all the others,
the first plant of that holy Order:
she comes with her daughters to see the father
who would never again
speak to them or return to them,
as he was quickly going away.
117 They looked upon him,
groaning and weeping with great *anguish of heart.*Ps 38:9

"Father, O father, what shall we do?" they *began to cry out.*Jos 3:3 "Why are you abandoning us poor women? We are forsaken! To whom are you entrusting us?a Why didn't you send us ahead of you in joy to the place you are going, instead of leaving us behind in sorrow? What would you have us do, enclosed in this cell, without your usual visits? *All consolation*2 Cor 1:5 ebbs away along with you, just as no solace remains for us who are buried to the world! Who will comfort us in so great a poverty, poverty of merit as much as of goods?

"*O father of the poor!*Jb 29:16 O lover of poverty! Who will help us in temptation? You, who experienced so many temptations! You, who were such a careful judge of

temptations! Who will comfort us in the midst of distress? *You, who were so often our help in times of distress!*Ps 46:2 What bitter separation, what painful absence!

"O death, dreadful death! You are killing thousands of his sons and daughters by taking away their father! *Our* poor ***efforts***Jer 7:3,5 bore fruit through him, and you rush to tear him far from us, beyond recall!"

The virgins' modesty overcame their tears.
To grieve too much *over him*Zec 12:10 was unbecoming,
for at his passing
a host of angels rushed to greet him,
and *the citizens of heaven*
Eph 2:19 and members of God's household rejoiced.a
Thus,
torn between sorrow and joy,
they kissed his most splendid hands
that glittered with rare jewels and shining pearls.b
Once he was taken away,
the door
that never again will suffer such pain,
*was closed*Mt 25:10 on them

O how great was the grief of all at the misery of these women!
How full was their mourning and the devotion of their outcry!
Above all how great was the wailing of his grieving sons!c
The sadness of each was shared by all,
since no one could keep from crying
when even *the angels of peace wept bitterly.*Is 33:7

118 Finally all reached the city
and *with* great *joy and gladness*Bar 3:35; Ps 45:16
laid the most holy body in a sacred place
about to become even more sacred.d
In the past he had brightened that place wonderfully
with instruction by his holy preaching.
There he now *enlightens the world*Mt 27:59
with a multitude of new miracles
glorifying the Most High *God Almighty.*Rv 16:14
Thanks be to God.
Amen.

Now look at what I have done, most holy and blessed father,
I have seen you through to the end with fitting and worthy praises,

inadequate though they be,
and I have written down your deeds
telling the story as well as I could.
Please allow me,
pitiful as I am,
to follow you worthily in the present,
that I may mercifully merit joining you in the future.

O loving one,
bear in mind your poor sons
for whom, without you,
their one and only consolation,
there is little comfort.
Even though you,
their primary and prized portion,
have joined the choirs of angels,
and are seated with the apostles on a *throne of glory,*Dn 3:53,54
they still lie *in a muddy swamp,*Ps 40:3
enclosed in a dark cell, tearfully crying out to you:
"O father,
place before Jesus Christ, son of the Most High Father,
His sacred stigmata;
and show Him the signs of the cross on your hands, feet, and side,
that He may mercifully bare His own wounds to the Father,
and because of this
the Father *will ever show us*Jb 33:26 in our anguish
His tenderness.
Amen.
*So be it, so be it.*Ps 72:19 "a

Here Ends the Second Book.