“that in all...character may be formed”.
Exploring a vision of formative-education in the spirit of St. Bonaventure

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In her seminal work *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith*, educator Sharon Parks described the critical challenges of the young adult era and the important developmental tasks that are ideally and uniquely attended to in the lives of the “twenty-somethings,” 17-30 year olds. She understands it as a critical time for young adults to form their imagination and as a time when young adults begin “to take self-conscious responsibility for [their] own knowing, becoming and moral action, even at the level of ultimate meaning-making (faith).”

Parks’s important work calls attention, therefore, to the necessity to develop or adopt models of formative-education to adequately address the developmental needs of 21-century young adults, “twenty-somethings” and beyond.

Sharon Parks, Parker Palmer, George Kuh, Larry Braskamp, L. Dee Fink and others have challenged institutions of higher education, and faculty in particular, to redefine and expand their understanding of education as a developmental and formative experience in which they, and a wide variety of other stakeholders within the institution, have a role to play in the formative-education of men and women for careers and, more importantly, life in a complex, demanding and globalized world. These authors are challenging educators to reconsider the content and disciplinary focus that came to characterize so much of late 20th-century higher education. They also seek to make the case that developing an individual’s capacity for reflection, interiority, dialogue with others and “otherness,” and learning through experience (e.g., internships, field work), among other things, are worthy and important concerns that ought to play a more central role in 21st-century education.

In this transitional moment within higher education, Franciscan sponsored institutions are blessed to have an eight centuries old intellectual-spiritual tradition that challenges and invites faculty, administrators and staff to retrieve and reimagine the

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2 Sharon Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2000), 64.
3 It is the contention of Robert Kegan in *In Over our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Harvard University Press, 1998) that the majority of adults have not been successfully educated, formed, and appropriately mentored to meet the mental challenges of modern life as ideally anticipated by Parks.
riches and relevance of its resources in the formative-education of responsible citizens who (1) are sensitive to ethical-moral concerns, (2) have grappled with questions of ultimate value and meaning, and (3) have been challenged to imagine the role they might play in building a more just, relational and loving world. Obviously, this is an enormous and complex task. You will be pleased to know that I will not attempt it here. However, I will attempt to give you a sense for its potential, usefulness and relevance in meeting some of the core challenges of formative-education in the 21st century mentioned above.

Pause:

Before I continue I would like you to take a moment.

1. What are the five dominant values that our society/culture urges us to embrace and live by (virtues)? Write them on the index card provided.
2. What are the five values you claim as your guide to right living? Write them on the back of your index card.
3. Can you recall a story in which your values played a critical role in what you chose to do, not do, in a given situation?
4. Take just a few moments with a neighbor and share a story —briefly, no time for long tales, no need for explanations or discussion, your story shared.

I hope that this personal reflection on your experience might serve as a point of reference for the next part of this presentation. As time permits, we will refer back to it or it might serve as a point of further reflection for you in the future.

The Franciscan Intellectual-Spiritual Tradition

Among the most fundamental questions that arise across the lifecycle within the human spirit are: Where did “I” come from? Where am “I” going? What am “I” doing here? To put it another way: What is the God intended purpose of my life? And, What must I do to realize that end to the extent that it might be possible in my state of human pilgrimage?

In response to those questions Bonaventure, a major voice in the early development of the Franciscan intellectual-spiritual tradition, articulated a vision of what it meant to walk in the footprints of Francis and Christ and to give one’s whole self to creating a more just, relational and loving world. To put it as briefly as possible, he argued that “two things are necessary, namely, knowledge of the truth and the practice of virtue.”

Bonaventure’s vision of the search for truth in the state of human pilgrimage is found in a very condensed form in a text entitled On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology. It was his inaugural address after being appointed Master of Theology at the University

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As a Christian theologian, Bonaventure names that end “salvation” which is pursued through the imitation of Christ, or in terms of what has been described by Zachary Hayes as his theology of “redemptive-completion” in The Hidden Center: Spirituality and Speculative Christology in St. Bonaventure (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 1996), 182.
of Paris in 1254. While that text, and others such as the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, seek to assist us in the pursuit of knowledge, understanding and even wisdom itself, I would like to turn our attention to one of ends of education mentioned in *On the Reduction*, namely, “that in all...character may be formed.”

For Bonaventure, the formation of character involved training in and the “practice of the virtues” by “means of which one lives rightly.” It is a vision in which, as Zachary Hayes put it, the “intellectual life” and the search for knowledge is “situated within the larger context of values that ought to shape human life.” Thus, it involved what might best be referred to today as a vision of formative-education, a vision of education that is concerned with the whole person. And, I would argue, it is one that might serve us well in better meeting the diverse developmental needs of 21st-century students as they pursue excellence in various disciplines, explore different career orientations, and prepare themselves for life in today’s fast-paced and technological world with its complex demands and expectations.

Pause:

When you arrived this morning, you received a handout with a story found in chapter V.7 of the *Major Legend*. He wrote:

Although [Francis] energetically urged the brothers to lead an austere life, he was not pleased by an intransigent severity that did not put on a [heart desiring right relationship] and was not seasoned with the salt of [discretion].

One night, when one of the brothers was tormented with hunger because of his excessive fasting, he was unable to get any rest. The [affectionate concern of Francis] understood the danger threatening one of his [brothers], called the brother, put some bread before him, and, to take away his embarrassment, [Francis] started eating first and gently invited him to eat. The brother put aside his embarrassment, took the food, overjoyed that, through the discerning condescension of his [brother Francis], he had avoided both harm to his body, and received an edifying example of no small proportion.

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1 *On the Reduction*, 25 (Hayes, 61).
4 The translation of the Latin *pietatis* has been rendered a “heart desiring right relationship” to better render the sense of Bonaventure’s meaning in contemporary English. See Col 3:12 the Scripture reference.
5 Discretion (*discretio*) has been substituted for the FA:ED discernment in two instances to render the Latin more closely and to emphasize the virtue associated with good judgment.
6 The pastoral image of the “pius/pastor” in Latin has been adjusted to better render the sense of Francis’s affectionate and personal concern for his brother.
When morning came, after the man of God had called the brothers together and recounted what had happened during the night, [Francis] added this reminder: “Brothers, in this incident let the charity, not the food, be an example to you.” He taught them, moreover, to follow discretion as the [guide for] the virtues, not that which the flesh recommends, but that taught by Christ, whose most sacred life expressed for us the exemplar of perfection.

Reflective Exercise
a. Take a few moments to read through the story. Please underline the value-virtue words you consider important/significant.

b. From the underlined/highlighted words, please rank them in order of importance to you.

c. Take a few moments and, as best you can, form into a buzz group, 4-6 people, (1) share your individual rankings, and (2) see if you can agree on a group ranking.

This exercise will be processed with the whole group in a very quick way.

As the group is processing the rankings, the sheet with the working definitions will be distributed.

The Major Legend of St. Francis: The Story in Context

The Major Legend of St. Francis was composed in 1263. In the prologue Bonaventure asserts that:

The grace of God our Savior has appeared …
   in his servant Francis
to all who are truly humble and lovers of holy poverty,
   who, while venerating in him God’s superabundant mercy,
      learn by his example…

   [God] gave him as a light for believers,
a practitioner, a leader, a herald of [right living, right relationship and right loving]  
   Gospel perfection, ….

As Eric Doyle noted some years ago, “St. Bonaventure saw realized in St. Francis everything he himself was striving for: gospel perfection and contemplative peace.” In his development of the text, Bonaventure presented a theological image of Francis as the one who was “worthy of love by Christ, imitation by us, and admiration by the world.”


There are fifteen chapters in the text, seven are historical (Chapters I-IV and XII-XV), five follow a thematic or virtue-centered order, and three describe how Francis was transformed as he “strove to keep his spirit in the presence of God” (prayer) and dedicated himself to “a continual exercise of virtue” (Chapters X-XI).

The virtue-centered, thematic chapters in particular, were intended to demonstrate how the “privilege of the many virtues made [Francis] Christ-like” and how he was “outstanding in giving good example.” The spirituality of the “imitation of Christ,” as presented by Bonaventure, was, therefore, “concerned with the most fundamental dimensions of the unavoidable network of relations within which human life is worked out.” The virtues at the heart of the Major Legend are proposed, therefore, as the values that ought to lie at the “core of our efforts to define and shape ourselves” and thus, our relationship to all reality. Through his focus on core virtues, embodied values, and selected stories, Bonaventure hoped to enkindle affection, shape understanding and imprint a memory of Francis within the brothers, and others, so they too might be inspired to “live rightly” (rectitudo vivendi), to live in “right relationship” (pietas) and to love in a “right and well-ordered” way (caritas). These are the three constitutes, therefore, that are at the heart of the vision inspired by Francis and articulated by Bonaventure that might help us, and those we share it with, to imagine who they are and what kind of person they hope to become.

The Story of the Hungry Brother

In his telling of the story of the hungry brother, Bonaventure names a core set of values, aspirational ideals, that he believed ought to “define and shape” the lives of the brothers and their relationship with all reality after the example of Francis. The values included charity, right relationship (pietas), discretion, brotherhood[sisterhood], discerning condescension, and austerity. Each of these aspirational ideals (values) challenges us to choose and pursue a particular good. It must, therefore, be understood, learned and lived if it is to become part of who I am as a person. Each of these values-virtues challenges us to choose and pursue a particular good.

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13 Major Legend, X. (FA:ED, II, 605) and Major Legend XI.1 (FA:ED, II, 612).
16 Hayes, 138.
17 My assertion here is modeled on Bonaventure’s expressed intention when he wrote The Tree of Life as a meditation on the life of Christ. See Bonaventure: The Soul’s Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis, (Cousins, 119).
18 In an Appendix at the end of this paper I have provided a descriptive definition of each of these virtues as they are found in the works of St. Bonaventure.
19 Bonaventure follows Aristotle in large measure in assuming that those who are practiced in a particular virtue tend to act on them quickly and with greater ease. He is clear in asserting, however, that in terms of free will, “grace does not force it but leaves the will free to consent.” See Breviloquium, Part V, 3.4 (Monti, 180). On the role of the virtues and the nature of free will, the late 13th century thought of Scotus will both enrich and develop the Franciscan tradition on this point.
These virtues constitute Bonaventure’s proposal with regard to how the unavoidable and often conflicting challenges of life and relationships are to be worked through in the lives of those who aspire to follow/imitate, not simply admire Francis of Assisi and those like Clare and so many others who were inspired to follow/imitate him.

For Bonaventure, a virtue is a “good quality of [the innermost self—mens] worked in us by God by which one lives rightly….” It aims to “avoid an extreme, be it deficiency or excess.” While the philosopher Aristotle understood virtue to “aim at what is intermediate in passions and actions;” the theologian Bonaventure understood it as the pursuit of those goods that involved the right ordering of love. Thus, he considered “becoming conduct the mark of well-ordered virtue.” He also urged the novices, indeed everyone, to “let your every word and deed manifest your integrity, devotion and discretion.”

The virtue of austerity (austeritas), the central challenge in this story, was principally concerned with learning through effort, experience, practice, and grace to “adjust” the “inner spirit” to a “norm and a rule” which for Francis was the Gospel. It required the self-discipline through which a person would strive to regulate the senses, that is, the desire to see, hear, taste, or touch what is good, pleasing, and beautiful. It included the necessity to manage responsibly one’s “affections and thoughts” through the self-discipline that might be required in a given situation. Or, to put it another way, the virtue of austerity involves the ongoing struggle to find the healthy self-discipline through which a person might “acquire, increase and preserve” a “good will” in order to be able to live justly in the world.

The challenge is succinctly stated in the first lines of the story:

Although [Francis] energetically urged the brothers to lead an austere life, he was not pleased by an intransigent severity that did not put on a heart [desiring right relationship] and was not seasoned with the salt of [discretion].

Remember, this is Bonaventure’s telling of the story. It follows his account in chapter five on how Francis’s struggled to “satisfying the necessities of the body without...

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Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. II, c. 9, trans. D. Ross (Oxford University Press, 1980), 45. He defines virtue as a “state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., the mean relative to us.” Bk. II, 6 (Ross, 39).

*Disputed Questions on Evangelical Perfection*, I, 2 (Reist/Karris, 49-50; see also Commentary on Book II of the Sentences, prelude, esp. n. 5 (Coughlin 350-351).


Earlier versions of the story can be found in *Assisi Compilation*, 50 (FA:ED, II, 149-150); *Assisi Compilation*, 53 (FA:ED, II, 152); and Thomas of Celano, *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Bk. 1, XIV and XV (FA:ED, II, 258-259).
giving in to the earthbound [temporal] inclination of the senses”? A struggle that, according to Bonaventure, led Francis to adopt such a “rigid discipline that he scarcely took what was necessary for the sustenance of his body” and how he was “innovative” in punishing himself as he struggled to find an adequate way to manage the questions, conflicts, and challenges of his inner life.

Francis’s behavior, indulgent before his conversion and rigid in his personal discipline afterwards, is at the heart of his ongoing and unresolved challenge in this area of his life. Now, this is hardly an image of Francis that would inspire the imaginations of healthy young people in the 21st century! At the same time, it identifies a very fundamental human concern that each of us must learn to work through. Bonaventure takes it on as a foundational challenge to be faced by those who aspire to live rightly, to live an ethical-moral life, who want to live justly in this world. We might best think of this challenge, therefore, in terms of the many different types of self-discipline—personal, familial, interpersonal, professional—that free us to choose the way of justice, right relationship and right loving as might be required in any given set of circumstances. For example, what were the disciplines I had to embrace to prepare this presentation and to deliver it? What do I owe you as conference participants (justice/right willing)? What did it require of me? (self-discipline)

Unpacking the Story: What is the good to be determined, chosen and pursued in living rightly the virtue of austerity/self-discipline?

The FRAMEWORK

AUSTERITY

• salt of discretion
• a “heart desiring right relationship”

The REALITY

brOTHER
“tormented by hunger”
“excessive fasting”
“unable to rest”

The “HIGHEST GOOD” CHARITY

“Brothers, in this incident let the charity (caritas) not the food, be an example to you.”

The CHOICE:

What is the virtuous choice to be made, the good to be pursued in this situation?

How do I best embody my values in this situation?

• follow DISCRETION, the “guide of the virtues”
• As best I can in this situation determine:
  1. What are the legitimate needs of my body?
  2. What is required of me to have a “right and well-ordered relationship” — loving — relationship with myself that avoids the extremes of excess or deficiency?

• to assist us in determining what might be chosen and pursued in this situation, Bonaventure (On Governing the Soul, 8)* provides three helpful questions with regard to what discretion might need to take into consideration in the struggle to live austerely—moderately, temperately—a well-disciplined manner of life:

  1. to “strive for nothing more than an ‘adequate measure’ in your use of food…so that your behavior will in no way be excessive.”

  2. to “strive for modesty in discipline by moderating silence…as opportunity requires and right reason dictates,” and

  3. to “strive for modesty by honestly regulating, ordering, and composing your acts…as required by moral integrity and right living.”

The questions provide a thoughtful, even if demanding, framework through which a person might learn, ideally through practice and experience, what the counsel of discretion suggests ought to be chosen and pursued in this instance.

The story raises, therefore, a series of important questions for professors and others who might be concerned about the formative-education of others. If this “brOTHER,” for example, were a student at your institution:

➢ Where would a student learn about the life of virtue?
➢ Who would provide the basic instruction in what constitutes a life of virtue, good-moral conduct?
➢ How would a student be exposed to different models of virtuous living as the they begin to take responsibility for
  ▪ the person they are becoming,
  ▪ the “rightness” of their conduct, and

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* On Governing the Soul, n. 8, (Coughlin, 205-206).
* Adapted from Bonaventure, “On Governing the Soul,” (Coughlin, 207). This approach presumes a basic understanding of Bonaventure’s theology of virtues.
the dynamic process of “meaning making” (faith) wherein the student will find something to which he is willing to give his heart?”

- How, in what context and when, will you and your colleagues be creatively inviting the student to become “self-conscious” and self-critical of who they are becoming and the quality of the moral choices they are making—the challenge of formative-education.

Francis: An Authentic Teacher

Bonaventure claimed in his morning sermon (1255) that Francis was an “authentic” and “excellent” teacher because he (1) “taught what he himself had learned,” (2) “taught what he learned without guile due to his fervent love,” (3) “put into practice what he learned,” and (4) “believed in what he had learned.” In the development of this argument, Bonaventure expressed his conviction that Francis “did not acquire his knowledge by reflecting in general terms on a limited number of truths, but by individual experience over a wide range of life.”

In the story of the brother tormented by hunger, Francis is presented as the teacher—the mentor, the spiritual guide, coach, the more experienced companion on the journey—who models for his brother a way to discern, choose and proceed if [he] desires (a) to live rightly (rectitudo vivendi), (b) to be in right relationship with himself (pietas), and (c) to love in a “right and well-ordered way” (caritas). This is demonstrated clearly in the body of the story.

Francis’s response to his brother’s need is worked out in the context of the values—virtues identified above, namely, charity, discretion, right relationship, discerning condescension, and austerity which must be brought into creative relationship with each other if their competing, often conflicting, claims are to be worked through in this situation. Bonaventure’s story highlights seven things, that is, how Francis: (1) felt “affectionate concern” (pietas) for one of his “brothers” (frater), (2) “called the brother” (frater/pietas), (3) put some bread before him [showed mercy (misericordia)], and, (4) “to take away his embarrassment, he started eating first” [felt compassion (compassio)], and (5) gently invited him to eat (circumpectionum condescendere),” (6) in determining what charity might require in this situation, and (7) reminds us that, in every experience, there is always something more that the “teacher”—mentor, guide, coach, companion—might learn about the virtue of discretion.

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*For more on the last point, see Sharon Parks, Big Questions, Worthy Dreams, chapter 2 “Meaning and Faith,” 14-33.
*In his discussion of the gift of counsel in the Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, VII.5, Bonaventure describes the three-fold action that is proper to counsel as the gift by which one learns to discern, choose and pursue what is permitted, proper and expeditious in the “practice of virtue.” See Works of St. Bonaventure XIV, intro. and trans. by Z. Hayes (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2008), 146-148.
In his brief articulation of so many value-virtues and details in this story, Bonaventure offers insight with regard to how one must, through experience and practice, “learn the right way of living” or what constitutes “becoming conduct.”

In this instance, despite the “teacher” Francis’s ongoing struggles in satisfying the needs of this body and to accept his human frailty which is the central concern in chapter five of the Major Legend and provides the context in which this story is told, Bonaventure provides an image of Francis as one who is able to provide “an edifying example” for his “brOTHER” by weaving together a series of judgments, choices and actions that “in this incident” reveal what “charity, not the food” requires of him. It points to a way of living in which the virtue of discretion must make a judgment about how a variety of goods might be brought into a dynamic, creative and harmonious relationship with one another in the choice and pursuit of the highest good, caritas or “right and well-ordered love.”

The “edifying example” demonstrates the complexity that a commitment to “right living,” moral living or becoming conduct, involves in the state of human pilgrimage according to Bonaventure. A complexity that requires an artistic paradigm that both challenges and enables a person to determine, in a given set of actual circumstances, what would constitute an “upright intention,” the desire to be and to do what is good (affection), and the willingness to embrace the discipline required by a good and measured response (moderation). In this instance, what does the “charity and not the food” require?

While there is much to be learned about the nature of each of the virtues mentioned (see Appendix), not to mention what must be learned through experience, practice and choice, there is one phrase that I would like to highlight in that I believe it constitutes

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33 See On the Reduction of the Arts, n. 4 (Hayes, 41).

34 Bonaventure compares the challenge of right living to the work of an “artisan” who “aims to produce a work that is beautiful, useful and enduring.” See On the Reduction of the Arts, n. 13 (Hayes, 51). Mary Beth Ingham, drawing principally on the work of Franciscan philosopher John Duns Scotus (d. 1308), explains how Scotus envisioned the “moral person as an artist in a monograph entitled Rejoicing in the Works of the Lord: Beauty in the Franciscan Tradition, The Franciscan Heritage Series, n. 6 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2009), 8. She notes that in the Franciscan intellectual tradition “The human journey is not simply about learning how to think correctly, it is a matter of learning to feel correctly, to notice and to act correctly.” (2)

35 On the Reduction of the Arts, n. 17 (Hayes, 53-55).
something that captures uniquely something essential to the Franciscan experience, hopefully an integral part of the formative-education individuals received at a Franciscan sponsored institution. It is Bonaventure’s use of the Latin phrase *circumspectionum condescensionem*.

The Latin *circumspectio* refers to the deliberate and well-considered attention to circumstances that is required in the process of making a judgment (*discretio*) about the best course of action to be chosen and pursued in this situation."

The Latin *condescendere* means literally to step down in relation to the need of another. It assumes a personal readiness and willingness on the part of an individual, in this case Francis, and to be primarily concerned with the other, in this instance, the needs of the “brOTHER tormented by hunger.” It is a response that requires three things. First, the inner discipline through a person like Francis would be able to recognize that the proposed ideal of austerity is not an end in itself. Second, true humility—a sense of one’s “great littleness”—that would enable one to be attentive and responsive to the genuine needs of the “brOTHER.” Third, the generosity of spirit (poverty) that would enable one to literally bend down and serve the “brOTHER.” It is a very practical example of “the Franciscan spirit” in action. If you think about it, it simply names, ideally, what students and others experience on our campus and in our classrooms, in our offices and in our residence halls—a mark of your institution’s distinctiveness.

In this view, we all have the opportunity to become formative-educators (1) by example and (2) by the way we engage the other, our brother or sister, by stepping down in relationship to their need and inviting them to imagine what kind of person they want to become or helping them to see how they might choose to become, in an even greater measure, a person with good character.

Conclusion

Bonaventure argued that Francis was a “messenger of God” who showed “in the splendor of his life and teaching” a way of “light [truth] and “peace.” As mentioned above, the question is: Do we wish to simply “admir[e]” or to “imitate” Francis?"

If we desire to imitate him, we must understand the vision, the values and the virtues that shaped his life. More importantly, we must commit ourselves to struggle to live those value-virtues to the extent that it might be possible in our state of human wayfaring."

We live in a world that proposes many values-virtues as a guide to right living and promises peace of spirit. Unfortunately, there are also numerous examples of how many of those proposed values-virtues have lead to injustice, violence, excessive consumption, competition to have and possess more than our share of the goods of the earth, broken

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* It is difficult to say why Bonaventure used *circumspectio* rather use *discretio* at this point in the text. It may simply be that it has more of the rhetorical and poetic tone—*cicum spectam condescensionem*—in which he typically chooses to express himself. The terms have similar meanings and the FA:ED translators translate *circumspectio* as discernment. In the Collations on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, VIII.6: The Gift of Understanding, Bonaventure writes *intellectus est regula circumspectionum moralium* which is translated as the “intellect is the criterion in judging moral matters.” (Karris, 166).

relationships, lack of respect for the legitimate needs and rights of others, and the search for love that often does not satisfy the deepest needs of the human spirit.

In many ways like our own time, the thirteenth century world of Francis of Assisi was a time of intense social, political and economic turmoil. Citizens of the emerging commune (city state) aspired to have a greater share of power, possessions, property and pecunia (money). Francis’s father, a successful merchant, expected his son to share his and the commune’s aspirations. However, a series of events in his young adult years, most especially his encounter with lepers, caused him “to leave that world,”38 to separate himself from that world and to embrace an alternative set of aspirations and ideals he found named in the Gospels. By embracing his inner struggle to discover a life of meaning, Francis discovered an alternative way of being in the world as he, and those who followed him, strove to build a more just, relational and loving world.

Two questions:

Will the students at your institution encounter the challenge to become responsible citizens who (1) are sensitive to ethical-moral concerns, (2) have grappled with questions of ultimate value and meaning, and (3) have been challenged to imagine the role they might play in building a more just, relational and loving world?

Will your integrity, devotion and discretion give witness to and invite your students to become persons of character through virtuous living?

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APPENDIX:
Descriptive Definitions of Selected Virtues according to Bonaventure

1. **Charity** (*caritas*) is “right and ordered love.” It is the soul’s “weight”—deepest point of centering—and the “origin of all spiritual attraction” drawing the innermost self (*mens/anima*) toward the good and ultimately back to its origin as its end, that is, the Highest Good, Love Itself—God. Its objects are God, our neighbor, our spirit and our body. Thus, charity is understood to “maintain order with regard to the different objects of love, in our desire for them and their effect on us.” All of the virtues “derive their rectitude originally and radically from charity, which is their source, their form and their end.”

Bonaventure’s theology of love (*caritas*) assumes that the human person is created with an innate desire for goodness/love. This desire is a gift of nature from the Creator. It is only satisfied when it is joined/united with the Highest Good—God.

On the human-spiritual journey, goodness may be experienced in the embrace of the “noble good,” the “useful good,” and/or the “agreeable good.” While the agreeable and useful good are indeed true goods, for Bonaventure, the noble good, the pursuit of the good in itself without reference to one’s own self, is the ideal. It is the source of true happiness in the measure that it might be experienced on the human-spiritual journey.

Following Hugh of St. Victor, Bonaventure asserts that “somehow by the association with love [a person] is transformed to the likeness of the one to whom [one] is joined by affection.” In the *Major Legend*, for example, Bonaventure asserts that Francis “longed to be totally transformed through an enkindling of ecstatic love” into an image of Christ. He goes on to argue that the “exceptional devotion of [Francis’s] charity so bore him aloft into the divine that his loving kindness was enlarged and extended to those who shared with him nature and grace.” For Bonaventure, this is the transforming power of love.

To put this another way, Bonaventure argues that the person who “loves goodness is made upright”—becomes good. In the *Major Legend*, Bonaventure described this as the essence of what it means to imitate Christ. It is through this dynamic of love that Francis was totally transformed and became “worthy of love by Christ, imitation by us and admiration by the world.” It is the core of the process through which Francis learned to “not be a deaf hearer of the Gospel,” that is, to live according to the values of the Gospel.

In *The Threefold Way: On the Enkindling of Love* Bonaventure describes the power of love as the dynamic process through which a person learns to show “resolute goodness

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* See *Breviloquium*, Part V, VIII, 2-5 (Monti, 201).
* *Breviloquium*, Part V, VIII,4 (Monti, 202).
* *Breviloquium*, Part V, VIII,5 (Monti, 202).
* *Breviloquium*, Part V, IV,6 (Monti, 186).
* *On the Reduction of Arts*, n 14 (Hayes, 51).
* *Major Legend*, IX, 2 (FA:ED, II, 597).
* *Major Legend*, IX, 4 (FA:ED, II, 599).
* *Major Legend*, I.1, (FA:ED, I, 530).
toward God” as the heart is “expanded or extended,” “opened,” and “poured out.” It is embodied primarily in deeds of mercy and compassion directed, as determined by the power of love, toward one’s Creator, one’s neighbor, one’s spirit, one’s body.

The two faces of Charity: Mercy and Compassion

2. **Mercy (misericordia)** is the name that is traditionally given to caring, good deeds in response to the needs of the other, one’s neighbor—service. According to Bonaventure, mercy resides in the affections and produces some good effects, that is, it results in good deeds. In his telling of the story of the brother tormented by hunger, Bonaventure recounts Francis’s choice “to put some bread before [the brother]” for whom he felt “affectionate concern” and how he “understood the danger threatening him.” In this way, he gives an account of the mercy shown to a brother, even if the word is not used explicitly.

In *The Testament*, Francis shortly began by recalling how “it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers,” suffering human beings who lived in misery and need as a consequence of their illness. Although he had learned to avoid them as a young man, he found himself, through grace, able to be “among them” and to “show mercy to them.” As a consequence of this radical change, Francis made the decision to leave the world of the commune of Assisi—with its aspirations and values—to embrace the Gospel as an alternative way of life. The two phrases “among them” (*inter allos*) and “showing/making mercy” (*feci misericordiam*) would become central and defining characteristics of the movement inspired by Francis.

Putting on a “heart of mercy” and “extending mercy” to one’s neighbor, another self, is a central theme in Bonaventure’s commentary on Luke’s Gospel. Referring to 1 John 3:17, Bonaventure asks: “The person who has the goods of this world and sees a [an other] in need and closes one’s heart to [them], how does the love of God abide in [them]?” Genuine mercy is, therefore, felt within and expressed in “relieving another’s need,” doing “good works,” “giving readily,” assisting another through our deed.

In chapter one of the *Major Legend*, Bonaventure demonstrates how Francis’s natural inclination of “generous care for the poor” (*miserato*)—kindness—was gradually opened, expanded and extended through the power of love (*caritas*). It empowered him to exhibit mercy (*misericordia*) to a poor and badly clothed knight. Gradually, as a consequence of the transformation taking place within, Francis

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* See also Francis of Assisi, *The Earlier Rule*, IX,9 (FA:ED, I, 70). “They must rejoice when they live among people considered of little value and looked down upon…”
* *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, VI:30 (v. 30) (Karris, 530).
* See the variety of phrases used by Bonaventure, for example, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, X: 36-37 (n. 61) (Karris, 987-988). Among numerous other examples see *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Part 1, VI: 30, n. 73 (Karris, 530).
clothed himself with a spirit of poverty, a sense of humility, and an eagerness for intimate brotherly affection (*pietas*). …

[He] showed deeds of humanity and humility to lepers with a gentle [brotherly affection] (*pietas*). He visited their homes frequently, generously distributed alms to them, and with a great drive of compassion (*compassio*) kissed their hands and their mouths. 

Bonaventure continues by telling how Francis “wished” to “not only give his possessions but his very self” to “poor beggars.” In this way, Bonaventure emphasizes how Francis became a man inclined to both show mercy through his deeds and became more compassionate, more able to simply “be with” lepers—others—as human beings in their need. He concludes the chapter by asserting that Francis “did all these things while he had not yet withdrawn from the world in attire and way of life.” He gave an example of true Christian living in the world and became a “light for believers, a practitioner, a leader, a herald of Gospel perfection.”

3. **COMPASSION,** coming from the Latin *com-pati,* means literally “to bear, to endure, or to suffer with” another. It names a love that is willing to express itself in voluntary suffering for the good of others.”

In the Christian tradition, Jesus Christ is the exemplar of what it means to be compassionate. Francis and Clare of Assisi were the 13-century followers/imitators of Christ who inspired a movement with compassion as one of its core values.

In the Franciscan tradition, compassion is perhaps best understood as “a participation in the suffering of another, not in a narrow sense understood in terms of pain for the sake of pain, but rather, in the broadest sense of suffering as the human condition.”

It is the challenge of embracing in love “the other” in their “humanity and fragility” in its manifold forms and expressions. It assumes two things.

First, an individual who has the ability and willingness to “look and see” (*attenuate et videte*) the truth, the reality of the other, most especially the one who is suffering in their

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*See Bonaventure, *Major Legend,* chapter one (FA:ED, II, 530-535). The images of the heart are taken from Bonaventure, *The Threefold Way,* II. 7 (Coughlin, 109).

*Major Legend,* prosl., 1 (FA:ED, I, 526).

Zachary Hayes, *Bonaventure, Mystical Writings* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999), 125. In this text, the translators have translated *pietas* as piety, or filial love, a word whose rich meaning and history is not readily apparent. In contemporary usage, *pietas* in this instance is closer to compassion—genuine concern for the other—as Ewert Cousins translated it in *The Life of St. Francis,* in *Bonaventure: The Classics of Western Spirituality* (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 223.


See Francis of Assisi, “Later Admonition and Exhortation,” 4 (FA:ED, I, 46). As Blastic explains, this is an important dimension of the incarnation, how the “Word of the Father…in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary…received the flesh of our humanity and fragility.”

Clare of Assisi, “Fourth Letter to Agnes,” 24-25, in *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents,* trans. and
human limitedness, incompleteness, neediness, or suffering—fragility. The movement of looking (ad-tendere), therefore, presumes that the individual is “able to be drawn out of one’s own self in attention, awareness, receptivity and surrender to the other,” in a given situation.

The movement of “seeing” (videre) points to the developed ability to understand, to grasp the reality of a situation in its complexities as best we can with its lights and shadows. In this sense, “seeing” leads to a practical kind of understanding of what is happening in this time, this place, to these people so discretion might make a judgment about the good to be pursued.

Second, compassion implies a response, a willingness to take “the initiative to move toward [the other] in their situation.”

Stories from the early experience of Francis, his first brothers and sisters, and the disciplined theological-philosophical reflection on that experience by Bonaventure, for example, demonstrate how compassion was a response to the “needs” of the other whether physical, emotional-psychological, spiritual, or a consequence of social, political, economic structures that were obstacles on “the other’s” journey toward realizing a greater measure of their humanity, happiness, wholeness, and/or their God intended end (beatitude).

4. Discretion

Discernment (discerere) means the ability “to see deeply in order to separate, distinguish, discern.”

Discretion (discretio) is “the result of a correct discernment.”

A discreet (discretus) person was typically considered to be

morally enlightened, the spiritual guide and the sage, the one who perceives clearly the difference between good and evil, who knows how to act in the light of every circumstance, who is moderate and self-effacing in all he does.

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*Blastic, “Contemplation and Compassion,” 151.

*Blastic, “Contemplation and Compassion,” 153. It involves a “movement toward people wherever they are to be found.” 174.

*Francis of Assisi, Earlier Rule, V, 3 (FA:ED, I, 67).

*Discretion (discretio) is the virtue that is referenced by Bonaventure. While the translators of FA:ED have rather consistently chosen to translate discretio as discernment, the process of coming to a correct judgment, in this text and other places, see for example Francis of Assisi, Admonition XXVII.6 (FA:ED, I, 137), this study, focused on the virtues, suggested discretion be used to the extent possible.


* Mary E. Ingham, “Discretio,” Mots Médiévaux Offerts À Ruedi Imbach, ed. I. Atucha, et. al.,
All three terms have a long history in the Christian tradition and play an important role in the spiritual life in particular. While the meaning of the term discretion has remained consistent, the meaning of both discernment and what it means to be “discreet” have often changed and been modified.

In her word study of discretio Mary Beth Ingham demonstrates how it is a “multivalent term in medieval texts, demonstrating a provenance both philosophical and theological.” She concludes that the term variously referred to the “rational ability to distinguish good from evil,” the “acquired ability to make proper judgments in light of circumstances,” as well as the necessity to “enact the moral judgment, adjusted to particular circumstances of the concrete situation.”

Ingham notes that in it’s “lack of precision” and “elasticity” the term opened the door in many ways for the 13th-century reception of Aristotle’s ethics, the virtue of prudence in particular, and the “distribution of different aspects of discretio among virtues such as justice (judgment), temperance (moderation) and fortitude (execution).”

She also concludes that this ubiquitous and important twelfth century moral term, disappears after 1230 to be replaced by Aristotelian prudence, the central intellectual virtue of the intellectual life…Moral decision-making, whether by discreetus or the phronimos, requires flexibility and creativity.

Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) considered discretion the “moderator and guide of the virtues, a director of the affections, a teacher of right living.”

Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) described discretion as “the first offspring of reason.” Its function was to provide “counsel,” that is, to “consider with foresight, to foresee cautiously, to seize skillfully, to reveal quickly, and to censure sharply” when there was danger or the absence of the good. By it, “the eye of the heart, —viz., the intention of the mind— is guided.”

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Textes et Études Du Moyen Âge, 57 (Proto, 2011), 212.

Ingham, 212.

Ingham, 212-213. An example of this may be seen in Bonaventure’s Breviloquium, V. 4. 2-5 where prudence is described as “rectifying the rational power” as part of a discussion wherein the cardinal and theological virtues govern human life. (Monti, 183-185).

Ingham, 213. An example of the “elasticity” in the use of the terms discernment and prudence may be found in Bonaventure’s Collations on Seven Gifts where Bonaventure frequently uses the term “discern” but, when commenting on Qoheleth 7:26 (IV. 10, 90) follows the text’s use of prudence and in the collation on understanding where Aristotle has been referenced (VIII.4, 164) and the intellect is then described as “the criterion in judging moral matters” (VIII. 6 and 7, 168).

Ingham, 213.


The Twelve Patriarchs LXIX (Zinn, 126).

The Twelve Patriarchs, LXIX (Zinn, 126).
Richard emphasized that discretion required “a great deal of practice” and a “great deal of experience.” Through its continuous instruction of the heart, he also considered it the virtue through which a person was ultimately “led to full knowledge of itself.” As Richard explained,

we learn many things concerning discretion by reading, many things by listening, and many things from the innate judgment of reason, yet we are never educated to the full concerning [discretion] without the teaching of experience.

Thus, discretio is the virtue through which a person is led

to know fully the total state and quality of the inner and outer person and to seek out skillfully and to investigate carefully not only what sort of person [one] is but also even what sort [of person one] ought to be.

Bernard and Richard, both twelfth century theologians and spiritual masters, give us a good sense of the monastic tradition’s understanding of the term. Both are important sources for Bonaventure although he references only Bernard in his rather limited use of the term.

Bonaventure states that “by means of the intellectual power, the soul discerns truth, avoids evil and seeks the good.” In the Collations on the Seven Gifts (1268), for example, the meaning of discretion is further clarified when Bonaventure distinguishes between three types of counsel by which we learn:

a. to discern what is permitted, what is proper, and what is expeditious for salvation according to the judgment of right reason;

b. to choose what is permitted, appropriate and expedient according to the norm of a good will, and

c. to pursue what is permitted, appropriate, and expedient according to the practice of virtue.

In his discussion of this gift, Bonaventure emphasizes how important it is to not only “discern rightly” but also to “choose well” and to “carry it out” the “three things necessary for virtue.”

In his telling of the story of the “brother tormented by hunger,” Bonaventure uses discretio and, a close synonym, circumspectio. Both words seem to reflect the older theological-monastic tradition with its emphasis on understanding —making a correct judgment quickly—about the needs of the other or the self within a particular set of

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* The Twelve Patriarchs, LXVII, (Zinn, 124).
* The Twelve Patriarchs, LXVII, (Zinn, 124).
* The Twelve Patriarchs, LXX, 128. In Richard’s discussion of the role of discretion in coming to the true self-knowledge, one hears many echoes of Bonaventure’s description of the virtue of true self-knowledge in On the Perfection of Life in Works of St. Bonaventure X (Coughlin, 141-146, esp. nn. 5-6).
* Brevisiloquium, II, 9.4 (Monti, 87).
* Bonaventure, Collations on the Seven Gifts, VII, nn. 5-7 (Hayes, 146-147).
* Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit, IV. n. 8 (Hayes, 148).
circumstances. In this instance the question is: What does caritas, not austeritas, ask of the brother? Of Francis in response to his brother’s need?

3. **Brother** (frater/fratres—pietas) is used five times and is implied twice in this story. It provides an important context for understanding how, in this instance, the practice of austeritas must be considered thoughtfully (discretio) by Francis who intends to love as Christ loves with “a heart full of mercy and compassion.”

In his Testament, Francis expressed his gratitude that the Lord had given him brothers. The brothers who played such an important role in their shared thoughtful judgments (discretio) about how they were to “observe the Gospel” and to live as “lesser brothers” (fratres minores). Therefore, learning to be “brother”(sister) to one another and to all persons and creation, became a defining characteristic of Francis’s life and relationships as well as those of his early brothers.

Bonaventure, the “theologian of Francis’s experience,” chose to explain the central and integral role of relationship in Francis’s human-spiritual experience in terms of the virtue of pietas, “right relationship,” in chapter eight of the Major Legend in particular. His thought is succinctly expressed when he explained that:

> From a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with an even more abundant [pietas], Francis would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of “brother” or “sister,” because he knew they shared with him the same beginning.

While a full discussion of Bonaventure’s rich theology of pietas is beyond the scope of this essay, the centrality of relationship and understanding that “the other” as a brother or sister, “no matter how small,” is a key consideration in discerning, determining, or making a good judgment about the good to be pursued and chosen in a given situation when charity is proposed as the primary value— “let the charity, not the food, be an example to you”—as in this story.

In his telling of the story of Francis’s encounter with and response to the “poor knight” in chapter one of the Major Legend, Bonaventure states that Francis fulfilled the “two-fold duty of pietas” (1) by “relieving the want of a poor human being” by giving his garment to a “poor and badly clothed knight”—doing mercy and (2) by “covering over the embarrassment of a noble knight”—being compassionate.

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* The Later Rule, I.1, see also The Earlier Rule, I.1 and (FA:ED, I, 100 and 63).
* Zachary Hayes, Forward, in *The Disciple and the Master, Bonaventure’s Sermons on St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), x.
* The translation of pietas as “right relationship,” although not precise, is suggested by Bonaventure in his description of the virtue at the beginning of chapter eight (FA:ED, I, 586). The late 20th century Bonaventurian scholar Dr. Ewert Cousins in a private conversation with me suggested it as perhaps the most adequate way to capture Bonaventure’s theology of pietas for contemporary readers.
* Major Legend, VIII.6 (FA:ED, II, 590).
* For a very abbreviated explanation of Bonaventure’s theology of pietas see note 34 to Bonaventure’s text *On Governing the Soul*, 10 in *Works of St. Bonaventure* X, 209-10.
In the story of the brother tormented by hunger, Bonaventure states that Francis “was not pleased by an intransigent severity that did not put on “a heart full of mercy and compassion” (pietatis) and was not seasoned with the “salt of discretion” (discretionis).” He seems to be suggesting two things.

First, as he stated earlier in chapter five (n.1), Francis was “austere toward himself but considerate toward his neighbor”—his behavior is inconsistent with regard to the practice of the virtue of austerity. Francis’s personal inner struggles did not, however, become an obstacle to his response to the needs of “the other,” his brother. Second, action that might have been the fulfillment of a “two-fold duty” has now become part of who he is as is demonstrated in the next part of the story where Bonaventure says that Francis had (1) affectionate concern for his brother (right relationship), (2) understood his need and responded by “putting some bread before him” (mercy), and (3) responded in a manner that did not embarrass the brother (compassion). Although it is difficult to render in English the “edifying example of no small proportion” that Francis gave, according to Bonaventure, as suggested above, is providing a framework through which “a brother,” any person, might determine what is required for right moral living with one’s brother, rendering what is due him (right willing/justice)—genuine concern for the real needs of the other (compassio), upright intention (caritas), and the showing of mercy (proper action).

In his telling of the story of the brother tormented by hunger, Bonaventure argues that the ideal of austerity is secondary to the demands of charity. Within the diverse cluster of values that are operative in the story as he constructs it, Bonaventure suggests that the individual discerning and choosing, in this instance Francis, is given the opportunity to learn through experience the practical and ongoing demands of what it means to grow in one’s capacity to have a heart full of mercy and compassion by discerning the good to be pursued in his response to the material as well as the psycho-spiritual needs of the “other.”

5. Discerning condescension (circumspexionum condescensionem)

The Latin circumspexio means deliberate, well-considered, attentive, looking around repeatedly in the process of coming to a judgment about the best course of action in a given situation. It is a close synonym of discreetio. It refers to the consideration and careful attention that a person ought to learn through experience to give to both inner experience and exterior circumstances.

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* The FA:ED translation of pietatis and discretionis have been modified.
* It is difficult to say why Bonaventure used circumspexio rather than discreetio at this point in the text. It may simply be that it has more of the rhetoric and poetic tone—circumspexiam condescensionem—in which he often chooses to express himself. The terms have similar meanings and the FA:ED translators translate circumspexio as discernment. In the *Collations on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (VIII.6: The Gift of Understanding), Bonaventure writes intellectus est regula circumspexionum moralium which is translated as the “intellect is the criterion in judging moral matters.” (Karris, 166).
The Latin *condescendere* means literally to step down in relation to the need of another. It provides a succinct description of (1) what Francis was challenged to discern and (2) what response he might make in light of the judgment made.

Bonaventure makes frequent reference to the *condescendere* of God, especially in the sending of the Word, Christ as the “exemplar of perfection,” the one humankind is called to follow/imitate and whom Francis strove to follow most closely. The word is difficult to render in contemporary English because the word has come to mean “looking down on” the other, the opposite of its medieval meaning.

Francis’s response, in light of his commitment to “observe the Gospel” as a “lesser brother,” challenged him to embody the values he aspired to live by choosing to be a humble, poor and loving brother in this instance. Francis’s humility, sense of his great littleness, enables the leader to become the “minister and servant” of his brother. The virtue of poverty, non-appropriation of the goods of the earth, enables him to share food. His “affectionate concern” for a brother enabled him to do it in a way that did not embarrass the brother in his “humanity and fragility” — compassion. As Bonaventure phrased it, although he had “energetically urged his brothers to lead an austere life,” the demands of charity constitute a greater good than the good that is the object of austerity in this incident.

In this instance, Bonaventure offers what might be considered a unique and characteristically “Franciscan” response by choosing the way of humility, poverty, and compassionate service (mercy) — love. As Bonaventure asserts, in this instance, Francis gave an “edifying example of no small proportion.”

6. **Austerity** (*austeritas*) is the virtue through which a person learns to manage, in a right and well-ordered way, the needs of the human body and its desires to see, know, taste, touch and experience the good. It involves the “inner discipline” through which a person strives to “adjust” or “regulate” the “inner spirit,” that is, one’s affections, thoughts and actions, as required by “moral integrity and right living.”

The value-virtue of austerity is perhaps best understood in the context of Bonaventure’s understanding of the human challenge, in light of humanity’s goodness,

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*In Bonaventure’s *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* he makes frequent reference to the *condescendere* of God, and of Christ in particular.

In his discussion of the difference between imperfect and perfect abstinence in the *Defense of the Mendicants* [1269], Bonaventure writes about the person who had “the full intention of abstaining, yet because of the place or the time makes sensible use of food of this kind or because he needs to eat such foods to sustain his life when he is sick or weak or because in eating such foods he edifies his brother through charitable condescension.” The theoretical story, written several years after *The Major Legend*, seems to reveal Bonaventure’s thought process with regard to the “salt of discretion,” “a heart full of mercy and compassion,” and the possibilities of offering others an “edifying” example even though the word *discretio* is not explicitly used. (DeVinck/Karris, 119).


* In his *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, Bonaventure says that from the time of his birth Jesus “manifests the disposition of the highest condescension, because not only did he become a little child for us, but he also became poor and despised for us.” (Karris, 151-152).

* Francis of Assisi, “stepping down” in relation to the needs of the other is an integral dimension of Franciscan leadership as service.

* On Governing the Soul, n. 8 (Coughlin, 206).
limits, and freedom to live in accordance with the “order of justice” (right willing) in the pursuit of the “moral good.”

Within this framework, justice is “not only a cardinal virtue, but also a general virtue that comprises the rectitude of the soul… the whole will.” It refers primarily to a person’s behavior in terms of rendering to others what is due them.

Austerity is the value-virtue that his concerned principally with a person’s inner life, the heart’s desires, the intellect’s curiosity, or inclination to take a particular course of actions. Any of these, most especially the affections many become distracted or disordered rather easily and quickly by lesser goods when it is not trained and disciplined through practice, learning, experience to strive for a pattern of “right living.”

In his various writings on the virtue of austerity, more typically temperance, moderation (modestia) and / or the challenges of disciplined living, Bonaventure strives to recognize the good and legitimate needs of the human body. At the same time, he knows the many ways human needs and desires easily become dis-ordered, that is, are not easily satisfied and are inclined to the extremes of either excessive self-indulgent or self-denial.

In a short text entitled On Governing the Soul, Bonaventure writes about the ongoing challenge of preserving a right and good spirit in terms of the three-fold and interrelated challenges of moderation, right willing (justice) and right relationship (pietas).

With regard to moderation, he urges everyone:

1. to “strive for nothing more than an ‘adequate measure’ in your use of food… so that your behavior will **in no way be excessive.”**
2. to “strive for modesty in discipline by moderating silence… **as opportunity requires and right reason dictates,”** and
3. to “strive for modesty by honestly regulating, ordering, and composing your acts… **as required by moral integrity and right living.”**

In the articulation of these questions Bonaventure is not proscriptive. Rather, he provides a framework through which an individual might learn discretion through experience, that is, to make good judgments about the good to be pursued, about what is

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*Breviloquium*, Pt. III, 10.2, (Monti, 125). Readers who are unfamiliar with Bonaventure’s understanding of human spirit and body might find it helpful to read the *Breviloquium*, Pt. II, ch. 6 and chs. 9-11. See also Bonaventure, *The Threefold Way*, Chapter 1, nn. 2-9 (Coughlin, 91-98 and section II, The Soul, Deformed by Sin (Coughlin, 30-36), and section III, The Meaning of Hierarchy and its Threefold Activity, esp. the Way of Purgation (Coughlin, 47-54) in the introduction to *Works of St. Bonaventure* X where a summary of Bonaventure’s thought on order and the disorder of sin may be found.

*Breviloquium*, V, 4, 5 (Monti, 185). A similar argument is made in Bonaventure’s *Commentary of the Gospel of Luke II*, 60 (Karris, 186).


“Temperance is firm and measured dominion of reason over passion and over other movements of the soul that are not righteous. Its parts are sobriety as regards taste, chastity as regards touch, and modesty as regards the senses. The theologians call this modesty ‘discipline.’”

While Bonaventure and the tradition typically referred to this disorder as sin, it is a classification that is easily misunderstood and often dismissed as antiquated in the 21st century.

*On Governing the Soul*, n. 8, (Coughlin, 205-206).

*Adapted from Bonaventure, On Governing the Soul, (Coughlin, 207). This approach presumes a basic understanding of Bonaventure’s theology of virtues.*
required of an individual for “moral integrity and right living.” It reflects his theology of
the virtues and offers a framework that is quite adaptable and flexible in working
through the practical challenges of living a wide variety of virtues. In a discussion of the
virtue of abstinence in the Defense of the Mendicants (1269), for example, Bonaventure
explains how

> a person had the full intention of abstaining, yet because of the place or the time
> makes sensible use of food of this kind or because he needs to eat such foods to
> sustain his life when he is sick or weak or because in eating such foods he edifies a
> brother through charitable condescension (emphasis added).\(^\text{102}\)

In this story Bonaventure offers a practical example of the kind of discretion that
might be needed or required in a particular situation.

As reviewed above, the “rigid discipline” that Francis strove to maintain as well as
his contradictory behavior with regard to his human “passions and desires” obviously
constituted a challenge to Bonaventure’s theology of the virtues in which he advises that
one ought to strive for an “adequate measure” in most things excepting charity and
patience, to avoid the extremes, and to chose what is “required by moral integrity and
right living.” The question then, attributed in this text to Francis, is: How does a person
face the “difficulty” of “satisfying the necessities of the body without giving in to the
earthbound [temporal] inclination of the senses”? It is the question that Bonaventure
addresses in the eight stories highlighted in chapter five that provide the context to
understanding his telling of the story of the brother tormented by hunger.

Austerity involves the pursuit of a valuable good, one within the context of a larger
set of other goods (value-virtues). At the same time, in Bonaventure’s telling of the story
of the brother tormented by hunger. He also demonstrates how the virtue of austerity
is not an end in itself but must be considered in relation to other goods, some of which
might of greater importance—“in this incident, let the charity, not the food, be an
example to you.”\(^\text{103}\)

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\(^{102}\) Bonaventure, Defense of the Mendicants, (De Vinck/Karris, 119).

\(^{103}\) Major Legend, V. 7 (FA:ED, II, 564-565).