#### **JOY IN THE DISCOVERY OF GOD WITHIN *Part Two***

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According to St Bonaventure, *scientia* forms the substance and the foundation which allows the movement into the second dimension of knowledge, that in which *scientia* is transformed into *sapientia*, intellectual knowledge is transformed into wisdom. In medieval usage, *sapientia* was a term which was used to define that which ought to be the end purpose of all study, a knowledge which derives from the infusion of intelligence with love. We not only know but we love or value what we know. And that is extremely important. We might reflect on the words from Oscar Wilde’s novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,

Nowadays people know the price of everything but the value of nothing.

How do we come to love or value what we know? According to Bonaventure, the knowledge which we have of the world around us, *scientia*, is symbolic in nature. When we look anew at what we have come to know in a spirit of *contemplatio* - contemplation, to ‘gaze at’, evoking an attitude of reverence, wonder and awe towards that which one contemplates - it becomes possible to accept the realities encountered in experience in their full significance as realities which are symbols of the divine presence. It is at this moment that one acquires the knowledge which Bonaventure terms *sapientia*.

What is crucial here is *affectus*, desire. *Sapientia* entails the involvement not only of the human intellect but also of human desire, which specifies that which we value in life, that which we love. The goal of *scientia* is to prepare for and lead to *sapientia*, the goal of the intellect is to prepare for and lead to the realm of values and of love. Early in his academic career, in his *Commentaries on the Sentences* of Peter Lombard, Bonaventure clearly states his understanding of the purpose of theology:

The knowledge presented in this book is of this sort. For this knowledge helps faith, and faith is related to the intellect in such a way that, great as it is in itself, its nature is to move the affect. And this is clear. For this knowledge that tells us that Christ has died for us, and similar things, moves a person to love… Therefore, it must be conceded that we do theology so that we may become good people. (*1 Sent. Prooe*. q.3, [1:13])

We might think here of the words of Pope Francis in one of his weekday sermons in early September 2013, where he spoke of the necessity of having the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of love:

You can have five degrees in theology, but not have the Spirit of God! Maybe you’ll be a great theologian, but you are not a Christian because you do not have the Spirit of God! That which gives authority, that which gives identity is the Holy Spirit, the anointing of the Holy Spirit.... The authority of Jesus – and the authority of the Christian – comes from this ability to speak the language of the Spirit, the language of love. Often, so often, we find among our faithful, simple old women who perhaps didn’t even finish elementary school, but who can speak to us of things better than any theologian, because they have the Spirit of Christ.

The integration of knowledge with love highlights the value of contemplation. Iris Murdoch lamented the fact that the tyranny of a scientific age has weakened the dogmas and images of religion. As a result, she claimed, we have been left with far too shallow and flimsy an idea of human personality. Murdoch constantly stressed in her writings the theme of ‘paying attention to’. She was not religious in a traditional sense, but believed in a transcendent power of goodness. It was through paying attention to ‘goodness’ that we become good ourselves and hence humanity becomes what it should aspire to be. She uses the word ‘attention’ “to express the idea of a just and loving gaze directed upon an individual reality... the characteristic and proper mark of the active moral agent.” ‘Paying attention to’ is essentially to love. Murdoch continues:

When we pay attention, we learn to love. Love is the perception of individuals. Love is the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real. Love is the discovery of reality. (*The Sovereignty of Good*, 78)

We could quite legitimately equate this notion of ‘paying attention to’ with contemplation. Fundamentally, ‘paying attention to’ or contemplation’ is the discovery of the real.

Or, as Pope Francis put it in his homily at Mass on 8 September 2013, quoting Thomas Aquinas:

The Christian is called not to fear great things and to pay attention also to small things.

Contemplation, of course, is central to our Franciscan spiritual tradition. Regis Armstrong categorizes St Francis as a true theologian because he was a true contemplative. Contemplation was at the centre of St Clare’s way of life and was essential in the path of self-knowledge. She utilizes the spiritual image of the mirror – in particular, Christ is the mirror, the one who reflects the hidden mystery of the depths of the Godhead. Clare’s practice of contemplation becomes focused upon the mirror and it involves a threefold movement – gaze, consider, contemplate.

O most noble Queen, gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him. (2L Ag 20)

In Clare’s time, the mirror (Latin, *speculum*) was an important theological symbol. It was used as a metaphor to say something about their conviction that God, although transcendent to creation, is at the same time revealed in some way in creation. In particular, creation is capable of reflecting the beauty of God. The imagery of the mirror, moreover, also has something to say about the self. A mirror is a reflection into which we can look in order to find a greater truth about ourselves, to discover a direction as to what we should be doing with our lives.

In her Second Letter, Clare makes reference to the Old Testament figure of Rachel.

But because one thing is necessary, I bear witness to that one thing and encourage you, for love of Him to whom you have offered yourself as a holy and pleasing sacrifice that you always be mindful of your resolution like another Rachel always seeing your beginning. (*2L Ag.*10, 11)

The figure of Rachel had long fascinated Christian writers. St Jerome analyzed her name in terms of its derivatives, ‘seeing’ and ‘beginning’; hence Rachel becomes the one who is able to ‘see the beginning’, to hold on to one’s initial vision. It is good for us to do this, to see our beginning, to rest for a while in the memories of our calling.

The end purpose of contemplation is spiritual transformation. In the contemplation of Christ, the mirror, the image of the eternal Godhead, one becomes Godlike.

Place your mind before the mirror of eternity! Place your soul in the brilliance of glory! Place your heart in the figure of the divine substance! And transform your entire being into the image of the Godhead Itself through contemplation.

(*3L Ag.* 12, 13)

Such transformation is expressed in a life that is beautiful to behold, a life that radiates the beauty of all the virtues.

Gaze upon that mirror each day and continually study your face within it, that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes, covered with the flowers and garments of all the virtues. (*4L Ag* 15-17)

The beautiful life is the joyful life, and through contemplation we can come to a deeper appreciation of what it means to live the joy of the Gospel.