

THE FRANCIS TRILOGY  
OF  
THOMAS OF CELANO

The Life of Saint Francis  
The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul  
The Treatise on the Miracles of Saint Francis

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## The First Book

TO THE PRAISE AND GLORY OF GOD ALMIGHTY,  
THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.  
HERE BEGINS THE LIFE OF OUR MOST BLESSED FATHER FRANCIS.

### Chapter I

#### HOW HE LIVED IN THE CLOTHING AND SPIRIT OF THE WORLD

<sup>1</sup>In the city of Assisi, which is located in the confines of the Spoleto valley, *there was a man* named Francis. From the earliest years of his life his parents reared him to arrogance in accordance with the vanity of the age.<sup>a</sup> And by long imitating their worthless life and character he himself was made more vain and arrogant.<sup>b</sup>

A most wicked custom has been so thoroughly ingrained among those regarded as Christians, and this pernicious teaching has been so universally affirmed and prescribed, as though by public law, that, as a result, they are eager to bring up their children from the very cradle too indulgently and carelessly. For when they first begin to speak or babble, little children just born are taught shameful and detestable things by gestures and utterances. And when the time of weaning arrives, they are compelled not only to say but to devote themselves to things full of excess and lewdness. Compelled by the anxiety of youth, they are not bold enough to conduct themselves honorably, since in doing so they would be subject to harsh discipline. A secular poet puts it eloquently:

Since we have grown up with the training of our parents,  
all sorts of evils pursue us from our childhood.<sup>c</sup>

- a. Thomas does not give us a date for Francis's birth, but elsewhere he writes that Francis died in the twentieth year of his conversion (cf. n. 119), or twenty years after he had given himself perfectly to Christ (cf. n. 88). Since Francis's conversion took place when he was about 25 years old (cf. n. 2), and since he died on October 3, 1226, he must have been born in 1181 or 1182. Gregory the Great (+604), whose second book of his *Dialogues* is dedicated to a life of Benedict of Nursia (+546), treats the birth of Benedict in the same way, that is, without a date, cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogue II*, Introduction.
- b. The literary tradition of the Middle Ages and the strong influence of Saint Augustine of Hippo (+430) on medieval hagiography prompted Thomas to stress the power of evil operative upon the young Francis.
- c. Seneca, *Ad Lucillum epistolae morales*, v 1, ep. 60, l. The philosopher Seneca (+85 C.E.) enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages as a moralist and presumed correspondent of Saint Paul. Thomas calls him a poet because of several plays attributed to him. The quotation here is from his letters.

This is quite true, for the desires of parents are more injurious to their children, the more they yield gladly to lax discipline.

But even when the children advance a little more in age, they always fall into more ruinous actions by their own choice. For a flawed tree grows from a flawed root; and what was once badly corrupted can only with difficulty be brought back to the norm of justice.

But when they begin to enter the gates of adolescence, what sort of individuals do you imagine they become? Then, without question, flowing on the tide of every kind of debauchery, since they are permitted to fulfill everything they desire, they surrender themselves with all their energy to the service of outrageous conduct. For having become *slaves of sin* by a voluntary servitude, all the members of their body display the *weapons of iniquity*, and, displaying nothing of the Christian religion in their own lives and conduct, they content themselves with just the name of Christian. These wretched people generally pretend that they have done more wicked things than they actually have, so that they do not appear despicable by seeming innocent.<sup>a</sup>

<sup>2</sup>This is the wretched early training in which that man whom we today venerate as a saint—for he truly is a saint—passed his time from childhood and miserably wasted and squandered his time almost up to the twenty-fifth year of his life. Maliciously *advancing beyond* all of his *peers* in vanities, he proved himself a more excessive *inciter of evil* and a *zealous imitator* of foolishness. He was an object of admiration to all, and he endeavored to surpass others in his flamboyant display of vain accomplishments: wit, curiosity, practical jokes and foolish talk, songs, and soft and flowing garments. Since he was very rich, he was not greedy but extravagant, not a hoarder of money but a squanderer of his property, a prudent dealer but a most unreliable steward.<sup>b</sup> He was, nevertheless, a rather kindly person, adaptable and quite affable, even though it made him look foolish.<sup>c</sup> For this reason more than for anything else, many went over to him,

- a. Cf. Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*: "I pretended to obscenities I had not committed, lest I might be thought less courageous for being more innocent, and be accounted cheaper for being more chaste" (II, 3, 7). [This and all future quotations from *The Confessions* have been taken from: Augustine, *The Confessions*, translated with an introduction and notes by Maria Boulding, O.S.B. (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1997).]
- b. Thomas returns to the examples of the earlier hagiographical tradition in which highlighting the goodness of a person before his conversion can be found. In this case there is a possible allusion to *The Life of Saint Anselm of Canterbury* (+1109) by Eadmer of Canterbury (+1124) in which he describes the saint as generous and reliable. Cf. Eadmer, *Life of Anselm* I, 1.
- c. Sulpicius Severus described Martin as being "kept completely free from those vices in which that class of men [soldiers] become too frequently involved." *The Life of Martin* 2. [This and all future quotations from *The Life of Martin* have been taken from: "The Works of Sulpicius Severus," translated with Preface and Notes by Alexander Roberts, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Volume XI, (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1894).]

Rom 6: 20

Rom 6: 13

2 Mc 4:1, Gal 1: 1

Lk 19:20

partisans of evil and inciters of crime. Thus with his crowded procession of misfits he used to strut about impressively and in high spirits, making his way through the streets of Babylon.<sup>a</sup>

Ps 33:13

Then the Lord looked down from the heavens  
and for the sake of His own name

He removed His own anger far from him,  
and for His own glory He bridled Francis's mouth  
so that he would not perish completely.

Is 48:9

The hand of the Lord was upon him,  
a change of the right hand of the Most High,

Is 1:3

Ps 77:11

that through him the Lord might give sinners confidence  
in a new life of grace;  
and that of conversion to God  
he might be an example.<sup>b</sup>

## Chapter II

### HOW GOD VISITED HIS HEART THROUGH A BODILY ILLNESS AND A VISION IN THE NIGHT

<sup>3</sup>That man was still boiling in the sins of youthful heat, and his unstable time of life was driving him without restraint to carry out the laws of youth. At the very time when he, not knowing how to become tame, was aroused by the venom of the *ancient serpent*, the divine vengeance, or rather the divine anointing, came upon him.<sup>c</sup> This aimed, first of all, at recalling his erring judgment by bringing distress to his mind and affliction to his body, according to that prophecy: *Behold I will hedge up your path with thorns, and I will stop it with a wall.*

Rv 20:2

Hos 2:6

Thus worn down by his long illness, as human obstinacy deserves since it is rarely remedied except through punishment, he began to

a. *The Confessions* (II, 3, 8): "With companions like these I roamed the streets of Babylon and wallowed in its filth as though basking amid cinnamon and precious ointments." See also *Lives of the Desert Fathers* VIII, 3, and Eadmer, *The Life of Anselm* II, 24 both of which refer to a pre-conversion state by the image of the "streets of Babylon."

b. In order to express the rhetorical and poetic quality of Thomas's work, the translators have broken the text into sense lines. By doing so they break with the customary way of presenting Thomas's work in order to express in a clearer way the beauty of the text. Cf. Introduction for explanation of sense lines.

c. Thomas uses the Latin word, *fervescere*, which literally means "to boil" to highlight the "boiling" passions of the adolescent Francis. In this sentence Thomas plays on two Latin words, *divina ultio* [divine vengeance] and *divina unctio* [divine anointing].

*mull over within himself* things that were not usual for him.<sup>a</sup> When he had recovered a little and, with the support of a cane, had begun to walk about here and there through the house in order to regain his health, he went outside one day and began to gaze upon the surrounding countryside with greater interest. But the beauty of the fields, the delight of the vineyards, and whatever else was beautiful to see could offer him no delight at all.<sup>b</sup> He wondered at the sudden change in himself, and considered those who loved these things quite foolish.

Lk 12:17

<sup>4</sup>From that day he began to regard himself as worthless and to hold in some contempt what he had previously held as admirable and lovable, though not completely or genuinely. For he had not yet been freed from the *bonds of vanities* nor *had he thrown off from his neck the yoke* of degrading servitude. It is difficult to leave familiar things behind, and things once instilled in the spirit are not easily weakened. The spirit, even a long time after its early training, reverts to them; and vice, with enough custom and practice, becomes second nature.<sup>c</sup>

Is 5:18; Gn 27

Thus Francis still tried to avoid the divine grasp, and, for a brief time losing sight of the Father's reproach while good fortune smiled upon him, *reflected upon worldly matters*. Ignoring *God's plan*, he vowed, out of vainglory and vanity, to do great deeds. A certain nobleman from the city of Assisi was furnishing himself on a large scale with military weaponry and, swollen by the wind of *empty glory*, he asserted solemnly that he was going to Apulia to enrich himself in money or distinction.<sup>d</sup> When Francis heard of this, because he was whimsical and overly daring, he agreed to go with him. Although Francis did not equal him in nobility of birth, he did outrank him in graciousness; and though poorer in wealth, he was richer in generosity.

1 Cor 7:34; Wt

Gal 5:26

a. Medieval hagiography frequently describes illness as providing the occasion for conversion. In *The Life of Anselm* I,3, for example, Anselm actually prays for an illness in order to be received into the monastic way of life.

b. Gregory the Great writes of the early years of Benedict in a similar way: "While still living in the world, free to enjoy its earthly advantages, he saw how barren it was with its attractions and turned from it without regret." Cf. Gregory the Great, *Dialogue II*, Prologue. [This and all subsequent quotations will be taken from the following text: Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, translated Odo John Zimmerman, O.S.B., *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 39 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959).]

c. Cf. Cicero (+43 B.C.E.), *De finibus bonorum* V 25 74: "Even the volataries of pleasure take refuge in evasions: the name of virtue is on their lips all the time, and they declare that pleasure is only at first the object of desire, and that later habit produces a sort of second nature, which supplies a motive for many actions not aiming at pleasure at all." Cf. Macrobius, *Saturalia* VII 9 7; Augustine, *Contra Julianum opus imperfectum* IV 103.

d. Apulia is located in the southeastern part of the peninsula. It is the place where Walter of Brienne, head of Innocent III's papal militia, was fighting against Markwald of Anweiler, seneschal of the German Empire. The latter claimed tutelage over the young Frederick II, who had been entrusted to the pope.

<sup>5</sup>One night, after Francis had devoted himself with all of his determination to accomplish these things and was eager, seething with desire, to make the journey, the One who had struck him with the *rod of justice* visited him in a *vision during the night* in the sweetness of grace.<sup>a</sup> Because he was eager for glory, the Lord exalted and enticed him to its pinnacle. For it seemed to him that his whole house was filled with soldiers' arms: saddles, shields, spears and other equipment. Though delighting for the most part, he silently wondered to himself about its meaning. For he was not accustomed to see such things in his house, but rather stacks of cloth to be sold. He was greatly bewildered at the sudden turn of events and the response that all these arms were to be for him and his soldiers. With a happy spirit he awoke the next morning. Considering his vision a prediction of great success, he felt sure that his upcoming journey to Apulia would be successful. *In fact he did not know what he was saying*, and as yet he did not at all understand the gift sent to him from heaven. He should have been able to see that his interpretation of it was mistaken. For, although the vision bore some semblance of great deeds, his spirit was not moved by these things in its usual way. In fact, he had to force himself to carry out his plans and undertake the journey he had desired.

It is a fine thing  
that at the outset mention be made of arms,  
and very fitting  
that arms be handed over  
to a soldier about to do battle  
*with one strong and fully armed.*  
Thus,  
like a second David  
*in the name of the Lord God of hosts*  
from the long-standing abuse of its enemies,  
he might *liberate Israel.*

a. The phenomenon of dreams, frequently found in medieval hagiography, is present throughout the Bible (e.g., Gn 28:12; 41:5; 47:7; 1 Kgs 3:15). Further information can be found in Martin Dulaey, "Sognes-Reves", in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique XIV* (Beauchesne: Paris, 1990) 1054-1066. For other examples in medieval hagiography, cf. Eadmer, *The Life of Anselm* 1,2; *Lives of the Desert Fathers* X:4.

## Chapter III

HOW, CHANGED IN MIND BUT NOT IN BODY,  
FRANCIS TALKED ALLEGORICALLY ABOUT THE TREASURE HE HAD FOUND  
AND ABOUT HIS BRIDE

<sup>6</sup>Changed in mind but not in body, he now refused to go to Apulia and was anxious to direct his will to God's. Thus he retired for a short time from the tumult and business of the world and was anxious to keep Jesus Christ in his inmost self. Like an experienced merchant, he concealed *the pearl he had found* from the eyes of mockers and *selling all he had*, he tried to buy it secretly.

Now there was in the city of Assisi a man he loved more than all the rest. They were of the same age and the constant intimacy of their mutual love made him bold to share his secrets with him. He often brought him to remote places suitable for talking, asserting that he had found a great and valuable treasure. This man was overjoyed, and since he was so excited about what he heard, he gladly went with him whenever he was summoned. There was a cave near the city where they often went and talked together about the treasure.<sup>a</sup> The man of God, who was already holy because of his holy proposal, was accustomed to enter the cave, while his companion waited outside, and inspired by a new and extraordinary spirit he would pray to his *Father in secret*. He acted in such a way that no one would know what was happening within. Wisely taking the occasion of the good to conceal the better, he consulted God alone about his holy proposal. He prayed with all his heart that the eternal and true God guide his way and *teach him to do His will*. He endured great suffering in his soul, and he was not able to rest until he accomplished in action what he had conceived in his heart. Different thoughts followed one after another, and their relentlessness severely disturbed him. He was burning inwardly with a divine fire, and he was unable to conceal outwardly the flame kindled in his soul. He repented that he had sinned so grievously and that he had offended *the eyes of majesty*. While his past and present transgressions no longer delighted him, he was not yet fully confident of refraining from future ones. Therefore, when he came back out to his companion, he was so exhausted from his struggle that one person seemed to have entered, and another to have come out.

a. Gregory the Great had described this period of Benedict's conversion in a similar way when writing of his flight to a "lonely wilderness" where he made his home in a "narrow cave." Cf. Gregory, *Dialogue* II 1. Thomas uses the word *crypta* to describe that place of solitude. It is translated in this instance as "cave." Its location and nature remain problematic.

<sup>7</sup>One day, when he had invoked the Lord's mercy with his whole heart, the Lord showed him what he must do. *He was filled with such great joy* that, failing to restrain himself in the face of his happiness, he carelessly mentioned something to others. Even though he could not remain silent because of the greatness of the love inspired in him, he nevertheless spoke cautiously and in riddles. Just as he spoke to his special friend about a *hidden treasure*, so he endeavored to talk to others in figures of speech. He said that he did not want to go to Apulia, but promised to do great and noble deeds at home. People thought he wanted to get married, and they would ask him: "Do you want to get married, Francis?" He replied: "I will take a bride more noble and more beautiful than you have ever seen, and she will surpass the rest in beauty and excel all others in wisdom."

Indeed  
the *unstained bride* of God is  
the true *religion* that he embraced,  
and the hidden treasure *the kingdom of heaven*,  
that he sought with great longing.  
For it had to be that the gospel call be fulfilled  
in the one who was to be  
*in faith and truth*  
a *minister of the gospel*.

#### Chapter IV

##### HOW AFTER HE SOLD ALL HIS BELONGINGS, HE DESPISED THE MONEY HE RECEIVED

<sup>8</sup>Ah! Inclined and strengthened by the Holy Spirit the blessed servant of the Most High, seeing that the *appointed time* was at hand, followed that blessed impulse of his soul. Thus, as he trampled upon worldly things, he made his way to the greatest good. He could no longer delay, for by then a fatal disease had spread everywhere and infected the limbs of so many that, were the doctor to delay just a little, it would stifle breath and snatch life away.

After fortifying himself with the sign of the holy cross, he arose, and when his horse was made ready, he mounted it. Taking with

him scarlet cloth to sell, he quickly came to a city called Foligno.<sup>a</sup> There after selling everything he brought in his usual way, this successful merchant even left behind the horse he was riding, when he had obtained his price. Starting back, he put down his bags and pondered conscientiously what to do about the money. In a wonderful way, in an instant, he turned completely to the work of God. Feeling the heavy weight of carrying that money even for an hour, and reckoning all its benefit to be like so much sand, he hurried to get rid of it. Returning toward the city of Assisi, he came across a church on the side of the road. It had been built in ancient times in honor of Saint Damian and was threatening to collapse because of age.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Arriving at this church, the new *knight of Christ*, aroused by piety at such a great need, entered it with awe and reverence.<sup>c</sup> He found a poor priest there, kissed his holy hands with great devotion, offered him the money he was carrying and explained his proposal in great detail.<sup>d</sup>

The priest was astounded and, surprised at this sudden conversion in incredible circumstances, he refused to believe what he was hearing. Because he thought he was being mocked, he refused to keep the money offered to him. It seemed to him that Francis, just the day before, was living outrageously *among his relatives and acquaintances* and *exalting his stupidity* above others. But Francis stubbornly persisted and endeavored to create confidence in his words. He pleaded, begging the priest with all his heart to allow him to stay

- a. Foligno is located about 15 km or 9 miles east of Assisi. In modern use the term "scarlet" describes a vivid shade of red. Prior to the 16th century it referred to a bright dye, white, blue or green. The taste for the exotic that influenced Western fashion at the time of the Crusades brought from the East its first samples of damask, scarlet and crimson. All these rare fabrics were prized and very expensive.
- b. The church of San Damiano was built in 1103 by a consortium of noble families that later entrusted it to the prior of San Rufino in Assisi and later to the city's bishop. It is difficult to know the condition of the church when Francis first entered it. For information concerning the origins and questions of the Church of San Damiano, see Marino Bigaroni, "San Damiano-Assisi: The First Church of Saint Francis," *Franciscan Studies* (1986) 45-97; Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, translated by Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1981), p. 215, j.
- c. Thomas uses the word *pietas* here, a word he employs nineteen times in 1C. It is a difficult word to translate since our modern English word, piety, does not fully express the richness of a word that classical Roman writers associated with humility, religion and spirituality, and viewed as the bedrock of all social relationships. Cf. H. Hagenvoort, *Pietas: Selected Studies in Roman Religion*, (Leiden, E.J. Brill: 1980). For a thorough study of the word in the history of spirituality, see Irénée Noye, "*Piété*," *Dictionnaire de la Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique*.
- d. *Propositum*, a word Thomas uses twenty-two times in this work, does not always have the same meaning, cf. *Corpus des Sources Franciscaines I, Thesaurus Celanensis*, edited Georges Mailleux, (Louvain: Publications du CETEDOC, 1974). At times it refers to purpose, as in this instance, while at other times it suggests a plan or a proposal. The word takes on a technical sense when it refers to the *propositum vitae*, the primitive "rule," which Francis and his first brothers presented to Pope Innocent III. Cf. 1C 33.

2 Tim 2:3

1k 2:44

Prv 14:29

with him for the sake of the Lord.<sup>a</sup> Finally the priest agreed to let him stay, but out of fear of Francis's parents did not accept the money. The true scorner of wealth threw it onto a window opening, since he cared for it as much as he cared for dust.<sup>b</sup>

For he desired  
to possess wisdom, which is better than gold,  
and to acquire understanding, which is more precious than silver.

Prv 16:16

### Chapter V

#### HOW HIS FATHER PERSECUTED AND BOUND HIM

<sup>10</sup>While the servant of the most high God was staying there, his father went around everywhere like a diligent spy, wanting to know what had happened to his son. When he had learned that Francis was living in that place in such a way, he was touched inwardly with sorrow of heart and deeply disturbed by the sudden turn of events. Calling together his friends and neighbors, he raced to the place where the servant of God was staying.

Accl 16:17; Mt 25:5

Gn 6:6; Ps 6:4

Jk 15:6

The new athlete of Christ,<sup>c</sup> when he heard the threats of his pursuers and learned in advance of their coming, lowered himself into a hiding place, which he had prepared for himself for this very purpose, wanting to leave room for their anger. That pit was in the house and was known to only one person.<sup>d</sup> He hid in it for one month continually and scarcely dared to come out even for human needs. Whenever food was given he ate it in the secrecy of the pit, and every

Rom 12:19

a. Bernard of Clairvaux (+1153) writes of a similar desire expressed by Saint Malachy (+1148). Cf. Bernard, *The Life and Death of Saint Malachy the Irishman* 4. This text is important because it provides an example of the hagiographic style of Bernard of Clairvaux whose influence on the spiritual literature of the early thirteenth century—and hence on Thomas—was significant.

b. In the changing economy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such an attitude toward money was common. Money was "portable" wealth and concern for it presented new temptations to greed and exploitation. Cf. Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), especially pp. 35-41; George Duby, *William Marshal: The Flower of Chivalry*, translated by Richard Howard (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), pp. 87-90.

c. The image of a trained athlete appears in hagiography from the time of the martyrs to describe one involved in the struggle of the spiritual life. As one had to practice physical asceticism or self-discipline to be a strong athlete, so one had to do the same in the spiritual life. Bernard of Clairvaux portrays Malachy as an "athlete of the Lord," cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Life and Death of Saint Malachy the Irishman* VIII, 16. [All passages from this text are taken from Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Life and Death of Saint Malachy the Irishman*, translated and annotated by Robert Meyer, (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1978).] Felix, a monk of the eighth century, described the Anglo-Saxon saint, Guthlac (+714), as an "athlete of Christ," cf. Felix, *The Life of Saint Guthlac* 33. [All passages from this text are taken from: Felix's *The Life of Saint Guthlac*, text, translation and notes by Bertram Colgrave, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).]

d. This passage raises questions: the nature of the *fovea* [pit], its location, and the identity of the one person who knew of its existence. Subsequent writers attempt to bring clarity to these issues in their biographies of Francis.

service was provided to him in secret. He prayed with flowing tears<sup>a</sup> that the Lord would free him from the hands of those persecuting his soul and that he could favorably fulfill his fervent wishes. Fasting and weeping, he earnestly prayed for the Savior's mercy, and, lacking confidence in his own efforts, he cast his care upon the Lord. Though staying in a pit and in darkness, he was imbued with an indescribable happiness never before experienced. Then totally on fire, he abandoned the pit and openly exposed himself to the curses of his persecutors.

Ps 142:7

Jl 2:12

Ps 55:23; Du 2

<sup>11</sup>He rose, therefore, swift, energetic and eager, carrying the shield of faith for the Lord, and strengthened with the armor of great confidence, he set out for the city.<sup>b</sup> Burning with holy fervor, he began to accuse himself of idleness and sloth.

Eph 6:16

When all those who knew him saw him, they compared his latest circumstances with his former and they began to reproach him harshly.<sup>c</sup> Shouting that he was insane and out of his mind, they threw mud from the streets and stones at him. They saw him as changed from his earlier ways and weakened by starving his body. They blamed everything he did on starvation and madness.

Ps 18:43; Jn 8:

But since the patient person is better than the proud, God's servant showed himself deaf to all of them, and neither broken nor changed by any wrong to himself he gave thanks to God for all of them.

Eccl 7:9

For in vain do the wicked persecute those striving for virtue,  
for the more they are stricken, the more fully will they triumph.  
As someone says, "Disgrace makes a noble mind stronger."<sup>d</sup>

<sup>12</sup>For some time rumor and gossip of this sort raced through the streets and quarters of the city, and the noise of that ridicule echoed here and there. The report of these things reached the ears of many, finally reaching his father. When he heard the name of his own son mentioned and that the commotion among the townspeople swirled around him, he immediately arose, not to free him, but rather to de-

Sg 3:2

a. For similar descriptions see Alan, Bishop of Auxerre, *Vita secunda s. Bernardi* 4; Eadmer, *The Life of Anselm* II,53; and Gregory the Great, *Dialogue* II 17.

b. Once again Thomas uses military images which were frequently used in medieval hagiography. Cf. Felix, *The Life of Saint Guthlac* 27: "Then girding himself with spiritual arms . . . he took the shield of faith." See also, Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Life and Death of Saint Malachy the Irishman* 26: "He puts on the weapons so mighty with God."

c. Geoffrey of Auxerre, author of Book Four of the *Vita prima s. Bernardi*, writes: "When his brothers and close relatives saw that [Bernard] was considering leaving the world and adopting this way of life, they began to use every means in their power to try and make Bernard change his mind."

d. Thomas seems to refer to Seneca's *Epistola Morales* 4, n.10:2: *Habet enim hoc optimum in se generosus animus, quod concitatur ad honesta*. [For this is the best that the generous spirit has within itself, that it is urged toward honorable things].

stroy him. With no restraint, he pounced on Francis like a wolf on a lamb and, glaring at him fiercely and savagely, he grabbed him and shamelessly dragged him home. With no pity, he shut him up for several days in a dark place.<sup>a</sup> Striving to bend Francis's will to his own, he badgered him, beat him, and bound him.

As a result of this Francis became more fit and eager to carry out his holy plan. Neither the reproach of words nor the exhaustion of chains eroded his patience.

Those taught to rejoice in suffering  
will not deviate from an upright intention and way of life  
nor be stolen from Christ's flock  
because of beatings and chains.  
Nor will they fear *in the flood of many waters*  
whose refuge from oppression is the Son of God,  
who always shows them his sufferings,  
greater than those they endure.

Ps 32:6

## Chapter VI

### HOW HIS MOTHER FREED HIM AND HOW HE STRIPPED HIMSELF BEFORE THE BISHOP OF ASSISI

<sup>13</sup>When his father had left home for a little while on pressing family business, the man of God remained bound in the prison of his home.<sup>b</sup> His mother, who had remained at home alone with him, did not approve of her husband's action and spoke to her son in gentle words. After she saw that she could not dissuade her son from his proposal, *she was moved by maternal instinct*. She broke his chains and let him go free. Thanking Almighty God, he quickly returned to the place he had been before. Since he had passed the test of temptations, he now enjoyed greater freedom. Throughout these many struggles, he began to exhibit a more joyful appearance. From the in-

1 KJRS 3:26

a. The same spirit of persecution by one's father appears elsewhere in hagiography. Cf. Eadmer, *The Life of Anselm* 14: "That is to say, he stirred up in his father's mind so keen a hatred against him that he persecuted him as much, or even more, for the things he did well as for those which he did ill." [This and all future references are taken from: Eadmer of Canterbury, *The Life of Saint Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, edited with introduction, notes by Richard Southern, (London, New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962).]

b. As a merchant in the cloth trade, Pietro di Bernardone may have traveled to cloth fairs in Champagne. He would have taken the usual trade route from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. Since the end of the 12th century Champagne had been the main center for trade between East and West. Trade fairs traveled from city to city: Troyes, Provins, Bar-sur-Aube and Lagny. Generally Italian businessmen were the driving force and the masters of trade traveling the passes of the Alps and Apennines, at times in harsh weather. They traveled alone or, because the road was dangerous, in caravans. Cf. Map B, p. 208.

juries inflicted he received a more confident spirit and, now free to go anywhere, he moved about with even greater heart.

Meanwhile, the father returned and, not finding him and heaping sin upon sin, he turned to reviling his wife. He raced to the place, shaking and screaming, so that if he could not call his son back, he might at least drive him from the area. But since *the fear of the Lord is the assurance of fortitude*, when the child of grace heard that his father in the flesh was coming to him, he went out on his own to meet his father crying out loudly that binding and beating lead to nothing. In addition, he declared he would gladly suffer anything for the name of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>When the father saw that he could not recall him from the journey he had begun, he became obsessed with recovering the money. The man of God had desired to spend it on feeding the poor and on the buildings of that place. But the one who did not love money could not be deceived even by this appearance of good, and the one who was not bound by any affection for it was not disturbed in any way by its loss. The greatest scorner of the things of earth and the outstanding seeker of heavenly riches had thrown it into the dust on the windowsill. When the money was found, the rage of his angry father was dampened a little and his thirsty greed was quenched a bit by its discovery. Then he led the son to the bishop of the city to make him renounce into the bishop's hands all rights of inheritance and return everything that he had.<sup>a</sup> Not only did he not refuse this, but he hastened joyfully and eagerly to do what was demanded.

<sup>15</sup>When he was in front of the bishop, he neither delayed nor hesitated, but immediately took off and threw down all his clothes and returned them to his father. He did not even keep his trousers on, and he was completely stripped bare before everyone. The bishop, observing his frame of mind and admiring his fervor and determination, got up and, gathering him in his own arms, covered him with the mantle he was wearing. He clearly understood that this was prompted by God and he knew that the action of the man of God, which he had personally observed, contained a mystery. After this *he*

a. This is a reference to Bishop Guido II, who was bishop of Assisi from 1204 until his death, July 30, 1228. A papal decree of May 12, 1198 addressed to his predecessor, Guido I, confirmed the many episcopal privileges by the bishop of Assisi. At the time of these events, Guido II possessed broad powers in both the ecclesiastical and civil worlds. Cf. *Regesta Honorii Papae III*, ii, P. Pressutti, Rome, 1895, n. 4958, p. 242 NV. I, p. 323. For information on the juridical procedures for bringing an accused person before the consuls or bishop, cf. Arnaldo Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, translated by Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 222-230.

Ps 30:11 *became his helper.* Cherishing and comforting him, he embraced him  
Col 3:12 in the depths of charity.

Look!

Now he wrestles naked with the naked.  
After putting aside all that is *of the world,*  
he is mindful only of divine justice.<sup>a</sup>

1 Cor 7:33

Now he is eager to despise his own life,  
by setting aside all concern for it.

Thus

there might be peace for him,  
a poor man on a hemmed-in path,  
and only the wall of the flesh would separate him  
from the vision of God.