

asked whether an illiterate man could love God as much as a literate one. Bonaventure replied that in such a situation, he would perhaps place his hopes in a dear older lady than a master of theology!² Speculation without devotion is nothing,³ he told the Franciscans, and he tells us. Franciscan poverty, and indeed our own poverty, is not about a loathing of the world. The gospel must be preached in full awareness that the gifts we are given in this life are for none other than praise and worship of Almighty God, for they and we belong to God alone.

- ^{1.} *The Mind's Road to God, IV.3.*
- ^{2.} *Chronica XXIV generalium, 88.*
- ^{3.} *The Mind's Road to God, Prologue, 4.*

Nick is a member of the Parish of Chester, NS and an Executive Member of the NS & PEI Branch of the Prayer Book Society.

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NOTICE of MEETING

The Prayer Book Society of Canada - Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island Branch will hold its Annual General Meeting on **Saturday, June 12, 2004**

All Welcome

Directors, please RSVP to Sarah Stevenson, Secretary 423-1156; email (preferred): se.stevenson@ns.sympatico.ca

Location: **St. Stephen's Church, Chester**

Schedule: 10:30am	Holy Communion
11:30am	Annual General Meeting
12:30—1:45pm	Lunch
1:45—2:45pm	Address by Michael Edward
2:45—3:30pm	Evening Prayer

June 27 to June 30
2004 Atlantic Theological Conference
"Multiculturalism and Religious Freedom"
Fredricton, New Brunswick
- details in enclosed brochure -



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EASTER 2004



St. Francis preaching to the birds -- Giotto

"Let every thing that hath breath / praise the LORD"

(Psalm 150:6)

by Nicholas Hatt

It is perhaps with some trepidation that I approached the writing of this article, reflecting on a period of study at the Elliott House of Studies in Savannah, Georgia: we had gathered, after all, from January 13 to 15, 2004, when the temperature in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island was at or near an icy -40°F, while Savannah enjoyed a rather chilly (to them at least!) 68°F. That reprieve for a period of study, made possible in part by the generosity of the local Prayer Book Society Branch, was certainly appreciated in more ways than one!

Approximately twenty clergy, or those considering holy orders, had gathered to undertake a study, led by Dr. Robert Crouse, of *The Mind's Road to God*, written around 1276

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by Bonaventure, the seventh Minister-General of the great Franciscan Order. At the time of his promotion to head the Order in 1274, the Franciscan friars – numbering about 28,000 – were increasingly divided over a very practical question: could the Christian religious life be lived in a world fraught with luxury and wealth? There were some who stressed that the friars were to live a life of stern ascetic piety, including perhaps even the abandonment of learning; while others who had incorporated themselves into the mainstream life of the Church and the University, and around centers of extreme wealth and capital, claimed it was the only way to preach the Gospel. Each claimed to be representing the “Franciscan ideal” in the pursuit of the religious life. Undoubtedly, heading such a fractured group seemed daunting. It is to this challenge that Bonaventure wrote *The Mind’s Road to God*, only two years after becoming head of the Order.

This small work, in itself, is a wonderfully rich synthesis of philosophical and theological teachings going right back to the ancient Greeks. To that end, it represents for us a perfect example of the finest of medieval learning. For Bonaventure, it was clear that the strife within the Franciscan Order centered around a common pursuit, which *The Mind’s Road to God* encourages us to explore and undertake: the soul’s attempt to praise and worship Almighty God. For Bonaventure and so many of his contemporaries, and throughout the ancient and medieval world, it is this aspect of the soul which constitutes the human’s unique position within God’s created order. For us to do otherwise is to deny our very humanity.

A society dedicated to the use of the *Book of Common Prayer* well understands this, knowing that it is our heavenly yearning which rouses us toward prayer and divine learning. But we do it not to attain some kind of personal religious “experience” or spiritual “episode”, but for the reordering of our souls towards heaven, that we might catch a glimpse of the divine life. Indeed, as we were reminded in our Candlemas 2004 Newsletter, “...our commitment is to the exactness of language, and to the musical rhythms, which represent our earthly attempts to realize the heavenly harmony of praise which is the obligation of all God’s creatures.” And when this work is accomplished, says Bonaventure, “when [the soul] sees his spouse [Christ] and hears, smells, tastes, and embraces Him” and “he can sing like the Bride a Canticle of Canticles...perceive the highest beauty...hear the highest harmony, smell the highest fragrance, taste the highest delicacy, [and] apprehend the highest delights”.¹

We have perhaps no better guide in this work than a prayer book which is bathed in the words of Holy Scripture, and presents those Scriptures fully within the context of the

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PBSC NS&PEI Branch is always thankful for your financial support, even when lack of space prevents us from saying so in a big way. Thank you!

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teachings of the church catholic. Such a prayer book, which presents a complete and complex system for the divine ordering of every moment of our lives, allows each of us, from within our own subjective experiences, to offer those up to God, and understand them within the context of the divine harmony of all creation. We are taken beyond our own experiences so that we might understand them and ourselves within God’s creation, and that we might live a life faithful to God’s created order. To do otherwise is to engage the religious life from a purely subjective and personal perspective, as though they alone were our consolation in this life. In this way, the Scriptures and the tradition of the church become more than simply an accumulation of past experiences which can sometimes enlighten our own through their similarities, but rather, are essential guideposts to living the Christian life.

From this standpoint we can begin to encounter God’s creation, and ourselves, in their true reality. We can begin to discover the nature of God’s created order and ourselves in their fallen and sinful state, and are roused to offer them up to God in prayer. Only from this encounter can we begin to understand the real importance of the events of Easter, when our fallen humanity is liberated from sin and restored to glory, that we might once again be enabled for true worshipping of God at His heavenly altar.

And lest we think that this is simply a pursuit for the learned and privileged, Bonaventure reassures us: one day, while speaking with Giles of Assisi – an early companion of St. Francis, and a staunch supporter of complete Franciscan poverty – Bonaventure was