

Custodians of the Tradition

*Reclaiming the Franciscan
Intellectual Tradition*



Those like ourselves who are immediate heirs of the tradition inspired by the spirituality of Francis [and Clare] might better see ourselves as responsible stewards of a treasure that has much to offer for the healing of humanity and of the world at large.

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The One Thing Necessary

Seeing Chapter IX of the *Third Order Regular Rule* through the Lens of the Teachings of John Duns Scotus

Mary Beth Ingham CSJ

The First and Greatest Commandment

We all know that the first and greatest commandment — the one thing necessary — is to “*Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength.*”

The truth of it is written on our hearts. No one needs to teach this truth to us. The words of the commandment are natural to us. As Augustine would say, it is closer to our identity than we are to ourselves. At the same time, this command does not merely rest in our hearts but shows itself as active in our lives by bringing harmony, peace, and therefore beauty to the world around us. Harmony and peace bring beauty to what we subjectively feel inside ourselves and to what we objectively observe outside ourselves. We come equipped for everything we need for the spiritual journey. Of course, God’s delight is to be with us as the beautiful line from Proverbs says — “My delight is to be with the children of men.” The Franciscan tradition has taught us this very well.

This scriptural passage is a command and obligation about relationship. As a result, we are surrounded by the commandment, we are impregnated with it, we are like fish in water and the commandment is like the water that surrounds us. The commandment internally and externally, subjectively and objectively manifests itself. The fruit of the commandment is beauty, harmony, gentleness and peace. ***We have the natural ability to live this commandment of relationship.*** In fact, the reason this commandment exists is that it is natural for us to follow it and live our vocation in right relationship.

The Rule Itself

Regarding the Third Order Regular Rule, specifically Chapter IX. The first paragraph in the Chapter speaks about the necessary commandment — love of God — as the source for the apostolic life. The manner of the apostolic life is peacemaking. This means that, in being a presence one is offering a transformative presence to the world. Finally, the goal of the apostolic life is to give praise and glory to God. All of one’s deepest desires and the desires of the human heart converge around this inspiration that is the heart of this Rule. ***Chapter IX is all about the heart: centered on the heart, written on the heart, flowing from the heart.***

This is not to talk about the heart in the sense of the physical organ or seat of emotion. It is to use the biblical sense of the heart; that is, my deepest self, my inner center, the place where my deep, unique self (*haec*, in Scotist terms) expresses itself. This unique self is expressed in but not limited to my emotions and passions.

Affection for Happiness and Affection for Justice

As Scotus noted, the heart has two desires or affections:

1. to love justice through right action and
2. to have what I need for myself to be happy.

The **first** desire is the desire *to love* and *act rightly*, to act as God acts, to see as God sees, to be just. The **second** type of *affection for happiness* or self is a healthy one because it focuses on what I need for a healthy, normal life. Only a misguided act would ask me to not have this desire. This healthy desire for self is part of what makes me a unique individual.



Generous Creativity

These two desires or affections exist in us because they exist in God. God's self love is necessary for all because this is love of the Supreme Being. My rightly ordered self love is necessary only for myself because I am not supreme — not the center of the universe. *My two affections, in right order, allow me to respond with generous creativity to each situation in my life and to transform them.* The *affection for happiness* is a natural disposition, while the *affection for justice* is what allows us to choose freely. These two affections working together and complementing each other are what makes us rational in our choices.

Which are the elements involved in choice? *First, consider how God sees it; how God loves it.* This affords me objectivity because I am looking at things with another's vision. God reveals divine values to us through scripture: concern for the poor, the innocent, the voiceless, etc. We can be transformed into people who see the world from God's point of view by developing harmony between the two affections.

As we see in Scotus, our affection for justice is not lost as a result of Original Sin (some theological traditions claim that it is) and this affection is even shared with the non-baptized. Still, it is important to note that using both affections leads to a state of freedom. Sometimes people choose one affection or the other. For example, battered women may choose to stay in violent relationships in order to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their children. This would be an extreme of other-centered generosity that causes damage to the necessary affection for self happiness.

The fact that our affection for justice is not lost by Original Sin is what opens the

door for the positive view of humanity characteristic of Scotus.

God did not come into history to fix what was broken but rather to be with what God values — humans and all of creation.

This makes a *huge difference to the reason* for apostolic ministry: *we are to be present with, not to be fixing.* Choosing to get our two affections into harmony releases our creative energy and demonstrates the perfection of our reasoning ability. This is true freedom.

We have to make choices about how to act. Sometimes it happens that I can stand in the moment before deciding too quickly what to do. I can get my two affections into harmony and then act creatively with the movement of the Spirit. It's as if I hold myself in readiness and then the Spirit rushes in.

Affection for Justice

Now, let us identify places in the Third Order Regular Rule where the affections for justice and happiness are joined. We can consider the *affection for justice*. Chapter IX, paragraphs 29-30 refer to healing the wounded and the erring.

These are external actions, moving us toward others. But, being willing to take risks to do these types of ministries, to expose one's self to those possibly hostile to such actions reveals a love of justice for its own sake. One can choose to love the good of justice in spite of possible personal repercussions. This requires the ability to recognize the right moment and choose to take a step forward.

The brothers and sisters are to love God with their whole heart, their whole soul and mind and with all their strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves. Let them glorify God in all they do. Sent into the world, they should give Witness by word and work to God's voice and make known to all that only God is all powerful. (cf. Mk 12:30, Mt 22:30)

As they announce peace with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts. No one should be roused to wrath or insult on their account; rather, all should be moved to peace, goodwill and mercy because of their gentleness. The sisters and brothers are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring . . . (29-30)

Affection for Happiness

And, what of the necessary affection for happiness? In paragraphs 30-31 I find places where it reveals itself: *gentleness of heart, striving toward humility and giving thanks with the joy that is part of the Franciscan vocation.* These are acts of the affection for happiness because these acts come from the deepest wellsprings of our selves. The work of a lifetime is involved in having the two affections in balance: taking risks in healing the wounded or erring from the stance of joyful humility.

The Balance

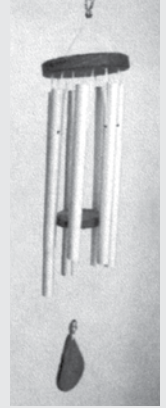
Small acts often reveal that the balance has been realized. An example includes the film "The Lives of Others." Set in 1984, in East Berlin, a member of the secret police had a playwright and his wife under surveillance for suspected but unfounded disloyalty to the State. During this time the policeman is transformed and chooses not to report something. He even chooses to advocate for the two people. The man did an intentional act which opened the door in his life for a different way of being. The affection for justice was revealed by this man who took a risk to promote the good of others. This man did not know where this choice would lead but the results became a part of his life.

The result of the balance of the affection for happiness and the affection for justice is a balance of presence to myself and others, helping us be ready for the next decision. This moment of balance is one full of good possibilities. Scotus uses the example of an artist, such as a musician, who is at the inner "*still point*" of readiness just before he or she begins to play an instrument. The present moment of balance is the moment of the Spirit, from which the creative good will blossom into reality.

Another example includes the experience of attending an Annotation 19 Retreat by Wilkei Au who used the idea of "*the audible*." The audible is the play that the Quarterback can call if he sees something in the field that nobody else sees. Every player has to be alert to the possibility of "the audible." As we move through our daily lives, we also have to be alert to the possibility of "the audible."

Balance and Harmony: The Wind Chime

from *The Harmony of Goodness* by Mary Beth Ingham CSJ



In the introduction, I suggested an image for Scotist moral discussion: the wind chime. I chose this image because it combines elements of balance and harmony with dimensions of visual and musical beauty. I maintain that in Scotus we find an intricate presentation of moral goodness which is dynamic and which requires the development of artistic character which is capable of a discerning judgment about what ought to be done. While each chapter has focused on an aspect of the chime, it is important to reprise all aspects in a final discussion.

As we have seen the chime is composed of several individual pieces which, while separate from one another, must hang in an appropriate relationship to each other in order for the chime to sound. This images the foundational insight of Scotus that each person is an individual in relationship. Haecceitas is not an independent reality, if by independent one means totally separated from all others. The Trinity exemplifies this person-in-relationship and functions as personal goal for all human living. It is communion, not autonomy, which lies at the end of the moral journey. The chime must exhibit balance of all elements. This balance does not require a one to one correlation, however. Two smaller pieces may very well balance a larger piece. The point is that the entire configuration be balanced.

Every chime requires a center disk which is sufficiently weighed to hang appropriately yet sufficiently light to be moved by the wind. The will is such a central element, weighted by its two affections for justice and for possession, yet free enough to move toward the surrounding pieces. Of course, here the wind chime imagery falls short, for in Scotus the will is a rational self-mover and not moved by anything else in a strong sense of determinism. Yet the disk is at the center of other pieces, just as the will functions within a given context. A discussion of the freedom of the will in the absence of any choice makes no more sense than a discussion of a wind chime composed only of a disk hanging from a string with no other pieces to strike.

Surrounding the will are aspects which “decorate” the morally good act, just as the pieces of the chime surround the disk. These aspects are those significant to any moral judgment: time, place, manner, rational will. Like the chime, the morally good act exhibits both a visual and musical beauty. It is pleasing to the eye and ear. This aesthetic perspective informs all other aspects of the moral discussion. It offers the whole against which each piece is to be judged. The virtues, as natural inclinations, surround the will and enhance the beauty of the will’s internal freedom.

The movement of the chime and the beautiful sound fulfill the purpose for which the chime was made. The intellectual virtue of prudence and the theological virtue of charity both belong to the nature of the will. The activity of proper moral decision-making is made possible by the balance already within the will and present in the order which surrounds it. Prudence is the practical wisdom which perceives and creates moral goodness as a work of art. Charity completes the practical dynamic by informing all with love. Together, prudence and charity fulfill the rational and affective dimensions of the will and await the divine response of *acceptatio*.

Together, the human goods of balance and harmony constitute that inner peace which gives rise to joy within the heart of the formed moral agent. Like the artist, she has an internal center of balance. Like the chime, his movements are graceful and grace-filled. The chime is sensitive to the slightest wind. So, too, the moral expert acts quickly in light of what circumstances demand. The greatest danger to moral living is the *non velle*, the capacity of the will to refrain from doing what is right. Moral inertia is difficult to overcome, just as physical inertia is an obstacle to movement. The dancer who has not continued to rehearse experiences stiffness in her limbs. The moral agent who delays acting finds it more difficult to respond at all.

The internal balance and external harmony of the chime correspond to the subjective and objective dimensions of moral living. Within the will, the two affections are held in a balance appropriate to the object of loving. This balance is necessary so that the affection for justice can succeed in directing the affection for possession. The harmony of goodness produced in moral activity is judged in light of rational principles and in light of the divine will. These offer appropriate means by which the will develops its ability to exercise rational deliberation in particular instances.

Ingham CSJ, Mary Beth. *The Harmony of Goodness: Mutuality and Moral Living According to John Duns Scotus*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1996.

I had this happen to me a couple of weeks ago. I was supposed to have a very difficult discussion with someone and I wanted to have it, move on, and be happy. But something said to wait. Another day she came into my office to talk and something inside me said, “Now.” I had the grace to say it as a question which didn’t come to me naturally. So, the Spirit’s “audible” is a moment, and the key for me is to hold and wait for the

right moment rather than “let’s clean up this one-horse town with a John Wayne attitude.” When the grace of the Spirit’s audible happens, I find that a genuine, gentle self pours forth. So, awareness in the present moment is key to our ability to be a transforming agent.

For Scotus, it’s about working toward this. It’s all about working to balance the affection for happiness and the affection for justice at the given moment

as I choose to act. *This places me as an instrument for God’s grace to open the door a crack and let the abundance of God’s love come through.* In the balance of the two affections we move from inner harmony to outer beauty. Just as the musician can move in this way, so the fully formed moral person can act as an artist of beauty.

Where in your life can you identify moments of this kind of artistic ministry?

Some are small and not recognized and we make the mistake of thinking the big events are the most important. I may be surprised that something I thought was minor actually was a major event for someone else. The smallest actions may very well have the largest consequences.

Incarnational Dynamic

In the Franciscan tradition, the incarnational dynamic moves from the image of God to the image of Christ. Following Francis, we are channels of divine abundance with transforming and transformative presence. Acts of peace are sacramental, opening doors to transforming ourselves and the world. In the film mentioned earlier, the man's action transformed him and had an impact in the world around him. Divine, dynamic epiphanies are part of the incarnational dynamic that is still going on in the world. We may not even be aware all the time that we are part of the action and power of this love becoming real in history, this incarnational dynamic, but it is becoming obvious to

In that love which is God (1Jn 4:16) all the brothers and sisters, whether they are praying or serving or working, should strive to be humble in everything. They should not, because of a good work or word God does or speaks in or through them, seek glory or rejoice or exult interiorly. Rather, in every place and circumstance, let them acknowledge that all good belongs to the most high God, Ruler of all things. Let them always give thanks to the one from Whom all good proceeds. (31)

others. It is an epiphany in which we have a role because we are instruments in the hands of the divine musician.

Chapter IX concludes by telling us to acknowledge that all good belongs to God, to whom we give thanks because all good comes from God.

We are present in this dynamic flow of abundant divine goodness. So, the "one thing necessary" is to restore each person to the state of dignity intended by God. It is to let our hidden self grow strong so that the world knows an original blessing.

It is to recreate a transformed self and world according to the intention of God.

In this Rule the call of God's heart is the call of our hearts, calling us to the goal for which we were made. May we enter more fully into that pleroma, that abundance of divine love that brims over and makes all things new. With love as the watchword and gratitude your goal, may you be filled with joy that is your birthright as Franciscans. May you know during this Jubilee time the blessing that you are for the People of God.

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This synthesis is from a special presentation given by Mary Beth Ingham CSJ to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA for the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the approval of the Third Order Regular Rule, 1982-2007.

Synthesis provided by: Joe Schwab OFM

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