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*Let me cry out therefore:*

*“O what a glorious saint he is!*

*His disciple saw his soul ascending into heaven:*

*beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun,*

*glowing brilliantly as it ascended upon a white cloud!*

*O true lamp of the world, shining more brilliantly than the sun in the Church of Christ!*

*Now, you have withdrawn the rays of your light, as you withdraw into that luminous homeland*

*You have exchanged our poor company for that of the angels and saints!*

*In your glorious goodness and great renown, do not put aside care for your sons,*

*though you have put aside flesh like theirs.*

*You know, you truly know, the danger in which you have left them;*

*for it was your blessed presence alone*

*that always mercifully relieved their countless labors and frequent troubles!*

*O truly merciful and most holy father,*

*you were always kind and ready to show mercy and forgive your sinful sons!*

*We bless you therefore, worthy father, as you have been blessed by the Most High,*

*Who is God over all things blessed forever. Amen.”*

(First Life, bk.2, chpt 9 of Bl. Thomas of Celano)

*Almighty, eternal, just, and merciful God,*

*grant to us wretches, by your will, to do what we know you wish,*

*and ever to wish what pleases you,*

*in order that, purified in soul, lighted up within,*

*and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,*

*we may follow the footsteps of your Son,*

*our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*and reach you, Most High, by your grace alone.*

*For you live and reign and are glorified.*

  Daily excerpts from *the Tribulations*, Franciscan Sources

**1** - Knowing the future through the Holy Spirit, he would say: “With the pretext of preaching and edifying others, the brothers shall abandon their vocation, that is, pure and holy simplicity, prayer, humility, and our Lady Poverty. It will happen that, because they believe themselves inflamed with the devotion and love of God, they will remain cold, empty of charity. - **God does not pay weekly, He pays at the end.**

**2** - And so, they will be unable to return to their vocation, as they have wasted the time for living according to their calling; and it is to be feared that what they seemed to have will be taken away from them and they will find their hands empty on the day of tribulation. The people they think they converted to the Lord through their preaching were actually converted to the Lord by the prayers of the holy brothers in deserted places who weep over their own sins and those of others. – **The Beatitudes are a call to us to see ourselves**.

**3** - It has been given by Christ to true Lesser Brothers to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest to know only in parables. There are so many who willingly climb up toward knowledge that anyone who renders himself sterile of it for the love of God will be blessed.” – **Perhaps with charity one should not think**.

**4** - Some brothers came from France and reported to him that the brothers had recently received an important man, a master of sacred theology in Paris. Both the people and the clergy were greatly edified by this. Blessed Francis listened, then sighed and responded: “I am afraid, my sons, that in the end such masters will destroy my plant. - **Every person is their own chief enemy**

5 - The true masters are those who show their way of life to their neighbors through good works with gentle wisdom. A person has only as much learning as his actions show; and is wise only as much as he loves God and neighbor; and a religious is only as good a preacher as much as he humbly and faithfully does the good that he understands.” – **Charity like love should be blind**.

**6** - A holy brother, a master of theology, came from Germany at that time to see Saint Francis, to be sure about his understanding and intention regarding the Rule. As he learned and listened to his intention about life according to the Rule, his spirit became as tranquil and consoled as if Christ Jesus Himself, not a man, had spoken. – **None but myself ever did me any harm**.

**7** - After the interview the brother knelt humbly before Saint Francis and said: “I now promise again, into your hands, to observe, faithfully and purely, this evangelical life and Rule according to the pure and faithful intention which the Holy Spirit has spoken clearly through your mouth, until the end of my life, as much as Christ’s grace will allow me. – **There is more to be feared from unspoken and concealed, than from open and declared hostility**.

**8** - But one favor I ask of you. If in my lifetime it happens that the brothers fall away from the pure observance of the Rule as you foretell through the Spirit, so much that, because of their opposition, I cannot observe it freely among them, I ask by your obedience that I may withdraw to observe the Rule perfectly, alone or with some brothers who also wish to observe it purely.” – **An open foe may prove a curse, but a pretended friend is worse**.

**9** - Hearing these things, Blessed Francis was overjoyed, and blessed him, placing his right hand on his head, saying: “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedek. Know that what you asked is granted, by Christ and by me.” – **Doing an injury puts you below your enemy**.

**10** - He showed in this way that all the promises made to him by Christ about his religion would, in the end, be fulfilled in those who would strive to observe the Rule simply, to the letter, and without glosses. – **Revenge makes you even with your foe but forgiveness sets you above him**.

**11** - Those who bear the easy yoke of Christ’s life and Rule with bitterness are sons of the flesh, always twisting the holy and pious understanding of the Rule toward their own fleshly way of thinking. They are like Ishmael, born according to the flesh, who was hostile to Isaac who was born according to the promise of the Holy Spirit and lived a spiritual and holy life. – **I owe much to my friends, but owe even more to my enemies**.

**12** - So it will be in this life and religion: the sons of the flesh will persecute the sons of the spirit. But God, who divided the sons of Israel from the Egyptians with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, will separate the true sons of the Rule from the sons of the prudence of the flesh. He will abandon the latter in the shadows of error and the coldness of greed and self-love. – **There is so much good in the worst of us.**

**13** - The former He will lead into the light of divine brilliance and the cross-like perfection of seraphic charity, and make them conformed to the body of His brilliance by the power with which He subjects all things to himself. – **There is so much bad even in the best of us.**

**[The Beginning of Division]**

**14** - There was in the time of Saint Francis apparent unity outwardly among the brothers regarding the habit, living together, and obedience. But there was a hidden schism and great diversity in regard to the purity of the Rule, observing and loving it, and obedience and sincere following of the intention of the founder. – **Love makes all hard hearts gentle**.

**15** - Lacking among them were the following: to be of one mind; to have the same charity; to have the same mind among all; to do nothing out of rivalry or for empty glory, each considering others superior; not seeking their own interest but, with the founder, those of Christ, for the consolation of others, what is useful to them, and serves mutual edification. - **From a slip of the foot you may soon recover, but a slip of the tongue you may never recover.**

**16** - Brother Elias, having given himself to the subtleties of philosophy, secretly drew after himself a gang of rebels in a spirit of greed and vanity. He opened up and dug a pit for himself and, deceived, he fell into it and died. – **One may often regret their speech, but never their silence.**

**17** - He failed to recognize the stratagems, tricks, and inventions of Satan, and so, unaware, he prepared the ways for them, improved the route, and made their paths straight, opposing, in the founder, Christ Himself. – **If you desire people to speak well of you, hold your tongue.**

**18** - Christ Himself kindly revealed this to a holy and venerable priest, the rector of a parish in Massa Trabaria, named Don Bartolo, whom Saint Francis designated to act in his place in all things and for all things because of his outstanding holiness. – **Slander kills three: the slandered, the slanderer, and the one who listens to the slander**.

**19** - He was a very discerning man, a consoler of the sorrowful, full of mercy, piety, and charity. The brothers approached him confidently as the kindest of fathers and the instructor of their souls. – **Conversation is telling people a little less than what they want to know**

**20** - He used to receive brothers into the religion and reconciled those who had been expelled and had left. With divine and clear reasoning and living example he demonstrated to them that the counsels of human wisdom that disagree with the way of perfection and the intention of the founder were more than useless: they were infected with deadly poison. – **If only people would only stop talking where they stopped knowing, have the evils in the world would come to an end**.

**21** - This man, pleasing to God, at Christ’s command, in ecstasy of mind while praying, was led to the lower reaches of hell. There he saw Lucifer in his place of punishments, surrounded by the chief spirits of the lower regions. The prince of darkness posed an angry question to them as he asked for advice. – **The best conversation is that in which the heart has a greater share than the head**.

**22** - “We have received unpleasant and troubling news from the desert of the world, through men we hold in our power. Some men have appeared unexpectedly in the world. They despise and trample underfoot the world with the flesh and its vices. They threaten the rights and the places of our domain. – **The genius in conversation is in the art of being totally honest and totally kind at the same time**.

**23** - Unless we offer them some resistance, they will inflict damage and great loss on us. So think carefully what we should do to oppose them. You can hear more fully about their circumstances from those who have just come from there.” – **We seldom repent talking too little, but very often talking too much**.

**24** - At Lucifer’s command they began to report, describing the life and perfection of these men. One huge demon stood up. He and some of the evil spirits under him were engaged in an extraordinary struggle with Saint Francis and his religion. He said: “Even though, as our prince said, many are rising against us recently in various ways, there is one man in particular, a man of lowly condition, unschooled and simple, who has a small society of others like himself. – **Whoever gossips to you will gossip of you**.

**25** - He is the one who has risen up against us in such strength of spirit, that it seems not a man but Jesus of Nazareth in person battling against us in him. No trick of ours, however subtle, no deception, however strong, can deceive or overthrow him or his followers. No matter how many traps we lay, left and right, we cannot capture or overcome him. – **The tongue has no bones, but it can break your back**.

**26** - What is even more painful, any of our faithful followers who go near become our adversaries and deadly enemies. There was a period of silence among them. Then the individual captains began to propose wicked plans as to how victory over their adversaries might be won quickly. – **God gave us two ears and one mouth. Why don’t we listen twice as much as we talk?**

**27** - The details I omit for the sake of brevity. They discussed various vices in many different ways, and proposed examples of how they gained unexpected victories over very great and—as they thought—unassailable saints. Then another demon, Lucifer’s second in command, spoke after all the rest: “You have described numerous sly and workable plans; yet no one, believe me, has thought of the one way to win an overwhelming victory over them.” 286All the demons were interested in hearing his plan and proposal, so he went on: - **Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God**.

**28** - “We cannot defeat these men unless we turn all our commitment, effort, cunning and activity, to the following. We must inspire those who are proud, boasting, curious, deceitful and dishonest, greedy, envious, presumptuous and false, whom we know are ours. By every means we must suggest to them and foster in them the desire to do penance and join them to serve the Lord. Once we have our faction among them, we will seek to increase it every day. By it we will upset them, infect their religion; we will undermine their vows, their words, habits and works. We will make their reputation rot so badly that they, because of the deadly stench, all who approach them will smell the odor of death, and will not smell the enlivening fragrance that leads to life.” – **Afflictions are but the shadows of God’s wings.**

**29** - That plan of subversion pleased Lucifer and all his princes. From then on their policy was to pursue that last proposal with all their strength. God permitted, by His secret and hidden judgment, that the demons move men in tune with their aims and in sympathy with their spite to enter that religion, whose basic principles they hated as most opposed to theirs. 298At the beginning when Francis alone received the brothers, the demons were unable to carry out their evil plans for trickery, because he, enlightened like the cherubim by the Holy Spirit, had eyes front and back, inside and out. – **Sorrow is a fruit. God does not make it grow on limbs too weak to bear it.**

**30** - But then the number of ministers increased throughout the world, who lacked even a modicum of the spiritual perfection essential to forestall the hidden plots of the demons. And the spirit of every one of the ministers was carried away by the desire to increase the number of brothers, under the pretext of the salvation of souls and the expansion of the religion. They multiplied the people but not capture even one of their members.” These arrogant ministers, relying on their own prudence, wanted to rule, not to be ruled; to make a rule, for themselves and others, based on their own opinion and will, rather than observe the Rule humbly, mortifying their own will. – **God does not wish us to remember what He is willing to forget**.

**[Reunification of Office]**

**31** - Consequently, for the founder, and for the brothers who walked in simplicity, labor, sorrow, and affliction of spirit increased. For the tepid, danger grew; for the dissatisfied, glee; and for the malicious, confidence in evil-doing. These evils grew so much even before the death of Saint Francis that he, who was the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, was unable to remedy them by his words, his example, or signs and miracles of healing. Instead he chose, after praying, as the better role for himself, to spend time with God and renounce his office among the brothers. – **I believe in Christianity as I believe in the sun, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else**.