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JAN VAN EYCK'S THE STIGMATIZATION OF ST. FRANCIS:
THE VISUALIZATION OF FRANCISCAN CHRISTOCENTRIC MEDITATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Jan van Eyck's *The Stigmatization of St. Francis*:
The Visualization of Franciscan Christocentric Meditations

by

Sheryl Wilhite Garcia

The imagery of Jan van Eyck's *The Stigmatization of St. Francis*, looked at in the context of contemporary illustrated manuscripts, devotional images, and prayer manuals, suggests that the artist was using the *Agony in the Garden* theme to portray St. Francis as a type of Christ. The viewer would be able to identify certain mnemonic images within the painting as “markers” to instances in Christ’s life and death. This led to a mental visualization of Christ’s entire ministry, from the Annunciation to the Cross, as called for in Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, a Franciscan prayer manual for Christocentric meditation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Last, but not least, I would like to thank my parents, Bob and Linda Wilhite; my grandparents, Harvey and Lou Wilhite; and especially my husband, David, for the love and encouragement each gave me in their own special way.
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Realism, light, color, mysticism—these are the words that come to mind when describing works by Jan van Eyck. He was a master at using light effects and color to achieve a heightened sense of realism; behind the seemingly straightforward scene, however, usually lies a well-crafted web of intricate and subtle mystical imagery.

Jan's most famous commission is the *Ghent Altarpiece* at St. Bavo (fig. 1). Lotte Brand-Philip has explored the complexities of this monumental work and suggested that it was an extremely versatile devotional piece, possibly allowing over eighty different combinations of images according to the feast days of the church.\(^1\) With studies such as this, we begin to fathom the incredible genius van Eyck tapped to create deceptively forthright compositions. The realism of the works draws the viewer in, while he marvels at the precise detail. In such a way, the *Arnolfini Wedding Portrait* (fig. 2) may appear to be no more than a charming interior scene, pleasing to the eye of the modern viewer who considers it a "snapshot" of domestic life in the fifteenth-century. Panofsky, however, pointed out the symbolic elements that made the work into a sacred marriage document.\(^2\) More recently, Linda Seidel has expanded this study to explore the painting as a reflection of social and business customs, investigating the role of women in marriage contracts of the early fifteenth-century in Flanders.\(^3\)

Carol Purtle and Barbara Lane have both characterized some of van Eyck's works as Marian and Eucharistic devotional images. For example,

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paintings of a somewhat block-shaped Virgin with the Christ child on her lap, such as the *Lucca Madonna* (fig. 3), represent the Virgin as altar upon which Christ, the living Eucharistic Host, rests.\(^4\) Jan's *Madonna in the Church* appears at first glance to be a common representation of the Virgin and Child in a church interior (fig. 4). However, further investigation of the imagery—the confusing light source, the unusually large size of the Virgin, the statuette in the background—reveal the picture to be an allegorical representation of the Virgin as the Church. This work centers on Marian devotions and the role of Mary as Mediatrix. Craig Harbison has suggested that some works are meant to represent the “product of devotional imagination,” and that they are visions which have taken place, or are yet hoped for. Private devotions became increasingly important in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as will be discussed later. Harbison proposed that the *Madonna and Child with Canon van der Paele* (fig. 5) does not necessarily anticipate the Canon’s meeting with the Virgin and Child in Heaven upon his death, but is a representation of a vision that has already been granted to van der Paele during a period of meditation.\(^5\) Modern scholars generally agree that van Eyck's works are more complex than traditionally thought, and that these complexities can only be discovered by exploring a greater social context.

This paper will discuss possible meanings, functions, and ownership of a small van Eyck painting in light of the rise in mysticism and the concept of *Imitatio Christi* spurred by the *Devotio Moderna*, with its emphasis on lay piety.

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and salvation through meditation on and emulation of Christ's life. Also to be explored is the role of image to text in the Middle Ages, stemming from the Classical *imagines* that prompted memory of verbal text, to the Books of Hours and devotional manuals that illustrated the accompanying text. Representations of Virtues and Vices derived from the *Psychomachia* may have played a role in van Eyck's creative genius. Finally, the importance of images to monastic meditation--particularly to the devotions of nuns, who seem to have been more sensitive to visions and visual images--will be discussed. Special attention will be paid to Franciscan meditation, linking this painting to the Franciscan devotional manual, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, and showing that, in my opinion, this work is a portable devotional image used to aid in one's meditation on the Life, Miracles, and Passion of Christ. Van Eyck, true to form, realistically portrayed St. Francis at the moment of receiving the stigmata, but subtly manipulated the imagery in such a way as to remind the viewer of aspects of Christ's life.

The painting in question is a later work of Jan van Eyck, *The Stigmatization of St. Francis* (fig. 6), part of the Philadelphia Museum of Art's John G. Johnson Collection. Scholarship has focused primarily on the attribution of this work, and on its relationship to a nearly identical, but larger panel in Turin's Galleria Sabauda (fig. 7). Very little attention has been paid to the unusual iconography of the painting, or to its devotional aspects. It is not known who commissioned the work or why; nor is it known how the painting was used by subsequent owners. Definite answers to these types of questions are
perhaps out of reach; however, suggestions will be made as to possibilities. Of key interest is the inclusion of Brother Leo in the scene. Leo was not present during Francis' vision, and yet Jan decided to follow others' lead in showing Leo with the saint. Was he following convention, and producing a typical narrative work based on legends of St. Francis? As will be shown, the inclusion of Leo was essential to van Eyck's program of turning out a complex devotional image.

This diminutive panel, 5" x 5 3/4", is painted on parchment that has been glued to wood panel. While the painting does not appear to have come from a manuscript, the imagery may be directly linked to that found in Books of Hours. The painting shows St. Francis kneeling, close to the picture plane left of center, with the nail marks visible in this hands and feet. His eyes are turned upward, but it is difficult to discern whether he looks directly at the floating crucifix in the upper right, upon which hangs a man with the six wings of a seraph. Francis' hands are raised in what could be a gesture of surprise or praise. Directly under the crucifix sits a sleeping figure, head on hand, beside a small stream emerging from a large body of rock. Dressed in a darker robe, this figure has been identified as Brother Leo, one of Francis' disciples. Between the two men, in the background, is a multi-towered city upon a river. Tiny figures are evident, crossing the river, riding upon the road to the city, and gathering near the city's walls. Behind the towers, the river disappears into snow-capped mountains.

6 Technical information on the painting was supplied to me by Marigene H. Butler, Head of Conservation at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Her findings, An Investigation of The Stigmatization of St. Francis, is to be published in a forthcoming Philadelphia MA Bulletin devoted to this painting (page numbers are taken from her original manuscript, and may differ from those in any forthcoming publication.) I thank her for allowing me access to her files, and for her time in discussing this work with me.
Francis’ immediate surroundings are rocky, with various types of plant life that have been described as Iberian, suggesting that van Eyck was attempting to recreate the landscape of Mount Alverna.\(^7\)

The provenance of Jan’s painting dates only from 1827, when it was brought to London by Lord Heytesbury. Then the British Ambassador to Portugal, he purchased the work as a Dürer from a physician in Lisbon. It was sold in 1894 to Gooden and Fox, from whom it was purchased a month later by John G. Johnson, who gave the panel to the Philadelphia Museum of Art as part of the John G. Johnson Collection upon his death in 1917.\(^8\)

The first attribution of the work to Jan van Eyck came from Waagen in 1857. He supposed the work to have been painted in Portugal while Jan was part of Duke Philip’s delegation arranging for the hand of Isabella in 1428-29.\(^9\) In 1860, a will of one Anselm Adornes was published by Pinchart. Adornes was a wealthy lord, and a burgomaster of Bruges in 1475. Originally part of a Genoese family, Adornes’ branch had been firmly established in Bruges. He was born in 1424, seventeen years before van Eyck’s death. His will, dated February 10, 1470 at Bruges, states

> Item, I give to each of my dear daughters, to be theirs, to wit, Marguerite, Chartrusianne and Louise, Saint Trude, a little picture wherein St. Francis in portraiture from the hand of Master Jan van Eyck and make the condition that in the shutters of the same little pictures be made my likeness and that of my wife, as well as can be made.\(^10\)

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\(^10\) Johnson, 35 (see note 8).
Weale identified the 5 x 5 3/4" Johnson painting and its 11 5/8 x 13 1/4" "twin" in Turin as those referred to in the bequest. Weale attributed the work to Jan, believing it to have been executed in Spain because the brown habit of the Franciscans was not used in the Low Countries until the end of the fifteenth-century. Northern Franciscans were known as Grey Friars, due to their grey habits. This argument was emphatically refuted by the Very Reverend R. Huber, who explained that the color of habit varied in any country due to the poverty of the order—they wore what they could get.\(^{11}\) By 1901, Weale had changed his attribution to Hubert, citing similarities in style and flora to works ascribed to the elder van Eyck. He also noted the portrait-like character of the Francis figure, remarking that the saint was not an impersonation of the poor, frail, friar, but of a sturdy middle-aged man.\(^{12}\)

For some months a debate politely raged in the pages of *Burlington Magazine*. Some thought the Turin painting to be original, and the Johnson work a copy of it; others thought the Johnson work superior in execution. All thought the original painting, whichever it was, to have been done by Hubert. Roger Fry wrote to join in the argument, reporting on his findings during a 1906 cleaning of the Johnson panel. Fry stated that he had no doubt that the work was the original, executed by Hubert. The panel had an extra piece attached at the top, which enlarged the panel to 8" x 6". When Fry removed this piece, he found that the work was painted all round with a brilliant scarlet margin, which


\(^{12}\) Weale, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, XXV, 1901: 474-82 and *Hubert and John van Eyck* (New York: John Lane, 1908) 130-133.
likened to that seen on the border of a manuscript illumination. He supposed
that Hubert had conceived of the St. Francis as a miniature in oil, and that it was
close in date to the Milan-Turin Hours (early 1420's). Due to the height
created by the added piece, Valentiner thought that the panel may have served
as the high center of a triptych. He ascribed the work to Jan van Eyck.14

Friedländer did not think that either panel showed "features that would
unmistakably identify it as a copy." In light of the Adornes will, he suggested
that Jan painted them both either simultaneously, or copied one from another.
He pointed out that Adornes evidently regarded both as originals by Jan van
Eyck and of equal value. Friedländer remarked that the head of Francis
appeared to be a portrait, possibly that of Anselm's father, the original patron,
since Anselm would have been too young to have commissioned the works
himself. A later scholar established Adornes' father's name as Pierre, rather
than Francis as Friedländer had speculated. Whether some other family
member bore the saint's name is unknown, but Adornes' will did also call for "my
brother of the St. Francis Order" to be one of the attendants at his funeral.15

Baldass called the Johnson painting an early work by Jan, and likened
the style and composition to the Milan-Turin Hours' Agony in the Garden (fig. 8),
believed by some also to be a work of Jan van Eyck. Panofsky questioned the
authenticity of either painting, calling them "dry and pedestrian yet strangely

13 See the following volumes of Burlington Magazine: Mather, IX, 1906: 358; Ricketts, IX, 1906:
428; Mather, X, 1906: 137; Jaccaci, XI, 1907: 46-8; Fry, XLVIII, 1926: 274.
14 W.R. Valentiner, A Catalogue of a Collection of Paintings and Some Art Objects vol. II
See the entry in the Johnson Catalogue for remarks concerning Adornes' Will (note 8).
imprecise and fuzzy... the figure of the saint himself is so badly constructed that it is unacceptable even as an invention of Jan van Eyck (of course, that was before the work was cleaned.)

According to the Conservation Department at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the almost four times larger Turin painting is identical in design and subject matter with the Johnson work, but the Turin image contains underdrawing not found in the smaller painting, suggesting that the Johnson work was executed after the Turin painting. The two paintings also have nearly identical proportions, such that a projection of one image onto the other renders a precise match of individual parts of the works, but not all of the painting can be aligned simultaneously. They speculate that this could be the result of the design's having been transferred by means of patterns or some other technique from the larger painting to the smaller. The only other difference is the depiction of St. Francis' features; each appears to be a portrait of a real, and different, person.

Why was the smaller work executed? In 1957, a discovery was made of over a hundred fifteenth- and sixteenth-century images beneath the choir floor of the convent of Wienhausen. They were mostly small pieces of parchment cut from larger sheets and pasted on to wooden tablets. This was a type of mass production to satisfy the demand for devotional images. Since the St. Francis is painted on parchment glued to wood panel, it seems likely that it was also

16 Ludwig Baldass, Jan van Eyck (New York: Phaidon, 1952) 30.
17 Butler, 1, 15-20.
18 Eugene Honée, "Image and Imagination in the Medieval Culture of Prayer: A Historical Perspective," The Art of Devotion, ed. Henk van Os (London: Merrell Holberton, 1994) 163. Honée does not note his source for this information, and I was unable to learn anything more about the images found at Wienhausen, but it would be interesting possibly to link van Eyck's little panel with this practice. Cf. figure 21 for an example.
specifically produced as a small, portable devotional image. We could speculate that perhaps there were several little van Eyck St. Francis panels, with the Johnson work being only one of its kind to survive; or it was one of many copies planned, but never executed.

Now let us turn to why, in either work, the specific imagery was created. Most of the contemporary northern depictions of the stigmatization occur in Books of Hours which present the saints' lives, and will be used for comparison later.\textsuperscript{19} The Italian renditions include fresco versions as part of the life cycle of Saint Francis in church decoration, such as in the early fourteenth-century San Francesco at Assisi (fig. 9), or the slightly earlier Bardi Chapel at Santa Croce in Florence (fig. 10).\textsuperscript{20} Panels that survive were used as altarpieces, such as Berlinghieri's, executed not long after the canonization of St. Francis (fig. 11).

Because these works are used as part of a cycle depicting Francis' life, they tend to incorporate as many narrative elements as possible, easily identifiable by the loyal followers of Francis. They show Francis on Alverna, with the Seraph hovering above, and nearly all depict the rays connecting the crucifixion points of the Seraph with those appearing on St. Francis. The rocks on the mountain are prominently featured, giving an idea of the barren wilderness. However, the artists also include a chapel at lower right, and either a cave or a monk's cell for Francis to the upper left. These details fit in with the various texts on St. Francis that were produced after his death. Giotto, in the Bardi Chapel fresco, gives Francis a cave in which to dwell, because the newly

\textsuperscript{19} cf. figures 21, 22, and 28, for example.
\textsuperscript{20} This dating of the two churches is taken from James H. Stubblebine, \textit{Assisi and the Rise of Vernacular Art} (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).
published *Mirror of Perfection* (1318) stated that the saint had not built a house or cell for shelter, but had taken refuge beneath the rocks. The later image in the Upper Church at Assisi includes (for the first time) Brother Leo. James Stubblebine concludes that Giotto was drawing from the recently available text of the *Actus Beati Francisci*, which appears to be an account by Leo himself, in which the Friar claims to be a witness to the scene of the stigmatization. This new iconography became popular instantly and was widely copied by other artists.

Although van Eyck does keep the image of Brother Leo, there are only two other elements from these narrative works that he chooses to include. One is, of course, the Seraph, but Jan does not show the usual rays connecting the marks of stigmata. The second is the rocks. Nowhere do we find the chapel, the cell or hut, or the cave, which have been essential narrative elements. Instead, a stream and the city on the river have been added, which are not standard elements in any of the narrative works. Also, Leo is shown sleeping, rather than spying on his leader, as the Francis legends tell us he was wont to do. Van Eyck had no need to stress these narrative elements because he was not stressing the life of Francis, but, I believe, using the saint's image for other purposes. Also, the inclusion of the stream and the city, like the sleeping Leo, further his intended symbolism, as will be shown later.

The demand for devotional images such as those produced at

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21 Stubblebine, 80-83.
22 Ibid, 85-86.
23 cf. the story of the flaming torch descending on the head of Francis, which was witnessed by Leo as he was spying; this tale can be found in the *Little Flowers of St. Francis*. 
Wienhausen increased because the age directly preceding van Eyck's was witness to a variety of changes affecting every aspect of society, not least of which was spirituality. As early as the eleventh- and twelfth-centuries, the Latin liturgy had begun to lose its meaning to the general population for whom vernacular languages were the primary mode of communication (particularly in Northern Europe, where Germanic languages had no relationship to Classical Latin). Interaction between priest and laity was held at a minimum. By the fourteenth-century, the demand for masses for the dead and private masses kept both the clergy and the altars in constant employ. Because priests received money for each mass, liturgy was pared down to bare necessity, to increase the number of masses that could be said. Even celebration of the Eucharist was no longer a joint performance of priest and laity, but rather was conducted for the population by the priest.

By the fifteenth-century, most laypersons became content with only seeing the Host, rather than receiving it, and the elevation of the Host became an event of supreme importance. The wafer itself took on relic-like qualities and powers, and crowds clamored for mere sight of it. They pressed in at just that moment of elevation and dispersed quickly afterwards, believing that simply having seen the Host would keep them from evil, assure salvation, and even absolve sin. Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) noted, in his Defence of the True and Catholic Doctrine, that “the people so devoutly did knock and kneel at every sight of the sacrament, but that they worshipped that visible thing which they saw with their eyes and took it for very God." It was in this atmosphere,
then, that participating in and hearing the liturgy became less significant for the laity, but seeing--viewing--was critical.24 It was this translation of the visible element into a more mystical concept that allowed for the viewing of images, panels such as our St. Francis or imagined liturgical scenes, to become an increasingly important aspect of a new trend in personal devotion.

Indeed, the rise in devotionalism has been called the most significant development in late medieval Christianity. Beginning about the twelfth-century, devotions took the forms of pilgrimages, meditations on the Passion of Christ, Marian devotions, and veneration of relics, among other things. Images often played a key role in these devotions, which were usually directed toward some historical person, such as a saint, the Virgin, or the suffering Christ.25 An image, whether an icon of a saint, a statuette of Mary, or an illumination or panel of the Man of Sorrows helped the viewer to direct his thoughts and prayers properly, and provided an excellent focus for visionary experiences.

Other factors that played a role in developing the trend towards more personal, less clerically assisted piety were the rise in mendicant orders during the thirteenth-century, and, continuing into the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries, the increasing number of laypersons who wished to consecrate themselves to a religious, if not cloistered, lifestyle that de-emphasized the clergy’s role as spiritual counselors. The “Modern Devotion” was an excellent example of communities that adopted monastic habits, but not their vows.

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Known originally as the "Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life," these people simply undertook to visit their own parish churches on a regular basis, to live together in humility and pursuit of the virtues, and to follow a personal religion, rather than mere doctrine, by faithful imitation of Christ's example. Their early leaders, such as Geert Groote, who started preaching in 1380, translated scripture and meditational readings on the life of Christ from Latin into Middle Dutch, and their "collations" (sermons preached to interested townsfolk) were also given in the vernacular.\textsuperscript{26} Groote succeeded in reviving the primitive Christian Church; that which had promoted the meeting and praying together of the brethren, who had encouraged one another and held each other accountable in their striving for a Christ-like life. Groote's initial ideas were carried out by his followers, and helped to usher in the Reformation.\textsuperscript{27}

Thomas à Kempis, a student of the "Common Life," wrote Of the Imitation of Christ in 1441, the year of van Eyck's death. This treatise relies on many early teachings of Groote and his successors, who themselves drew heavily on the New Testament and Church Fathers, so the ideas contained within it would probably already have been known in van Eyck's time. Kempis' book emphasizes the mystical beliefs that man is born into sin and must constantly strive to subjugate his baser nature by filling himself with Christ. Virtue is to be sought more fervently than learning, and once one's evil desires are brought under control, all that is left is love for one's Creator and one's neighbor.

\textsuperscript{26} John van Engen, trans., Devotion Modern, Basic Writings (New York: Paulist Press, 1988) 13-17.

Kempis writes (a prayer addressed to Christ),

Repress thou my many wandering thoughts, and break in pieces those temptations which so violently assault me. Fight thou strongly for me, and vanquish these evil beasts, these alluring desires of the flesh; that so peace may be obtained by thy power, and that thy abundant praise may resound in a holy temple, that is, in a pure conscience.28

With dissatisfaction over the neglect of flock and abuses of power undertaken by the clergy and mendicant orders, this new way of life was very appealing to men and women alike. Common Houses sprang up all around the region, as more and more people purposed to set their mind's eye on the vision of Christ—the teaching Christ, the scourged Christ, the crucified Christ. The Brethren would probably have appreciated our image of St. Francis. Two of Groote's successors were particularly interested in a mystical treatise by a Franciscan Friar, David of Augsburg, Profectus Religiosorum, and early writings by these followers contain large passages from the Franciscan treatise.29 St. Francis' story of extreme devotion to Christ would have appealed to the Brothers and Sisters, despite its asceticism, and he could have been considered an early role model.

The fourteenth-century, then, saw a rise in mysticism. Writers such as Groote, Tauler, and Suso, drawing upon the works of earlier men like Augustine and on the spirituality of the Dominicans, Cistercians and Franciscans, cultivated the belief that the "devout soul could be so ravished above itself as to achieve direct, intuitive, ecstatic experience of God." These writers were not necessarily tied to monasteries, and wrote in the vernacular rather than Latin. Thus, they

29 Hyma, 544-545.
could reach a much wider audience than their predecessors, men like Bernard of Clairveaux and St. Bonaventure. Members of the mendicant orders took to preaching devotional sermons on the mysticism of an intimate relationship with Christ, which also came to be well received by the laity.  

Out of this mysticism developed an emphasis on the experiencing of visions—primarily of Christ or the Virgin—after periods of intense meditation and prayer, sometimes facilitated by fasting. This visionary experience signaled that a new level had been reached in one's relationship with Christ; a goal had been achieved insofar as personal contact had been made. The vision denoted a specific visitation of Christ or the Virgin to the individual, which validated and approved that person's efforts, through prayer and meditation, to emulate the Savior. As mentioned earlier, images often played a key role in this process. The image could be placed in one's home, as well as inside a church, and, as a sacred object, would define that part of a profane space as appropriate for devotion.  

The Master of the Saint Catherine Legend depicts a scene of Catherine in her own study, meditating on a cult image of the Virgin, who comes to life before her (fig. 12). More often than not, these images were narratives isolated out of the liturgy or the bible, rather than the traditional cult icons. As realistic narratives, instead of abstract metaphors, these images—mostly in the form of Books of Hours or panel paintings—were invaluable as instructional and devotional aids. One scholar has noted that in these images, artists were able

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30 Oakley, 89-91 and Kieckhefer, 77.
31 Kieckhefer, 81.
to manifest lay visions and meditations, and often paired donors with, or put them into the place of holy figures. By identifying the donor (or any observer) with a particular saint or individual known for his visionary experience, these images enabled the beholder to have a "vision by osmosis."\textsuperscript{33} An example would be Augustus' vision of the Ara Coeli, or the vision of St. Gregory during mass where the Host became Christ in the flesh, or St. Francis' seraphic vision. Because these narrative images were often depicted in contemporary, realistic settings, the viewer's meditative experience was greatly enhanced, since he could easily place himself into the context of the narrative.

Narrative images had been used to remind individuals of certain "texts"—speeches, lists, or lectures—since classical times. Mankind did not always have the ability to write thoughts down for future reference. The capacity to store away large tracts of literature within the memory and recall them at will was essential. The ancient Greeks had a system, which they may have borrowed from elsewhere and which was passed on to the Romans and into the Middle Ages, whereby rules for placing images in the memory to evoke certain ideas and even specific words were established.\textsuperscript{34} One was to think of a large architectural space, with various columns, rooms, doors, and such located at not too regular intervals, otherwise the spacing would be too similar and cause confusion in recalling specific areas. The lighting was to be neither too dark, nor too bright. On the columns or doors, proceeding in order, one was to place images of something or someone (imaginex) that would remind the individual of

\textsuperscript{33} Harbison, "Visions," 87-118.
\textsuperscript{34} Frances A. Yates, The Art of Memory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) 1-49.
what he (orators were mostly male back then) needed to say. It was considered easier to use images that stood for phrases and ideas, rather than specific wording, since thinking up and remembering images for every word was a monumental task. When the individual needed to reproduce the text, he would “read” it by the mnemonic images. By “walking” the space in his mind and seeing the *imagines*, he could start at any point or even go from end to beginning.\(^{35}\) The *Ad Herrenium*, a first-century B. C. text-book on rhetoric uses the following example in teaching mnemonics. Assume that you are the counsel for the defence in a law suit. According to the prosecution, your client poisoned a man, in front of witnesses, to gain an inheritance. To remind yourself of the accusation, use this image:

> We shall imagine the man in question is lying ill in bed, if we know him personally. If we do not know him, we shall yet take someone to be our invalid, but not a man of the lowest class, so that he may come to mind at once. And we shall place the defendant at the bedside, holding in his right hand a cup, in his left, tablets, and on the fourth finger, a ram’s testicles. In this way we can have in memory the man who was poisoned, the witnesses, and the inheritance.

The tablets are to call to mind the inheritance, and the cup recalls the poison. The ram’s testicles are an aural choice—“testicles” sounds similar to “testes”--the Latin word for “witnesses”, and will remind you of these persons.\(^{36}\) The scene has human action, is dramatic, and striking to the memory. These are key points to the *imagine*.

Mary Carruthers, in her book on the art of memory, states that pictures can function “textually,” as a type of writing in themselves. She points out that

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) Cited in Yates, 11-12.
Gregory the Great wrote that, basically, "a picture is for learning a story. It is not, in our sense, a picture of some thing but rather the means for memorizing and recollecting the same matter or story that written letters also record."  Van Eyck's *St. Francis* image is just such a picture—it is intended to remind the viewer of a text about the venerable Francis—rather than simply serve as the saint's cult icon. The inclusion of Leo, the stream, and the city are visual clues to this text. The image, then, in referring to a body of writing, should be "read" in a similar manner. Michael Camille stresses the importance in the Middle Ages between seeing and reading; for example the numerous manuscript images where figures hold scrolls whereon their speech is written out. See, for instance, figure 27, where one of the characters speaks and his words are printed for the viewer, who already knows them by heart, to read. Camille further points out that reading, and seeing, was often a group activity. Illiteracy was still a large concern, and perhaps one or two in a group were able to read. While someone gave voice to the text, the others looked at the words and the pictures representing the story. This is basically what occurred for the laity using their prayer books in church. While the priest read the mass, they looked at the images that corresponded to the words.

Carruthers writes of diagrams used for memory in the Middle Ages, diagrams which were infinitely expandable mental structures. The continuous

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40 Carruthers, 251.
narrative would seem to be such an infinitely expandable structure. Continuous narrative illustrations had been popular since the time of the earliest codices and are often used in Books of Hours. Evolving from a scroll format, these works compress several specific events into one folio or frame, and the viewer is able to travel, so to speak, from one end of the story to the other with the imagery. A good example is Hans Memling’s fifteenth-century panel, *The Passion of Christ* (fig. 13). In such a way, the viewer is able to recall and reflect upon an entire cycle of events by looking at one work, in much the same way that one traveled through the memory, stopping at the imaginés, to recollect a story. It was also possible, for the devout who could not afford to undertake a regular pilgrimage, to make the journey through the use of imagery such as Memling’s, essentially undertaking a mental pilgrimage. Thus, the individual could start with the Last Supper, and “visit” the successive stages of Christ’s Passion, just as he might progress from station to station on a pilgrimage tour of Jerusalem. The “Stations of the Cross” were introduced by the Franciscans in the late Middle Ages in just such an imitation of the Holy City tour.41

The Franciscans made great use of imagery in their meditative devotions. They found Christocentric meditation useful preparation for prayer and the sacrament of penance because it required only that the spiritual novice be familiar with scriptural stories. Nearly every layperson knew the gospel well enough to reconstruct and envision important events from Christ’s life. Franciscans encouraged penitents to freely meditate on the gospels and to use

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their imaginations to "mesh their individual history with the sacred history of scripture." Only by experiencing life with Christ in this way could they understand the sympathy Christ had for mankind, and the sacrifice of the Cross that He chose to suffer out of love. In response, the penitent would freely surrender his own will in preparation for penance. With its focus on "perfect penance" and individual experience, Franciscan spirituality manifested itself most clearly in participatory meditations on Christ's humanity, and particularly the experience of the Passion, exemplified by the popular gospel harmonies and narratives like the Meditations on the Life of Christ, by Pseudo-Bonaventure. The three principle stages of Christocentric meditation as developed by St. Bonaventure were first, sensible recollection, which provided a focus for meditation by vividly creating a scene of a gospel event in the imagination (forming an imagine). Alternately, the penitent could view illustrations, such as were included in many of the popular copies of Meditations on the Life of Christ, or a similar image, such as a painting. Second was emotional reflection, or the meditator's response to the scene. As his willful soul was confronted with Christ's compassion, he became aware of his own sinful nature. This led finally to moral application, typically a plea for guidance or expression of love at the end of the meditation.

The theology of the Franciscans is closely bound up with the example and experiences of their founder, St. Francis of Assisi. Francis was born in

merchant and his wife, and grew up with rather wild and costly ways before his conversion. Francis espoused a monastic lifestyle that encompassed humble service to his fellow man as well as the prayerful and meditative retreat from society practiced by the established monastic orders. He took a vow of absolute poverty in order to conform to the humility of the scourged Christ on the Cross. Poverty also released him from an attachment to all earthly things so that he could focus more acutely on obedience to God. Followers were attracted to this dualistic lifestyle, and within a few months, Francis had twelve close disciples. The Pope approved a rule Francis wrote for his companions in 1209, and the Order of Friars Minor was established, spreading rapidly throughout Italy.\textsuperscript{45}

Biographers of Francis stressed his likeness to Christ from the very beginning. Thomas of Celano, one of the saint's disciples, wrote the first story of Francis' life shortly after his canonization. Thomas went by firsthand knowledge, as well as information received from other brothers who had worked closely with "holy Father Francis." Thomas relates numerous miracles performed by the saint during his life--how he healed the blind and deformed, and cast out demons just as Christ had done when He walked the earth. Thomas also chronicles how Francis was careful to attend to the needs of the poor, castigating himself for gluttony whenever he met someone in more dire circumstances of poverty than he. Francis strove by word and deed to prove worthy of the crucified Christ, and prayed constantly to become in body, mind, and spirit like His Savior.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Thomas of Celano, passim.
The climax of Francis' spiritual journey occurred in 1224 during the feast of St. Michael. Francis had taken three companions up to Mount Alverna for forty days of fasting and prayer, commemorating Christ's forty days in the desert. He had prepared a place a way off from his disciples where he could pray in solitude among the rocks and clefts of the mountain. God had revealed to him that the clefts were created at the hour of Christ's Passion, when the rocks had been "rent asunder" according to the gospel. Francis had already received divine direction that he would suffer some fate similar to Christ's Passion, and so realized that this was the appointed place to experience that fate. He spent whole nights in prayers of preparation, being taunted by the devil and consoled by God, until the day of the Most Holy Cross. Before daybreak of that morning, Francis knelt alone and prayed the following prayer, according to St. Bonaventure,

O my Lord Jesus Christ, two graces do I pray Thee to grant unto me ere I die: the first, that while I live I may feel in my body and in my soul, so far as is possible, that sorrow, sweet Lord, that Thou didst suffer in the hour of Thy bitterest Passion; the second is, that I may feel in my heart, so far as may be possible, that exceeding love wherewith, O Son of God, Thou wast enkindled to endure willingly for us sinners agony so great.47

After remaining in prayerful contemplation of the Passion for some time, Francis suddenly beheld a seraph with flaming wings and the form of a crucified man descend from heaven. The whole of the mountain shone with dazzling splendor, such that people in the surrounding countryside thought the sun had risen, and rose up likewise to set about their business for the day. The Christ in the

seraphic vision spoke to Francis, saying

Knowest thou what I have done to thee? I have given thee the stigmas that are the marks of my Passion, in order that thou be My standard-bearer. And even as I, on the day of my death, descended into limbo and delivered all the souls I found there by virtue of these My stigmas, so do I grant to thee that every year, on the day of thy death, thou mayst go to purgatory and deliver all the souls thou shalt find there of thy three orders—Minors, Sisters, and Penitents—and others likewise that shall have had great devotion to thee, and thou shalt lead them up to the glory of paradise in order that thou be conformed to Me in thy death, even as thou art in thy life.\footnote{St. Bonaventure, 149.}

After the vision disappeared, Francis realized that nail marks began to appear on his hands and feet, and the wound in his side, which bled from time to time. He strove to keep the marks concealed from all but his closest companions, who marveled at how God had changed Francis into the true image of Christ. Francis died two years later, having performed more miracles in the interim, and was canonized after another two years, although he had already been referred to as “saint” since before his death.\footnote{Thomas of Celano, passim, and St. Bonaventure, 1-236.}

This climax, the stigmatization of St. Francis, appears to be the subject of Jan van Eyck’s little painting. When viewed on a very basic level, one could assume that this is simply a veneration image of someone’s patron saint, to whom he prayed for special favor or less time in purgatory. Remember that Christ gave St. Francis permission to rescue souls from limbo on an annual basis. The faithful were prompted to recall and imitate the virtues of saints depicted in illustrations. A German prayer card of circa 1470-80 depicts St. Francis on Alverna, showing the sleeping Leo and the animals which Francis
also counted as his brethren (fig. 14). The bottom of the card contains a printed prayer to Francis, reading

Holy and worthy father, St. Francis, a servant of Jesus Christ and a consolation for all mankind, who serve you here and call unto you, and honour you with prayer and fasting, celebrations, alms-giving and other good deeds. I pray you to pray to God for me, Who bestowed the five wounds upon you when He appeared to you. Give me voluntary poverty, chastity, obedience, penitence and sorrow for my sins, and eternal life. Amen.\textsuperscript{50}

On another basic level, this could be taken as an instructional image on how to pray properly in order to receive a vision. Body language was important to the attitude of prayer. A late fourteenth-century manuscript in the library at Siena depicts saints in various attitudes of prayer (fig. 15), and a fifteenth-century Dominican manuscript shows the nine modes of prayer used by St. Dominic (figs. 16, 17).\textsuperscript{51} James Snyder wrote of the St. Francis panel that the praying hands are on the central axis of the picture, splitting the composition into two antithetical halves. Brother Leo, the image of sloth in monastic life, is closed off from the vision by barren rocks, whereas St. Francis kneels by radiant trees and flowers.\textsuperscript{52} The viewer is visually instructed to kneel and pray in a watchful and reverent manner, not chancing to fall asleep, as has Leo, and so miss out on the anticipated vision. Viewers familiar with the story of St. Francis, who was one of the "most beloved" saints in the late middle ages,\textsuperscript{53} would know of his

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid, 62-63.
\textsuperscript{51} van Os, 62-64.
\textsuperscript{52} James Snyder, unpublished paper given at the CAA conference in Philadelphia in 1983. This work is to be published in an upcoming issue of the Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin dedicated to the van Eyck St. Francis panel.
intense devotion to God and his diligence in prayer, and thereby find a most
suitable role model for their own devotions.

Perhaps Snyder touched upon something when he said the picture was
divided into two antithetical halves. The image could be viewed as an allegory
of Virtue and Vice, along the lines of the classical *Psychomachia* images.
Katzenellenbogen tells us that, since the Early Christian period, Virtues have
been associated with the portrayal of well-known personalities.54 Much has
been made in the past over the choice of color for the two monks' robes. Virtues
were usually clad in brightly colored garments to differentiate them by color
symbolism from the Vices, who were clad in more somber hues.55 Obviously,
van Eyck could not put Francis into a colorful robe, so he chose to garb him in a
lighter colored robe than the disciple Leo, to further stress the dichotomy of the
two figures. Katzenellenbogen wrote of a manuscript, the *Klimax Hours*, where
a monk is striving to climb the ladder to heaven. He must first overcome his
sinful desires and achieve the virtues to advance to the top-most rung of the
ladder, where he will join Faith, Hope, and Charity. Although assisted by
angels/virtues in his climb, the monk is besought by devils/vices, who seek to
deter him. One folio specifically pictures Proseuche (Prayer) flogging the
sleeping Hypnos. Bonaventure, in his *Life of St. Francis*, states that "it was the
custom of that angelic man, Francis, never to be slothful in good, but rather, like
the heavenly spirits on Jacob's ladder, to be ever ascending toward God. . ."56

55 Ibid., 8, n. 1.
56 St. Bonaventure, 505.
wings of the Seraphim each stood for a particular virtue, as drawn by Matthew Paris (fig. 18). The feathers are labeled according to their virtues: Veritas, Integritas, Firmitas, Humilitas, and Simplicitas.57

The fact that Leo has his back turned to the scene of the stigmatization in addition to being asleep, rather than actively spying on Francis, is also an important visual clue. The Rothschild Canticles (an illuminated manuscript produced for a woman patron) features a scene where a couple representing immoral love shun Christ by turning their backs to the altar (fig. 19). Another image depicts a worshiper who turns his back on a pagan idol to focus his attention on Christ (fig. 20).58 With the gesture of the turned back, van Eyck has definitely used Leo as a repudiation of Francis’ positive Christian experience. Furthermore, the cords of each monks’ habit are carefully laid out, nearly touching, and appear to be almost one cord now severed in two. The bond that had connected the Brothers is now broken, just as the bond that one shares with Christ will be severed if one turns his back to the Savior. This painting could have been owned by a Franciscan monk or nun, who used it to meditate upon the Virtues, to aid in his or her own climb to heaven, and to keep focus on Christ.

A nun certainly did own this work—both of Anselm Adornes’ daughters entered convents, although not Franciscan. The painting, and its larger counterpart, were probably invaluable aids to the devotions of these women.

But what of the original owner? As we have seen, Anselm would have been too young himself to have commissioned either painting from van Eyck. The most obvious conclusion would be that the original patron was a Franciscan Friar, or more likely a Poor Clare, the female equivalent. Because the Adornes will mentions the Franciscan Order, it could be speculated that someone within the family was a tertiary member. The Third Order of Franciscans was comprised of those people who did not wish to become Friars Minor or Poor Clares, but who wished to practice basic Franciscan theology in their own spiritual lives. This possibility may account for the portrait-like character of St. Francis in the painting—a Third Order member may have had his own portrait included so as to more closely identify with St. Francis/Christ in his meditations, not having the benefit of the Brotherhood to daily reinforce his convictions. Or the portrait may simply have been included so as to remind the recipient of the painting of a cherished relative, with the sitter having no other affiliation to the Franciscans.

The tiny size of the painting suggests that it may have been easily carried for travel. Adornes went on pilgrimages, and traveled on business for Charles the Bold. He, or some other member of his family may have carried it with him in order to maintain a devotional routine while far from home. Some owners of smaller images wore them around their necks (fig. 21). While this 5 x 5 3/4" work may be a bit large to wear as a devotional pendant or badge, perhaps the owner still carried it with him or her to show affiliation with the Franciscans.

It is interesting that Adornes gave the two St. Francis works to his nun.

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59 Cartenrica Spantigati, taken from an unpublished article, which may be included in the upcoming Philadelphia MA Bulletin on the St. Francis panel.
60 van Cs, 162-163.
daughters. Imagery played an important role in the education of nuns, particularly in the training of novices. The Dominicans believed that art could be useful to the “lower, preliminary stages” of mysticism, such as prayer and meditation, but should be left behind at the highest stage of contemplation, namely, vision and mystical union.61 In fact, the Dominicans translated the lessons of the Vita Patrum into pictures for the edification of the nuns in the cura monialium.62 The copied images found at Wienhausen were under the floor of the convent, suggesting, perhaps, that the images had been produced for the nuns’ use. In general, it seems that women have been more susceptible to visions and mystical union than men. Women have had more mystical experiences, such as subsisting for years upon the Host only, or having Christ appear to them as either a baby or a young man, with whom they experience some sort of physical relationship.63 Of 321 known cases of persons receiving the stigmata (up to 1962), 280 of these were women.64

Even if Anselm Adornes did not have the smaller St. Francis panel copied from the Turin work in order to give both daughters gifts of equal value, perhaps he knew that the original owner or owners were women, and thus perceived the works to be particularly suitable for use in his daughters’ personal devotions. All other suggestions aside, I believe it is highly probable that the St. Francis was originally intended for a nun, most likely a Poor Clare, as an image to recall the

62 Ibid, 42.
text of *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, a fourteenth-century Franciscan devotional manual written for a Poor Clare by a Franciscan Friar.\(^{65}\)

A closer examination of the van Eyck panel will reveal a deeper level of meaning and usage than those previously suggested. Van Eyck has chosen to structure his composition with the sleeping Leo next to St. Francis. He has clearly included him in the same space, drawing attention to Leo by emphasizing the sheer ignorance of the Friar to the miracle occurring just behind him. The story of the stigmatization, as we have seen, however, does not include Leo in the action—he was not sleeping nearby; he was not present at all. There is a pictorial tradition of including the Friar in these scenes as the necessary witness to the miracle, although he is usually treated as a secondary figure, stuck off to one side of the picture, as in the Boucicaut Hours (fig. 22).\(^{66}\) The question raised by this arrangement is why an artist of van Eyck’s genius for invention would simply follow an incorrect pattern, and actually stress the error committed in this pictorial “type”? An obvious answer is that the patron ordered this exact scene, but that is too simplistic to accept without further investigation.

I think a better answer is that van Eyck deliberately chose to emphasize this arrangement in order to remind the viewer of another “type,” that of the *Agony in the Garden*, such as in the Milan-Turin Hours (see fig. 8). This scene shows Christ at Gethsemane with three of his disciples (not coincidentally, the number of companions St. Francis took with him to pray on Alverna). Christ had commanded Peter, James and John to keep watch while He prayed about His

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\(^{66}\) Baldass, 28, 30.
coming trials. Upon returning to the three, Christ found them all asleep, and admonished them to watch and pray so as not to fall into temptation. Twice more Christ left to pray and returned to find his disciples sleeping. The third time he told them to rise, as Judas was approaching with soldiers to arrest Him.\textsuperscript{67} The prayer at Gethsemane, where Jesus fully surrendered his own will to God's in the matter of the Crucifixion, marks the beginning of His Passion.

But what has Gethsemane to do with St. Francis? It is not so much the saint himself that this panel is about; rather I propose it embodies the three-fold concept of Franciscan meditation, as outlined above. Van Eyck has combined devices taken from the ever-popular Book of Hours with those taken from the Franciscan devotional manual, \textit{Meditations on the Life of Christ}, to depict the life of Christ using the icon of St. Francis. In this panel, van Eyck presents series of events (or cycles), not in a continuous narrative like Memling's where the events can be viewed sequentially, but in a collapsed form where the one scene stands in for several cycles, and encourages the viewer to recreate a continuous narrative (or mental pilgrimage) in his imagination. The painting is an \textit{imagine} for the entire life of Christ, like the expandable diagram. It is meant to set off a chain reaction in the memory, and remind the viewer of an entire text. The viewer would then be able to "read" this panel, like a Book of Hours or the Franciscan devotional manual.

Books of Hours typically contained illustrations to accompany the text of various prayers, said or at least read at specified times of day. The book may

\textsuperscript{67} The biblical Gethsemane story can be found in Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14: 32-42, and Luke 22: 39-46.
contain several sets of Hours, such as the Hours of the Virgin, the Hours of the Cross, the Hours of the Passion, and may conclude with a set of suffrages—prayers to popular martyrs and saints. Although each book was unique in its arrangement and what prayers it contained, a typical Horae contained the Hours of the Virgin, the Hours of the Cross, and some saints’ prayers, in addition to various lessons and calendars.68

The Agony in the Garden was frequently illustrated in Books of Hours. One of its uses was in place of the Annunciation for the Matins prayer in the Hours of the Virgin when that section used the Passion cycle instead of the Infancy cycle. This was particularly popular in fifteenth-century northern countries, such as Flanders. A Flemish manuscript from the 1440’s shows the Matins folio with the Agony in the Garden scene and the Annunciation in the initial (fig. 23).69 The average layperson would probably be familiar with this substitution. Much of the imagery in the St. Francis painting further cements this relationship. Francis’ gesture, with hands raised and slightly apart, recalls the manus expansibus—a liturgical gesture—and is reminiscent of the gesture often made by the Virgin in Annunciation scenes. Compare images of the Annunciation by Broederlam and by van Eyck himself (figs. 24, 25) where the Virgin holds her hands in the same attitude. Viewers would no doubt recognize this similarity. Neither would they miss the symbolism of van Eyck’s city on the river in the background. Such a scene was meant to represent the Heavenly Jerusalem, and corresponded to the Matins prayers and hymns from the Hours

69 Ibid, 66-68.
of the Virgin. Carol Purtle has shown how the background in van Eyck's *Madonna and Chancellor Rolin* (fig. 26), strikingly similar to that in *The Stigmatization of St. Francis*, is a visualization of the Psalms sung during Matins.\(^7\) Psalm 24 says that the Lord's kingdom "has been founded upon the seas and established upon the rivers." The city behind St. Francis appears to have been built literally over the river. Water can be seen in front of the structures, and again behind them trailing off into the mountains, and it would seem as if the water must flow beneath the city to continue its course. The Psalmist also asks, "who can ascend the mountain of the Lord? or who may stand in his holy place?" The answer, "He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain, nor swears deceitfully to his neighbor. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord and a reward from God his savior."\(^7\)

While the Psalmist refers to Christ, he could just as easily speak of Francis of Assisi, the *imitatio christi* epitomized. Francis has ascended the mountain to pray, and has received a blessing from his savior—the marks upon his sinless hands, which are central to the picture, just below the Heavenly City. All of this imagery would support an identification with the Matins prayer. Therefore, when viewers saw the *Agony in the Garden*, they would also be reminded of the *Annunciation*. They may then be prompted to recall the entire Infancy cycle, being fully familiar with this narrative from the gospel stories and their prayer book. When viewers of van Eyck's painting saw the *Agony in the*
Garden theme, they could call to mind Christ's infancy, meditating on the Annunciation, the Visitation, Christ's dedication, and later, teaching at the Temple, and the Flight into Egypt. They could recall all of these events in Christ's young life from the one scene.

The Gethsemane scene could also be used as the image accompanying the Hours of the Cross. Most frequently, the Crucifixion was used, or in some cases, such as in a French manuscript of circa 1425, the entire Passion was represented through the use of roundels (fig. 27). A folio from the Hours of Ogier Benigne prominently features the Garden scene (with Christ's arms outstretched as though already nailed to the cross) and includes border vignettes of the Betrayal, Christ before Caiaphas, the Flagellation, and Christ Crowned with Thorns (fig. 28). While the Hours of the Cross typically received only one miniature, it sometimes had one image for each prayer (excluding Lauds), and then the Agony in the Garden may well have been depicted individually.72 As with the Hours of the Virgin, the viewer of van Eyck's painting would have been reminded of the Hours of the Cross, and the entire Passion cycle. Indeed, the Crucifix is already present in the work, so both the beginning and end of Christ's life are depicted. The Meditations on the Life of Christ encourages the reader to "take up this meditation from the beginning of the Passion and follow it in order to the end...Heed all these things as though you were present, and watch Him attentively as He rises from the Supper at the end of the sermon and goes to the garden with His disciples".73 It would not be

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72 Wieck, 90, 104.
73 Ragusa and Green, 320.
difficult for the viewer to imagine the intervening events. A small brook emerging from the rock is conveniently provided to enhance the imagination. The Meditations writer speaks of a stream at Gethsemane in whose waters Christ washed the sweat and blood from his face when he had finished praying. Perhaps van Eyck has featured only one "disciple" in his garden so that the viewer, as admonished by the Meditations writer, can include himself in the action as another disciple, charged with remaining vigilant in prayer and sharing in the Lord's agony.

Van Eyck has, then, established both the Infancy and the Passion of Christ within his narrative panel to aid the viewer's meditations. But what of the life of Christ? This is where St. Francis plays a larger role. In the gospels, after the return from Egypt and Jesus' teaching in the temple, the next event described is Christ's baptism, followed by His forty days of temptation in the desert. Francis received his stigmata while fasting for forty days in imitation of Christ, during which time he, too, was tempted by Satan. After Christ's return from the desert, He called the twelve (the number of followers Francis initially gathered), and began His ministry and miracles. As described above, Francis was able to perform Christ-like miracles through God's grace. The last miracle he performed before receiving the stigmata was, through prayer, to bring water from the rock for his thirsting guide—the stream comes into play a second time. Francis' incredible resemblance to Christ would have been well known to his devotees, who would have had no trouble whatsoever in equating Francis' life

74 Ibid, 324.
with that of Christ's.

To round out the Book of Hours theme, the image of Francis can stand in for the suffrages, such as that of a Belgian Book of Hours from circa 1485 (fig. 29). More appropriately, however, it could represent the image of Francis found in copies of the Meditations on the Life of Christ (fig. 30).

So, in this work van Eyck provided the visual clues that enabled the penitent viewer to meditate upon the full life of Christ, particularly on the Passion, as narrated in the gospel harmonies expanded on by Pseudo-Bonaventure in his Meditations manual. This prepared the viewer to surrender his or her will to God, just as Christ had at Gethsemane, according to the threefold concept of Christocentric Franciscan meditation: recollection of the event through imagination, emotional reflection upon the event, and moral application of the lesson to one's self in recognition of one's sinful nature. Van Eyck achieved this using the climactic stigmatization of the Franciscan's founder, St. Francis, as the basis of the image. Jan made the work small so that it could be carried during travels, or hung near a nun's bed in her tiny cell, and become an immediate and intimate personal tool during daily prayer and meditation in the mystical quest to achieve a Christ-like nature, and thus spiritual union with Him.

As discussed at the beginning of this paper, van Eyck excelled at imbuing seemingly straightforward representations with multi-layered meanings through the use of subtle symbolic imagery. Other artists also used complex symbolism in their devotional paintings. Robert Campin's Mérode Altarpiece of c. 1425-30
makes careful allusions to biblical passages, Eucharistic rites, and Mariological themes through its use of symbols (fig. 31). The patrons of the work, seen kneeling at the left, used it at their private altar as an aid to prayer. But while Campin's painting, as well as Jan's other works use "primary" symbols, those which could instantly recall text and idea to the fifteenth-century viewer, *The Stigmatization of St. Francis* uses what we could call secondary symbols. The work is designed to invoke images of Christ's life, suffering, and death, and from those images the text and ideas of *Meditations on the Life of Christ* then flood the mind of the penitent at prayer. Van Eyck has created in this late work an even more complex image than usual, heavily packed together for intense devotional instruction of its viewer in the concepts of specifically Franciscan meditation.
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Fig. 21  Anon, *Pendant*, c. 1500. From a Convent, Wienhausen near Celle.

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Fig. 23  Painter of the Gold Scrolls Group, *Agony in the Garden*, 1440’s. Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 173, fol. 26. Baltimore.

Fig. 24  Melchior Broederlam, *Annunciation*, c. 1399. Musée de la Ville, Dijon.

Fig. 25  Jan van Eyck, *Annunciation*, c. 1435-37. 92” x 38”. National Gallery, Washington.

Fig. 26  Jan van Eyck, *Madonna and Chancellor Rolin*, c. 1435. 66” x 62”. Louvre, Paris.

Fig. 27  Master of the Munich *Golden Legend*, *Crucifixion* from Hours of the Cross, c. 1425-30. Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 288, folio 108. Baltimore.

Fig. 28  Anon, *Agony in the Garden*, c. 1480. Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 291, fol. 19v. Baltimore.
Fig. 29  Anon, *Stigmatization of St. Francis*, c. 1485. Walters Art Gallery, MS W. 176, fol. 160v. Baltimore.

Fig. 30  Anon, *Stigmatization of St. Francis*, from the *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, by Pseudo-Bonaventure.

Fig. 31  Robert Campin, *Mérode Altarpiece*, c. 1425-30. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Cloisters Collection, New York.
Figure 2  van Eyck, Arnolfini Wedding Portrait
Figure 4  van Eyck, *Madonna in the Church*
Figure 7  van Eyck, The Stigmatization of St. Francis (Turin)
Figure 9  Giotto, *The Stigmatization of St. Francis* (San Francesco)
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Figure 30  Anon.,  *The Stigmatization of St. Francis*