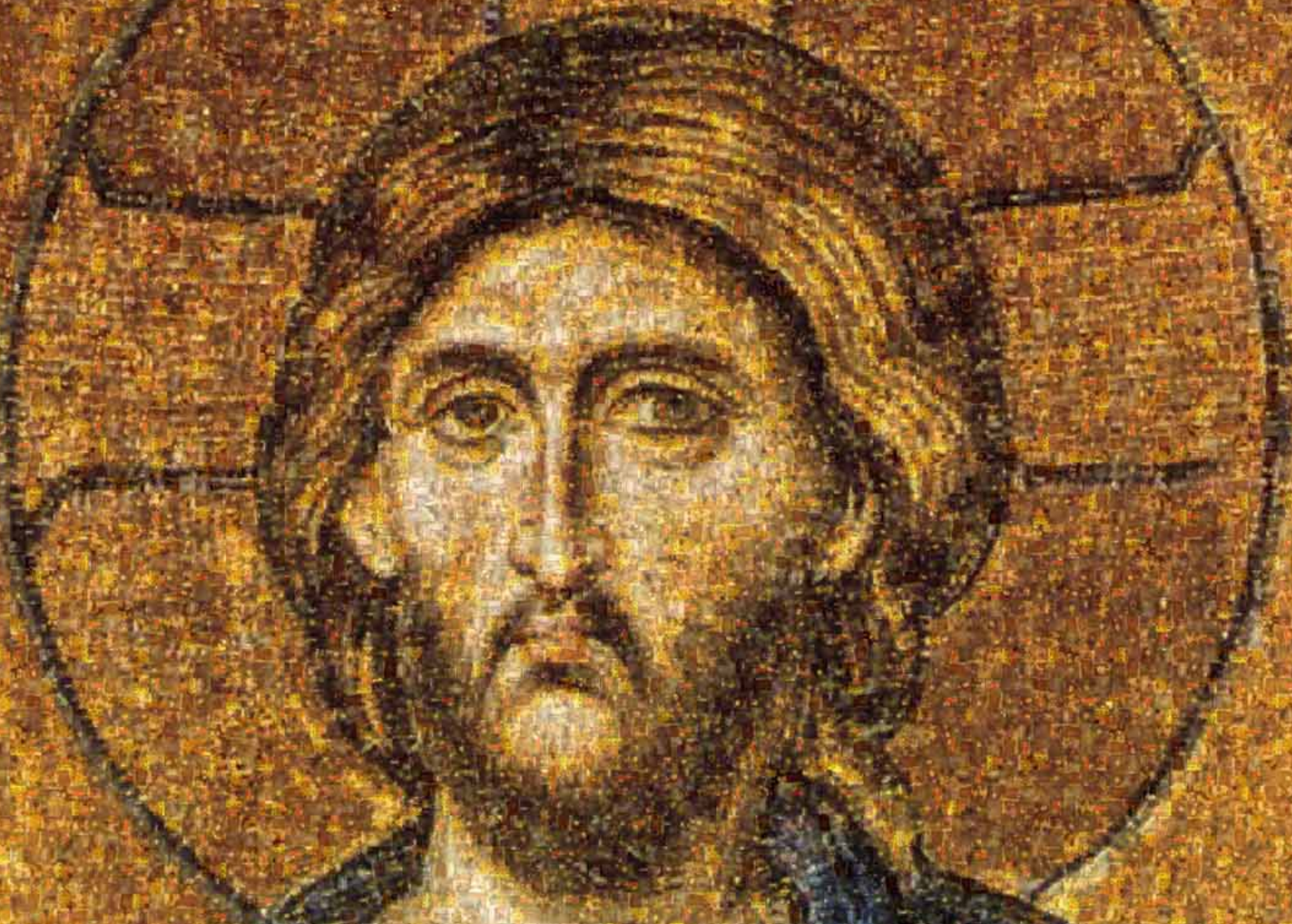


St Bonaventure



1221 - 1274

1221 – Born at Bagnorea in Tuscany

- Bonaventure tells us (*Legenda S. Francisci Prolog.*) that while yet a child he was preserved from death through the intercession of St. Francis
- 1238 or 1243 – Entered the Franciscan Order of Friars
- Studies at the University of Paris (initially) under Alexander of Hales
- St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas received the degree of Doctor at the Univ of Paris on October 23, 1257.
- Bonaventure, at the age of 35, had been elected as the “Minister General of the Friars Minor” on 2 February 1257.



- Internal dissensions in the Franciscan order between the so-called “spiritual” and “relaxed” Franciscans. The “spiritual” friars had adopted the teachings of Joachim of Fiore, including the teaching of the “Evangelium aeternum” associated with John of Parma.
- Bonaventure was commissioned to write the official life of St Francis as part of Pope Adrian V’s encyclical letter that issued an outline for a program to reform the “relaxed” faction (and to hem in the “spiritual faction”).
- Bonaventure’s holiness: Alexander of Hales once said that Bonaventure seemed to have escaped the curse of Adam’s sin. And St. Thomas, upon visiting Bonaventure’s cell when he was writing the life of St Francis, is reported to have found him in a state of ecstasy, and to have said: “Let us leave a saint to work for a saint,” as he withdrew.
- Bonaventure died in 1274. Canonized by Sixtus IV in 1482, and declared a Doctor of the Church by Sixtus V in 1557. Feast day is July 14.



Bonaventure's Writings

1. **dogmatic** (“Commentary on the Sentences” and “Breviloquium”)
2. **mystic** (“On the Triple Way,” “Tree of Life,” “On the Perfection of life,” “Mind’s journey to God,” etc.)
3. **exegetical**
4. **homiletic**

The Breviloquium

The *Breviloquium* is generally considered to have been completed in 1257, precisely in Bonaventure's transition from the university to his pastoral position. “*Breviloquium*” means “brief discourse.” Henri de Lubac observed about this work: “The *Breviloquium* of Saint Bonaventure, in its harmonious density, manifests a power of total synthesis, perhaps never equaled” (*Exegese medievale*, Part 2, 1. Paris: Aubier, 1961, p. 425).



“This teaching [theology] has been transmitted, both in the writings of the saints and in those of the doctors, in such a diffuse manner that those who come to learn about Sacred Scripture are not able to read or hear about it for a long time. In fact, beginning theologians often dread Sacred Scripture itself, feeling it to be as confusing, disordered, and uncharted as some impenetrable forest. That is why my colleagues have asked me, from my own modest knowledge, to draw up some concise summary of the truths of theology. Yielding to their requests, I have agreed to compose what might be called a brief discourse [*breviloquium*]. In it I will summarize not all the truths of our faith, but some things that are more oportune [for such students] to hold” (*Prologue*, 6.5).)

BONAVENTURE'S METHOD

Bonaventure's Method in the Breviloquium

- Read quotes on p. xxvi – xxvii
- Contrasting his method in the Breviloquium with his Mind's Journey into God
- Read quotes on pgs. Xxxv and following.



OUTLINE OF THE BREVILOQUIUM

Exitus-Reditus Schema, placed in a Trinitarian framework “The Word expresses the Father and the things made through him, and he is foremost in leading us to the unity of the Father who brings all things together. ... This is the sum of our metaphysics: emanation, exemplarity, and consummation” (*Hexaem.* 1.17).

- Comments on the “exitus-reditus” schema.



The first three parts of the *Breviloquium* describe the process of *exitus* ('going out').

- Part I: the origin of this process is the fact that God is Triune: the Highest and First Principle is itself a mystery of self-diffusive love. The Father, the unbegotten fountain-fullness of goodness totally communicates that goodness to the Son; these two freely love each other in the Spirit.
- Part II: goes on to consider the 'going out' of the universe from God through the Word. As the full expression of the Father's goodness the Word is 'singular' but at the same time it expresses the infinitely multiple possible things that God creates. Because it exists 'in the Word,' Bonaventure stresses the harmonious nature of creation and its essential orientation toward its divine source and goal. He also emphasizes the unique status of the rational creature, which can adequately grasp, albeit not completely, the truth and goodness of beings in such a way that it is drawn to their divine source as their ultimate fulfillment.
- Part III describes the negative dimension of the *exitus*, the 'falling away' of creation through sin, which has had a devastating impact on human beings, in that it has rendered them incapable of grasping the deeper significance of reality and taking the steps necessary to achieve their fulfillment in God.

The final four parts of the *Breviloquium* describe the process of *reditus* ('return')

- The mid-point in the process, at the bottom of the descent away from God, is when the Incarnation occurs.
- Part IV describes how God's Word became human to initiate the *reditus* ('return') of creation to its source, by revealing again to fallen humanity the true meaning of their existence and through his death and resurrection empowering them to rise again to God. The remainder of the *Breviloquium* detail the process of the 'return.'
- Part V: This is accomplished through the grace of the Holy Spirit (Part V), which transforms human beings interiorly so they might love God.
- Part VI: Concretely, this grace is mediated through the created means of the sacraments (Part VI); these are providentially designed to assist human beings in all the various situations of life.
- Part VII: describes the 'end' – the final and ultimate return of all things into the fullness of divine life.

1. The Production of Human Beings

Turn to Part II (On the Creation of the World), Chapters 11 and 12.

- Body and soul unity → Inner and outer senses
- Additional Fourfold assistance:
 - knowledge,
 - Conscience
 - Synderesis
 - Grace
- Completion and Ordering of the Whole World

2. The Corruption of Sin

Turn to Part III (On the Corruption of Sin):

- Chapter 5: The Contamination of Original Sin
 - Four-fold penalty:
 - Weakness
 - Ignorance
 - Malice
 - Concupiscenc
- Chapter 7: The Cure of Original Sin

3. On the Incarnation of the Word

- Chapter 5: The Fullness of Grace in Christ Considered in the Gifts in His Affections
 - Fullness of grace in his affections
 - Fullness of wisdom in his understanding
 - Fullness of merit in his deeds or his effects

4. On the Grace of the Holy Spirit

- **Chapter 1: Grace as a Gift of God**
- **Chapter 2: Grace as the Condition of Meritorious Acts**
- **Chapter 3: Grace Considered a Remedy for Sin**