Chapter IV—The Progress of The Order under Francis' Guidance and the Confirmation of the Rule

9. As Christ's servants increased in merit and virtue, the high esteem in which they were held became known all over the country, so that people came to see St. Francis from all parts of the world. Among them was a successful songwriter who had been crowned by the emperor and was known as the King of Verse. He made up his mind to approach Francis who was known for his disregard of all that belongs to the world and when he met him in a monastery at San Severino where the saint had come to preach, the power of God came upon him. There he saw Francis, the Apostle of Christ's Cross, signed with the sign of the Cross in the form of two swords of fire, one of which reached from his head to his feet, while the other crossed his chest from hand to hand. He did not know Francis by sight but he realized that the person pointed out to him by such a miracle could be no other. He was dumbfounded at the vision and immediately began to make good resolutions for the future; the saint's words moved him to compunction, as if a spiritual sword coming from his mouth had pierced him. There and then he said good-bye to popular renown and joined Francis by professing his rule. When Francis saw that he had abandoned the world with its troubles and chosen Christ's peace, he called him brother Pacificus. Pacificus afterwards became very holy; and before he left for France, where he was the first provincial minister, he was found worthy to have a vision of a great cross which appeared in different colors on St. Francis' forehead and lit up his whole face with a beautiful radiance. Francis always had great reverence for this particular sign, and he often recommended others to use it. He used to put it at the end of all his letters, as if his only desire was "to mark the brows of the true disciples of Jesus Christ who weep and wail with this sign of the cross," as we read in the prophet Ezechiel (Ez 9, 4).

10. As the number of friars increased with the passing of the years, Francis used to summon them all like a good shepherd to a general chapter at St. Mary of the Portiuncula. There, according to the measure of God's judgment, he would assign to each one the mission given him by obedience in this life of poverty. At these meetings no provision whatever was made for what they needed, and sometimes more than five thousand friars showed up. God cared for them in his providence, so that they had enough to eat and enjoyed good health, while they overflowed with spiritual contentment. Francis could not preside personally at the chapter of the different provinces, but by his unremitting prayer and the power of his blessing he was always there in spirit in his anxious care for his subjects. On one occasion he even appeared visibly at such a chapter by God's power. It was at the chapter of Arles and the famous preacher who we now honor as St. Anthony was preaching to the friars on the proclamation Pilate wrote on the Cross, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." One of the friars, a holy man named Monaldus, felt a sudden inspiration to look toward the door of the chapter hall; there with his own eyes, he saw St. Francis standing in mid-air with his arms stretched out in the form of a cross, blessing the friars. The friars who were present felt such wonderful consolation in their hearts that they were assured by the Holy Spirit that their father had really been there. It was only afterwards that they heard he had been seen and the saint himself remarked that he had been there, so that they had external proof for what they already believed. It seems that almighty God who had enabled St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, to be present at the burial of St. Martin and pay his respects to that holy prelate, permitted Francis to assist at the sermon given by his preacher St. Anthony. In this way he would attest the truth of francis' words, especially those concerning Christ's Cross which he bore as his servant.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)
When Christ your life appears in glory, you will appear with Him in glory.” These words of Saint Paul in the second reading today from his Letter to the Colossians tell us something very important about Our Lord and about ourselves. Saint Paul said also, “You are already seated with Him at God’s right hand.” And because of this, he tells us, we need to set our sights on the things of Heaven, not on the things of earth. Today, as we celebrate this great solemnity of Easter, we celebrate the single most important thing that has ever happened in human history. In the Church’s entire calendar year, today is the greatest feast of all. From a secular perspective, with a quasi-religious element to it, Christmas tends to be the one where the focus is placed; but from the Church’s perspective, the most important feast of the entire year is the one that we celebrate today.

Today death has been destroyed, death which has a bondage on each and every one of us. From the moment that we are conceived, each one of us is doomed one day to die; and for thousands of years of human history there was no hope. The Jews, as they worked their way through their history, began to recognize that the souls of the just somehow continued to live, but they did not yet have the concept of the resurrection. They did not understand any idea of being able to live with God. They believed in a nether world, in a place of the dead, and indeed at that time that was all there was. When a person died, whether they were good or bad, they went into this place of the dead. It is to there also that Jesus went in those three days that He was in the tomb. Saint Peter says it very simply by saying that He went to preach to those in prison. So from the time of Adam and Eve, all the way up to the day that Jesus rose from the dead, even soul that died went into this place. There was still a clear delineation between those who were just and those who were unjust, those who would one day be able to rise and go into Heaven and those who would rise and be condemned for eternity, but they were all still in this place apart from God because of sin. So on Friday, when we celebrated Our Lord’s death, we celebrated the fact that sin had been destroyed. But it is not enough that sin be destroyed if it still means that we are going to have to enter into death and stay there. And so Our Lord for our sake endured death. Saint Peter, in the first reading today, spoke about all the things that happened in Judah and Jerusalem. He talked about all the things that happened from the time of the baptism of John, all the way through the good works that Jesus did to the time, he says, when they hung Him on a tree. Saint Paul, in his Letter to the Galatians, reminds us that in the law it says that anyone who is hung upon a tree is cursed. Jesus took the curse for us. And the greatest curse of all is the curse of death. In death there is no hope; it is the end; it is darkness; there is nothing beyond (for those who are not Christian). But Jesus entered into death in order to be the victor over death. He tasted death for our sake so that we would be able to have life. We know now as Christian people that, like Jesus, we will have to enter into death someday but it is only a change from what we know in this life, in this vale of tears, in this place of sorrows, in this world of suffering. When you talk to a person who is elderly and suffering greatly, they look forward to death because they know that on one level it will be the end to all of their suffering, but they know also that it is going to be the passage into something that is far more beautiful than what they have ever known here. So they enter into death with Jesus in order to enter into life with Jesus.

In the Resurrection, the human body of Jesus Christ, Our Lord and God, rose glorious from the tomb. It took on a new form and was glorified. No longer held bound by the physical limitations of the human body, Our Lord was able to come forth from the tomb, was able to walk through the walls, was able to appear only to those to whom He wished to appear. As Saint Peter again made very clear, He did not appear to all but only to those who had been chosen beforehand, “by us,” he says, “who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.” He was still human and Him remains human for all eternity. But He is also divine. And because in Baptism we have entered into the death and Resurrection of Christ, we know that our bodies will rise from the dead. This body, the one sitting right here in the pew, is going to rise from the dead and it will live for all eternity along with your soul. Now the question, of course, is whether you are going to rise to life or whether you have chosen eternal death. For those who separate themselves from God, they have chosen eternal death, the living dead, because they will rise from the dead; that is, they will rise from physical death. But as the prophet Daniel tells us, they will rise to be an “everlasting horror and disgrace”. But for those who make the choice for Jesus Christ, the prophet Daniel tells us that they will “shine like the stars in the sky”. Saint Paul tells us, “Eye has not seen and ear has not heard nor has it so much as dawned on the imagination of man what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

So when we think in this world about the most joyful thing that we have ever experienced, no matter what it is, the most wonderful thing that has ever happened in your life, it is as nothing in comparison to what God has prepared for us, a mere tiny foreshadowing of the joy and the glory that God has waiting for you. But already you have entered into that spiritually. Just as in Baptism you spiritually entered into the death and the Resurrection of Christ, so now united with Christ – as He has taken our humanity with Him, bringing it out of the tomb and bringing it now into the eternity of Heaven – you, Saint Paul says, are seated with Him. Your humanity has already been translated into eternal life; all that remains is for you to go there physically, but spiritually you are already there in Christ. That is why Saint Paul tells us that we have to set our sights on Heaven. This is absolutely crucial because we live in a world that tells us this is all there is. We live in an atheistic and pagan society. We live in a world that does not believe in the resurrection from the dead. We live in a world that says, “Live for today because this is all there is. Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die!” As Christian people, we say, “That is nonsense, heresy!” And we have to reject it.
We do not live for this life but for the next because Christ, our Paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed. We have eaten of the Lamb and we have His Blood sprinkled upon our souls so that the Angel of Death will pass over us and we will pass through death into life. The beautiful thing about being members of Jesus Christ is that Our Lord will never ask anything of us that He has not done Himself, and so He tells us in Saint John’s Gospel that where He is we also will be. But we have to follow where He leads. Saint Peter tells us that He has left us an example to follow in His footsteps. And so we know that is what we need to do. We need to follow Him to Calvary, but we need to follow Him through death and into life.

For us, life does not end at the moment that the physical body dies because we know that the soul will live on forever. The soul goes immediately at the moment of death to its judgment, but we also know that the body will rise from the grave, that our souls will be reunited with our bodies and our bodies will be reanimated but with a glorified soul. Our bodies will be like the risen body of Jesus Christ, no longer held bound by the physical limitations which we have here, no longer subject to sickness, to weakness, to fatigue, to suffering, to any of the physical problems that we have. Our glorified bodies, then, will be translated into Heaven where they will be united with God for eternity and where no torment will touch them and every tear will be wiped away.

That is what we celebrate today in Jesus Christ. Yet it is not Christ alone, but all of those who are united with Him. And so as we share in the death of Christ, as we share in the suffering of Christ, so too God holds out for each one of us a share in the glory of Christ. We simply need to choose Him—to set our sights on Heaven where Christ is already seated at God’s right hand and you are seated there with Him in glory—so that when Christ your life appears in glory, you will appear with Him. And then for all eternity, united with Christ and sharing in His Resurrection, you will glorify God in the glory of your resurrected body. In the new and glorified existence which you will live, you will share in the victory over sin and death with Christ and glorify God forever.

We all need to ponder this message as it relates to us. Is our focus to bring to completion the work that God has given us? If not, it should be. What is this ‘work’?

All of us receiving this message are signed up for the newsletter. Not all of us so signed up are in the BSP but those of us who have applied for membership in the BSP are in varying ways committed to live the Rule of 1221, the Rule of the BSP, the life that St. Francis gave the laity, as our commitment, the fruit of our wills, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of our souls. This single commitment might be the greatest commitment many of us have made towards the salvation of our own souls outside of living our faith in all the other ways we do.

The human will is an amazing thing. It is one of the three primary attributes of our souls, which are composed of memory, intellect, and will. These things are who we are. These gifts of God comprise the being of each human being. When we are judged it will be based on our will, and what we have freely chosen, and those are big words: freely chosen.

What do we want from our lives? If we look back at it how are we serving God? How do we know Him? Do we love Him? To know, love, and serve God are the purposes of a human life, if ever you were wondering.

When we were young, and, praise God, in Catholic grade schools, the nuns there made us memorize this sentence: “The purpose of life is to know, love, and serve God in this world and be happy with Him forever in heaven.”

One leads to the other. If we do in fact know, love, and serve God in this life we will be happy with Him forever in heaven. The question is how do we do that? We will in fact spend our entire lives trying to fulfill this objective, if, and that is a big ‘if’, we want to live forever.

Who doesn’t want to live forever? Does anyone not want it? Not likely. Unfortunately there are many who although they want to live forever don’t have a clue what is required. Jesus is the common answer to all questions about the subject. The Scriptures are replete with admonitions from Jesus regarding eternal life and how to attain it. The simple fact is that “...this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (Jn 17:3), and it is the Will of the Father that it be so, as He said: “ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life...” (Jn 17:3) We know too that we need to eat His flesh and drink His blood because He told us that “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.” (Jn 6:54) Unfortunately there are many who don’t know this, or don’t care, and that again is the exercise of our own wills.

There is more though. We need to live for Him too, and that is a real challenge to our wills. Do we really want to live for Him? He said: “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for
eternal life.” (Jn 12:25) Do we really want to hate our life in this world? You won’t get a lot of support to do that from the world, for sure. Smile... On top of that we have to give up what most people in the world seek. Our further challenge from the Lord comes in his words: “Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive (back) an overabundant return in this present age and eternal life in the age to come.” (Lk 18:29-30)

Our ‘work’ is to know, love, and serve God. This work calls us to live our faith and our faith calls us to hate the world even though we live in it. The simple fact is we have to live in the world because we were born into it, but we do want to be of it. We “hate” the world by living our faith, and we live our faith more fully by living the Rule of 1221. The world will NEVER call you to fast, and pray, and lead a simple life. The Rule does. The world will NEVER tell you to live your religion and love and serve God. The faith does. In doing this we come to know God. So, we factually do know, love, and serve God in this way: by living our faith and the Rule of 1221. St. Francis knew all of this when he gave us the Rule.

So, as we approach Easter, which celebrates the Resurrection of Christ, which confirmed his eternal nature and life, let us rejoice to have a rule to live that calls us to follow Him, and let us exercise our wills, as the Lord calls us each to do, to fulfill in ourselves the Will of the Father, which is that we follow the Son. This work is a very good thing, and nothing is more important than that we do it. In doing it, like Jesus, we bring the work of the Father to completion in ourselves, and for the good of others no less.

Blessed be the Lord! Happy Easter to all!

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP Administrators - Morning Star Chapter – Minnesota

NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery BSP

“Get behind Me Satan! You are not judging by God’s standards, but by man’s.” (Matthew 16:23)

“Since January 20, when the final HHS Mandate was announced, two things have been abundantly clear: religious freedom is under attack, and we will not cease our struggle to protect it.” Timothy Cardinal Dolan from New York, President of the US Bishops Conference.

The tipping point of government intrusion into the life of the Church and all believers through the HHS Mandate has been reached. Suddenly everyone is shocked that the scorpion has bit the frog (March article), even though they knew its nature! Or did they? A benevolent government normally cannot stay that way for long. The world, the flesh and the devil are forever intent on corrupting all that is good and holy, and the price to avoid a takeover by a malevolent force is eternal vigilance. Just ask our Founding Fathers, who did all they could through a system of checks and balances to try and prevent the growth of an oppressive Federal Government that would one day turn on the people. Sadly, after a century of obscene unconstitutional growth, it has become Leviathan, and its Secular Socialist nature is clearly seen - not by its words, but by its actions. The transformation of America is almost complete.

This mandate has produced a curious and very different response from liberals and their more orthodox brethren. The religious left has a lot to lose because their Social Justice agenda will be ruined if the Catholic Church has to cease operating all the soup kitchens and other charitable institutions they take such pride in. Liberals count all the people who are dependent upon them, as they pat themselves on the back while re-distributing other people’s money. Conservatives count all who are not dependent upon the state but upon God, because they are encouraged—even with tough love if necessary—to live the Gospel life of individual virtue and personal responsibility. Thus they can take care of themselves, their family, and their neighbors without fanfare. Which of these versions is true Christian charity?

Leviathan did not come into being without the necessity of re-defining Christian charity through the introduction of a strange new gospel over a hundred years ago. R.R. Reno of First Things explains what it was in an article on the "Seductive Social Gospel." It was "a turn away from troubling debates about doctrine, the shift from personal salvation to social reform, and the reassurance that progressive disdain for traditional religion was in fact a sign of a more authentic and scientific faith. It provided a way to remain Christian while setting aside whatever seems incompatible with modern life."

The creator of the Social Gospel, Walter Rauschenbusch, stated: "For the first time in religious history, we have the possibility of so directing religious energy by scientific knowledge that a comprehensive and continuous reconstruction of social life in the name of God is within the bounds of human possibility." Heady stuff, basically a Protestant construct, compelling to Catholic liberals as well. These dreams of a new "Social Justice" agenda combining a watered-down religion with European style Socialist political power led to a fatal compact between church and state during the 1930’s—with the best of intentions.

Hillsdale College Professor Paul Rahe calls it: “American Catholicism’s Pact with the Devil.” Rahe is a bit over the top here and there, but his point is indisputable. Catholics/Christians “In their concern for the suffering of those out of work and destitute wholeheartedly embraced the New Deal. They welcomed Social Security, not stopping to ponder whether public provision in this regard would subvert the moral principle that children are responsible for the well-being of their parents. They did not stop to consider whether this measure would reduce the incentives for procreation.
and nourish the temptation to think of sexual intercourse as an indoor sport. They did not stop to think.”

He’s right. The “law of unintended consequences” is one of the most brutal laws in the universe, for it almost always follows good intentions with the harsh reality of results: good intentions without critical thinking combined with a tenacious adherence to the plan and will of God frequently bring tragic results. Note the beginning of the breakdown of the family as responsibility is gradually transferred from individuals as part of the family unit in God’s plan—to the government, in man’s plan.

It was determined by many people of faith that only the government could solve the crisis created by the Great Depression. They failed to foresee the consequences of turning personal works of charity over to an impersonal government far away, shattering the Catholic doctrine of subsidiarity. The result was the incomprehensible growth of the federal government all out of proportion to its Constitutional limits. The Progressive Movement used the biblical leverage of the Social Gospel to bring about the end of Constitutionally mandated “limited government.” Looking back in time, we see the same technique used then as now to achieve this transformation: “We cannot allow a crisis to go to waste.” The principal cause of the Great Depression was government mismanagement—bad policies at the very top. This is becoming very clear as we see the same thing happening today. Leviathan causes a crisis by unwise policies, then rushes to the rescue with the result: it grows ever more powerful, just as in the 1930’s: A new government program for every real or imagined—or created—ill.

Professor Rahe says that Church leaders eagerly endorsed “the notion that public provision is somehow akin to charity. This fostered state paternalism and undermined what they professed to teach: that charity is an individual responsibility, and that it is appropriate that the laity join together under the leadership of the Church to alleviate the suffering of the poor. In its place, they helped establish the Machiavellian principle that underpins modern liberalism – the notion that it is our Christian duty to confiscate other people’s money and redistribute it.”

That principle is now firmly established: “the notion that it is our Christian duty to confiscate other people’s money and redistribute it.” Catholic leaders have assisted the Party of Big Government in “promoting the growth of the Administrative Entitlements State,” not seeming to have “any concern for sustaining limited government and protecting the rights of individuals, (and) liberty of conscience.” As a result, “the Paternalistic State, which recognizes no legitimate limits on its power and scope that they had embraced, would someday turn on the Church and seek to dictate whom it chose to teach its doctrines and how it would conduct its affairs.” Is it time to stop and think yet?

Professor Rahe has clearly defined a pact with the devil. The HHS Mandate is just the beginning, the opening volley in an all-out war against Freedom of Religion. When people of faith in Big Government outnumber people of faith in God, America will cease to exist as we have known it. There will be more mandates to come from Leviathan, a never ending stream of mandates from which it will be impossible to obtain all the conscience clauses needed. It would take a room full of lawyers to figure them all out. Perhaps that’s a jobs plan. The liberal/Progressive agenda is the abolition of the freedom of the children of God, with secular ideologues seeking complete control of our every action, and even our thoughts. Hate crimes legislation is already on the books. Guess who it will be used against?

How does it feel to be like dogs begging for scraps from their worldly master’s table? How does it feel to be begging for this exemption, and that bit of money to carry on the Church’s ministries, if indeed it can overcome government blackmail—forcing a compromise on abortion or other doctrines in order to obtain mammon stolen from Peter to pay Paul. People of faith in Leviathan need to make a decision. When your precious Big Government attacks your faith and persecutes your fellow believers, where does your loyalty lie? Is it with your faith in Jesus Christ, or Caesar? It cannot be both! Those who choose faith in Caesar must also accept its secular Godless doctrines, which war against the tenets of their Christian faith! Those who choose to remain faithful to God and His Commandments have seen their progressive Christian brethren accept alien doctrines like the killing of the innocents, abortion, and the greatest sexual perversion known to mankind, homosexuality, to remain loyal to the party of Big Government currently in power. Not to mention the insult to charity as Jesus defined it in the Gospel. They look on in shock as their brothers and sisters in Christ contribute to the persecution of their own brethren. Will all unite in supporting our bishops as they take a stand for Religious Freedom—and the consequences? It is now a question of conscience: just how much can a believer cooperate with evil?

The world is moving in a relentless direction away from God. When the time comes that evil outweighs good, God will allow the consequences of our own actions to befall us. We have lived for so long with the fatal consequences of cooperating with Leviathan—corrupting the very notion of Christian charity we no longer see the results—the destruction of the family unit as a direct consequence of Caesar’s policies! Professor Rahe mentioned the beginning of this breakdown in the 30’s. We now see the end of the destruction of the family as perfectly exemplified by the Entitlement mentality of a college girl in a comment made to a presidential candidate: “I hear all this talk about freedom and the pursuit of happiness. What would make me happy is free birth control!” Sex is god, the marriage rate below 50%, illegitimacy epidemic, single girls married to a government check, men shiftless, irresponsible, and dealing drugs causing rampant crime. These are all direct results of misguided government policies! Such anti-family policies have bankrupted Europe and America, both spiritually and materially, corrupting people of faith in the process. And still these policies are tenaciously defended by the religious left—as though charity has always been subject to government control through Marxist style re-distribution of wealth. It’s time to break the pact with the devil! It’s time to choose God’s standards over Caesar’s mandates, and obey God rather than man. (Signs of hope next time)

Paul Beery BSP - Morning Star Chapter - Minnesota
The Burden of Expectations
A MEDITATION by Janet Klasson BSP

From the First Reading, Friday in the Octave of Easter

“And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.” (Acts 4:1-2)

Several years ago, when my daughter went off to university in another city, I felt the loss very keenly. She, on the other hand, was off on an adventure and had new things to try and new friends to be with. It was a difficult transition for me. I said the word “should” a lot: she should call us more often. She should come home more often. She should think of us more often. She should miss us more. I had raised her to be independent, and now came the stark realization that she no longer needed me! I often found myself feeling disappointed, angry, frustrated, and annoyed.

The Lord taught me many lessons through that time, one of which was this: if you have no expectations, you will never be disappointed. On the surface that may sound harsh, but it ties in very well with the penitential lifestyle.

There are two kinds of expectations. There are the good kind that mostly flow from our daily duties and obligations. We are expected to go to work on time, to give an honest day’s work, to change the baby’s diaper, to follow traffic laws. The other kind of expectations involve the laying of burdens on others.

It is very easy to lay the burden of expectation on others, but it is a two-edged sword doing damage to ourselves and to the target of our expectations. Yet, we do it all the time, most often with those closest to us. A wife feels frustrated that her husband watches TV while she is doing the dishes. Her expectation is that he would help her and they could go watch TV together. She gives him the cold shoulder. A grandmother feels disappointed that her adult grandchildren no longer visit her. Her expectations simmer when someone does come to visit she is gruff with them.

I do not wish to invalidate the way people feel in situations of perceived injustice. In many cases clearer communication could alleviate the situation. However, for those of us called to a life of penance, and for anyone wishing to grow in holiness, it would be good to examine our consciences and work towards annihilating our expectations. The penitent is called to cultivate spirit of detachment and to offer up any slights or injustices to God, linked to the cross. St. Ignatius of Loyola gives us a prayer that may assist us in growing in the virtue of detachment:

“Grant, O Lord, that my heart may neither desire nor seek anything but what is necessary for the fulfillment of Your Holy Will. May health or sickness, riches or poverty, honors or contempt, humiliations, leave my soul in that state of perfect detachment to which I desire to attain for Your greater honor and Your greater glory. Amen.”

There are certain “tells” that indicate when we have need to pray for a spirit of detachment. Feelings of disappointment, frustration, anger, and annoyance can be clues that more work needs to be done. There are many books and websites that can assist us in growing in detachment. Imitation of Christ is a must-read and re-read for anyone wishing to grow in holiness. Here is an excerpt:

“Be not troubled about those who are with you or against you, but take care that God be with you in everything you do. Keep your conscience clear and God will protect you, for the malice of man cannot harm one whom God wishes to help. If you know how to suffer in silence, you will undoubtedly experience God’s help. He knows when and how to deliver you; therefore, place yourself in His hands, for it is a divine prerogative to help men and free them from all distress.

“It is often good for us to have others know our faults and rebuke them, for it gives us greater humility. When a man humbles himself because of his faults, he easily placates those about him and readily appeases those who are angry with him. It is the humble man whom God protects and liberates; it is the humble whom He loves and consoles. To the humble He turns and upon them bestows great grace, that after their humiliation He may raise them up to glory. He reveals His secrets to the humble, and with kind invitation bids them come to Him. Thus, the humble man enjoys peace in the midst of many vexations, because his trust is in God, not in the world.

“Hence, you must not think that you have made any progress until you look upon yourself as inferior to all others.”

Abandonment to Divine Providence is another spiritual classic that can take one quickly down the path of detachment:

“Everything arranged by God as regards actions and sufferings must be accepted with simplicity, for those things that happen at each moment by the divine command or permission are always the most holy, the best and the most divine for us.”

Avoiding the temptation to lay our burden of expectation on others is only half of it. The flip-side is the expectation we ought to lay on ourselves to grow daily in holiness and to always try to set a good example for others. There is a wonderful anecdote in the Little Flowers of St. Francis where a peasant once admonished the saint: “Try to be as good as everyone thinks you are, because many people have great faith in you. So I urge you: never let there be anything in you different from what they expect of you.”
St. Francis immediately threw himself down before the peasant and kissed his feet, thanking him for having admonished him so charitably. St. Francis was one who was always hard on himself and easy on others, an attitude that is worth imitating. May God grant us all the grace of detachment from the expectations that serve only to lay burdens on others and disturb our peace.

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed, we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

"My child, esteem nothing that does not lead to Christ. You are earthly vessels, it is true, but you house a spirit that will never die. Decide today how you wish to spend eternity. Whatever ties you to this earth will weigh you down. Your spirit was made to soar. Then detach yourself from all that will perish. Love without clinging; use the things of this world without becoming a slave to them yourself. Child, the time is upon you, and you see the beginnings already. What once felt firm beneath your feet is now becoming unstable. Be sure your feet are firmly planted on the rock—which is Christ—and the Church, against which the gates of hell will never prevail. My child, cultivate a spirit of holy detachment, trusting that all you need will be provided in this life and in the next.”

Jesus I trust in you. Help us to cultivate a spirit of holy detachment so that we may be free to cling to you—with both hands!

Sirach 11:14 Good and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from the LORD.

"My beloved little child, do you see how all that I allow comes from my benevolent heart? For even if evil befalls you, and your prayers seem to dissipate in the abyss, even then the Lord is near—so near—to one who places her trust in him. What the evil one means for your destruction, I use to bring about great works of goodness and growth in holiness. My child, whether you live in suffering or comfort, riches or poverty, give thanks to the Lord always, for his love for you will never fail.”

My Jesus, I praise and thank you through the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Mother for all you have given me. My Lord and my God, grant me the grace through Mary to become the willing slave of Jesus in Mary for your glory, O heavenly Father. Amen.

Luke 6:40 No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher.

"My child, do you see how my Mother embodied this perfectly? Her humility, abject and pure, allowed her to perfectly imitate me. Only in this complete self-emptying was she then able to become a pure vessel completely filled by the Holy Spirit. There was nothing she clung to—even for an instant of her life—that did not lead directly to me.* So, as I received from her my human form, she received from me her spiritual form, the order of perfection. She, more than any other creature, has imitated me and been transformed into me. If, in your weakness, you are having difficulty imitating me, begin by imitating my Mother in her humility and poverty of attachment. If you do this, you will attain the goal you seek, which is perfect unity with your Beloved.”

Jesus you know how weak we are. Thank you for showing us this shortcut to you thorough consecration to your Mother. Grant us every grace, O Lord, that we might attain perfect union with you and live for you alone. Jesus in Mary, we trust in you. Amen.

(*In letting go of attachments, Our Lady did not let go of her duties, but sanctified them by bringing the Lord into each moment. In this way she lived a contemplative life in all the ordinary moments of the day, and let nothing come between her and her Beloved.)

FROM THE ‘SPARROW’
Franciscan Treasures

The peace of Jesus be yours! What gifts do sparrows give to God? Perplexing a thought this was. The smaller one becomes, the less they have to give to anyone...especially the great God. Micah posed it well when he stated: “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? (Mi 6:6)

In times past, it was customary, when granted an audience with a monarch or ruler, to bring a gift. One example is when the queen of Sheba visited King Solomon (1 K 10:1-13). In our day, it's also customary to bring a
housewarming gift to people who have moved into the neighborhood or into a new home. Not so, not so, with little sparrows and the great God!

The reverse of this is true in our relationship with God. He, "The King of Kings", comes among us, bringing His gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. He gave us His Son, Jesus, to live the perfect life we cannot, and to pay the penalty we deserve for our sins. All we little ones do is humbly and gratefully receive these gifts through faith.

We come before the Lord EMPTY-HANDED, and He fills us full of His blessings; we come broken by sin, and He heals us; we come with sin-stained bodies and souls, and He cleanses them; we come with a "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Mt 5:6), and He feeds us; we come in humble posture (is there any other for a sparrow?), and He lifts us. And Jesus will come before us again, and soon!

"When Christ said, 'Give me to drink,' it was the love of His poor creatures that He, the Creator of all things, desired. He thirsted for love."

(St. Therese of Lisieux)

The Little Flower then has shown us the only real true gift you have that can be given to the great God and that would be your love! Please give it to Him today!

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter

MEDITATION ON THE PASSION
by Dawn Usak, BSP

Eighth Station: Jesus Speaks to the Holy Women

We adore you oh Christ and we praise you. Because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.

Dear Lord, You meet the Holy women weeping for Your sake but yet You tell them to weep for themselves and for their children. Lord Jesus, let us weep for our own sins that have caused Your suffering Passion. May the shedding of our tears be an outward sign of contrition for our sins. Allow our tears to aid in cleansing our souls as Your Precious Blood cleanses all of our sins.

(Stations of the Cross. Painted by Sister Mary Leo Hargarten, SSND (1900-1959). Born in Milwaukee, Sr. Mary Leo studied art in Munich, Germany (1930-1934) and later headed the art department at Mount Mary College in Wisconsin. Suffering poor health, witnessing her mother’s chronic illness and saddened by the premature deaths of siblings, Sister found her comfort in the Passion of Jesus. This set of Stations, painted in 1953, was first erected in the old St. Francis Hospital in Shakopee, Minn. When the Sisters of St. Francis made major modifications to the Chapel they gave the set to Fr. Robert Bayer, who mounted them at the Franciscan Retreat Centre, Prior Lake MN.)

20/20 VISION
by Rachel Fahey (12-year-old granddaughter to Bruce and Shelley)

You don’t need 20/20 vision to see most things. In fact, you don’t need it to see any of the things that are truly dire to your being. The invisible things. 20/20 vision will not help you see the endless pit of quicksand called Ignorance. Or see the beautiful monster of Temptation. Or the ugly specter of Vengeance. Or even the evil demons of Jealousy that lurch in the deep abyss found in all hearts. You don’t need 20/20 vision to see the splendor of this world either. To see the shining rainbow of Faith. That surely leads to a heaping pot of gold. Or the angelic silhouette of a person who truly cares about you. Someone who will wipe the very tears off your face. Or the warm smile of True Happiness. That will heat even a chronically-chilled soul. Or even the ever-burning flame of Love. That will melt any heart. I have seen all of these things yet I don’t and probably never will. Have the gift of 20/20 vision. But perhaps those who have the clearest perception of this world. Are the select few who can’t see at all?
MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

CONTINUED PRAYERS FOR ANNA FERONI

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Anna Feroni is a sister in the BSP who is seriously ill. She is the original webmaster and has been a dear friend to Bruce and Shelley and many in the Association for a number of years. Please continue to keep her in your prayers.

HANDBOOK OF THE ASSOCIATION...

The BSP Handbook, titled *Stella Matutina: Handbook of The Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis* is now available for order. We have used a print-on-demand service at Lulu.com to print the book. This means we do not have to keep a stockpile of books, but customers order directly from Lulu, which prints them as they are ordered and ships them directly to the customer. This simplifies the ordering process for the administrators.

There is a link to the ordering page on our BSP Hompage. You will need a credit card or a Paypal account to order. Cost is $10.00 plus shipping ($3.99 for a single book).

**Bruce and Paul also have copies available.**

May the Rule of 1221 lead many souls on the path to holiness.

Bruce and Shelley Fahey, Administrators

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The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE OF ST. FRANCIS

A.k.a. BSP, is a non-profit Private Association of the Faithful, which is dedicated to renewing the ancient way of penance as contained in the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of 1221 for lay people in our modern world. We have the blessing of the Catholic Church to do this through several of its Archbishops, Bishops, and priests. If you are bound by another Rule of life in another profession of the way of St. Francis that does not permit you to enter other religious families you are nonetheless invited to add the elements of this beautiful way of life that Saint Francis of Assisi gave us to the lifestyle of your profession.

All members, and Franciscans, are welcome to submit articles for consideration for inclusion in this newsletter if they are directed towards the spiritual formation of members or are the outgrowth of the lifestyle of the Association. Just send them to the BSP at minnc@aol.com. Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends or neighbors. It is intended to be the primary monthly communication of the Association, and ongoing formation for all members and friends. And if you can find it in your heart and in your budget remember that donations to the BSP are used strictly to promote the lifestyle and are tax deductible.

We remain, always, sincerely yours in the love of Jesus Christ!

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP, Editors

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Welcome to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance!

*In the world, but not of it, for Christ!*

***Website: www.bspenance.org***

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He is risen indeed! Alleluia!
The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE

of St. Francis

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