BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:
Chapter IX—Francis’ Passionate Love—His Longing for Martyrdom

1. No human tongue could describe the passionate love with which Francis burned for Christ, his Spouse; he seemed to be completely absorbed by the fire of divine love like a glowing coal. The moment he heard the love of God being mentioned, he was aroused immediately and so deeply moved and inflamed that it seemed as if the deepest chord in his heart had been plucked by the words. He used to say that to offer the love of God in exchange for alms was generosity worthy of a nobleman and that anyone who thought less of it than money was a fool. The incalculable worth of divine love was the only thing that could win the kingdom of heaven. He used to say, “Greatly to be loved is His love, who loved us so greatly.” Francis sought occasion to love God in everything. He delighted in all the works of God’s hands and from the vision of joy on earth his mind soared aloft to the life-giving source and cause of all. In everything beautiful, he saw him who is beauty itself, and he followed His Beloved everywhere by his likeness imprinted on creation; of all creation he made a ladder by which he might mount up and embrace Him who is all-desirable. By the power of his extraordinary faith he tasted the Goodness which is the source of all in each and every created thing, as in so many rivulets. He seemed to perceive a divine harmony in the interplay of powers and faculties given by God to his creatures and like the prophet David he exhorted them all to praise God.

2. The memory of Christ Jesus crucified was ever present in the depths of his heart like a bundle of myrrh, and he longed to be wholly transformed into him by the fire of love. In his extraordinary devotion to Christ, he fasted every year for forty days, beginning at the Epiphany, the time when Christ himself lived in the desert. Then he would go to some lonely place and remain there shut up in his cell, taking as little food and drink as possible, as he spent all his time praying and praising God. He loved Christ so fervently and Christ returned his love so intimately that he seemed to have his Savior before his eyes continually, as he once privately admitted to his companions. He burned with love for the Sacrament of our Lord’s Body with all his heart, and was lost in wonder at the thought of such condescending love, such loving condescension. He received Holy Communion often and so devoutly that he roused others to devotion too. The presence of the Immaculate Lamb used to take him out of himself, so that he was often lost in ecstasy.

VISITOR’S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier... Reflections on the Easter Vigil

The events of these last several days are brought into a very specific focus for anyone who had the opportunity to be here this morning to pray and now to come this evening once again to pray. The first three readings of this evening’s Mass come to light in a very particular way. This morning you come into church very early in the morning as the sun was rising. You settle into your normal time of prayer, you get down into your heart and you focus on where you have always found Jesus, and you are struck
immediately by the realization that He is not here – you are in an empty building. And immediately your heart begins to search, as it says in the Song of Songs, “to search for the One Whom your heart loves,” and yet you cannot find Him. Like Mary Magdalene, you want to look at anyone and say, “Where have you put Him? Where is the Lord?” As you search around the church it becomes more difficult because at that point all of the statues are still covered; everything is draped in purple, all of the things that you would look to; there is nothing to hold onto. Finally, your eyes settle on the crucifix which is sitting right on the altar which is bare, other than the exposed crucifix. And even that does not settle the heart because it seems more like a memory which is burned in; you know the Lord is not on the Cross, but He is in the tomb. The church is silent and the neighborhood is silent and everything is dark.

Immediately, your mind begins to go to what we heard in the first reading, that in the beginning everything was a formless waste. As you look around for anything to grab onto in your heart, there is nothing. Suddenly, you begin to recognize that there is a mystery going on. It is something similar to the creation which we heard, although more similar to the second chapter of Genesis where we hear that God made man out of the dust of the earth. As we heard in the reading this evening, God made man in His own image and likeness. And now Jesus Christ, Who is the image of the invisible God and in Whose image each one of us is made – yet in the depth of His love was made in our image in the womb of His mother—suddenly He has reversed creation and He has entered into the earth, gone “back to the dust” from which He was made, as was said to Adam in punishment for his sin.

As you continue to look around the church in your heart to find someplace for your heart to settle, you come back to that crucifix which sits upon the altar and you begin to recognize that on that crucifix is the fulfillment of the prophecy that we heard in the second reading today. The Hebrew makes it even more clear and it is one of the most astounding passages in all Scripture when Isaac looks at his father and says, “Here is the wood and here is the fire, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?” What it says in the Hebrew is “God will provide Himself the lamb for the sacrifice.” God will provide Himself the lamb for the sacrifice. And as your heart focuses in on that crucifix, you begin to recognize that this is the Lamb Whom God provided for the sacrifice, for the redemption of our souls.

You begin to go even beyond that as you ponder that mystery and you move on to the third reading. You think about the cross that stands upon the altar, knowing that the Lord is no longer on the Cross, and you see then that it is just a barren cross standing there like a standard, a cross which has been driven into the earth and is similar then to the staff which Moses used when he struck the rock and split it in two, similar to the staff which Moses held in his hand as he reached out across the sea and split it in two. Now the Cross has been driven into the earth – the dust from which we were made—and it has been split in two so that the God of all creation could enter into the realm of death, so that He could enter into the netherworld and preach the Gospel to those who were in prison, as Saint Peter says, so that they too would be able to hear the Gospel and be saved. At that point, you can begin to recognize that everything has been split in two. For the souls in the netherworld, there was a clear distinction between the saints and the condemned. There is a split between Heaven and hell. There is a split between life and death.

And as you continue to ponder upon the fact that now this Cross has been driven into the dust from which we were made, it has been driven deep into the heart of each one of us so that that same split takes place within of sin and forgiveness, of life and death, of Jesus Christ and Satan. And the choice we have to make is just like the choice that was made for generations before. As you continue to ponder on these mysteries, suddenly what happens tonight begins to come into focus – but in reverse – because at the beginning of Mass tonight we were once again in the dark and suddenly (as what we heard in the third reading) there was a pillar of light that was shining in the dark. It was the Lumen Christi, the Light of Christ. He is the Light that came into the world, into the darkness, and the darkness was not able to overcome it. That light then spread from that one flame on top of the Easter candle to all of the candles which each one of us held. And suddenly there was a beautiful glow throughout the church, and the darkness had been enveloped in the light—just as each one of us was on the day we were baptized, as Saint Paul reminded us in the reading that we heard from his Letter to the Romans.

But we go beyond that, then, to the second reading again, back to the time of Abraham sacrificing his son. And we will recognize, as we continue through the Mass tonight, that the Lamb is going to be immolated once again upon the altar but this is the Lamb Who on the first day of the week brings about a new creation for Himself and for each one of us. On the first day of creation, He re-creates each one of us into His own image and likeness. Just as when God created Adam from the dust of the earth, Adam’s body laid there lifeless until the breath of God entered in and he had life. So, in the tomb, the body of Our Lord laid lifeless until at the moment of the Resurrection when His glorified soul re-entered His body and His body rose to a new and glorified state, and there was new life from death.

You begin to meditate upon this mystery that this is the One Who the Book of Revelation says is the Lamb Who was sacrificed, the Lamb who was slain, and has been found worthy to open the book that is sealed with the seven seals. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and when the Lion was seen He was a Lamb. He is the One who will give Himself now to each one of us so that
as we share already in His death and Resurrection through Baptism, now in the Eucharist we will elevate Our Lord and we will glorify in His Resurrection. But that is not all because the dust from which He was made, this earth which was remade in the Resurrection of Christ, is remade now in each one of us because we will receive our Risen Lord in the Eucharist tonight.

By the way, I must commend you: The priests of Saint Agnes Parish collectively heard forty hours of confessions in the last week. And other than Thursday night (when confessions ended at ten minutes to twelve midnight) my free time in the confessional consisted of five Hail Marys – that is all. Otherwise, it was completely filled with one confession following the next, following the next, following the next. I commend you for bringing your children and for preparing your souls and the souls of your family members so that what was dead in sin could be brought to new life. Tonight in the Eucharist, God will breathe that new life into each one of us and we will share in the glory of the Resurrection, in the Risen Christ.

This glory is ours because Our Lord does not save it for Himself. It is the other element of the mystery upon which your heart settles as you try to find a bridge to link these two parts together. The only place that you could find that is in the one place where Jesus remained alive on earth while He remained also dead in the tomb. As you came this morning to pray in the silence of the church, you found yourself in union with the one person. You sought Him in the Upper Room and He was not there; you sought Him with Mary Magdalene but she was looking for Him as well; and finally, prostrate before His tomb, you found His mother. And in His mother, in her Immaculate Heart where Jesus was conceived first before He was conceived in her virginal womb, there He continued to live. At the moment of His crucifixion, He entrusted each one of us to His mother and there we lived with Him in her Immaculate Heart. She is the only one who believed in the Resurrection before it happened. In her alone the faith of the Church remained for those three days when Our Lord was in the tomb. But in her heart each one of us remained, and the faith which Our Lord would place into our hearts remained alive in her so that now with her we glorify in the Resurrection of her only-begotten Son.

As we proceed now with the Mass, the blessing of the Easter water, and the renewal of our baptismal promises, we need to recognize this mystery which we celebrate today, the mystery into which we have been incorporated. And we have that choice to make. That Cross has been driven deep into our hearts, the Cross with the Word of God right on it. As Saint Paul said to the Romans, “The Word of God cuts more surely than a two-edged sword, and it separates spirit from soul and joint from marrow.” It separates from within us Jesus Christ and Satan. In just a moment, as we renew our baptismal vows, we will once again renounce Satan and all his works and all his empty promises and we will once again profess our faith in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. And just as this church, which this morning was like a void and empty waste, is now once again filled with beauty and will once again be filled with our Resurrected Lord, so too this temple of our body is restored to its beauty and will also be filled with Our Resurrected Lord in whom we profess our Easter faith.

This text was transcribed from the audio recording of a homily by Father Robert Altier with minimal editing.

ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...
Frozen: An Easter Message

Recently we had the opportunity to watch the Walt Disney movie, Frozen, and it is quite a movie. There are two central characters in it, two sisters, Elsa and Anna, not to mention a number of comic figures that are just plain funny. In it Elsa has magical powers from the time of her childhood that allow her to create ice and freeze things at a touch. In the course of the movie her powers become so strong they engulf the entire town of Arcadelle in winter and she builds a magnificent ice castle in the mountains unaware of the disaster she has created for others. Her sister, Anna goes to the rescue to save Arcadelle and her sister, and it becomes quite a movie that ends when Anna lays down her life for her sister Elsa and that act unleashes the power of love in Elsa as powerfully as the power of freezing was in her, and Spring comes for everyone. Love saves the day and the movie ends happily. This movie is so good that locally an entire grade school watched it and discussed then the power of love.

Of course, we all know frozen is how we will be when we die. Our wills that is, will be frozen. If we loved God and man when we lived we will love them when we die. If we hated God and man while we lived we will hate them in eternity. That, of course, is the core element in hell. The eternal, unchanging, hatred towards God and your fellow man. One Saint said once, having experienced heaven and hell, that everyone in hell hates everyone else. Hate is the
common element. In heaven love will fill everyone, and everything.

In the way we live and act nothing is frozen here, now, on earth, unless we want it to be. From our early childhood we learn from our parents and all those around us what is important in our life. In a sense we all have magical powers, to live as we choose to live. We all have free will! We learn that gradually, from our parents and friends and those around us and as we mature we learn to make decisions. Those can be good or bad decisions. They can pass Winter over our lives and the lives of others, or we can be creatures of Spring. We all go through this process. We all make decisions that affect us and others, for better and for worse. We need to always be looking to make things better.

"Make every contact a good one” is a key employee relations objective. That is the key to getting along with people. We do well to remember that each day. The same rule applies to decisions that we have to make. We need to make every decision a good one when it is up to us. And we can go one step further and apply this principle to the elements of the gospel as they apply to our lives. The fact is we live the gospel one step, one decision, at a time, every day and in every way, if we live it at all. So, we have time to make every decision, just like every contact, a good one, and we should. For us the gospel life is the ice breaker in all of our life. If we study the gospel and sincerely seek to live it, the sin and bad habits of our lives will disappear. We will shine with the love of God.

Taking this one step further, we need to see the many ways we can improve and break the ice of our bad habits and sins and direct our will to God, and wash it all with love. The love of the Great Lover, the Love of God, which He will instill in us if we seek Him and strive to do His Will. Little steps are the keys to great accomplishments here. If we see the bad habit or know the sin we need to look for ways to turn from it and diminish it, one step at a time. If we call on the Lord He will help us. He is always there for us.

The Rule is the key to us living the gospel more fully, and in living it we can reach out to others and help them live more loving lives. We can come to the rescue of others in simple ways, by living our Faith and prayer, positive thinking, good example, and good, loving decisions at every turn. We have a new commandment to live, given to us by the Lord, to love one another. To love one another we need to love God. All love flows from God and so our love of others will flow through us from our Risen Lord! Like in the movie Frozen our love will flow out over all and transform all around us and everyone in our life in a positive way.

We wish everyone a happy and blessed Easter!

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP Administrators, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota

NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

“He who sees Me sees the Father.” (John 14:9)

"It is 'God, who is rich in mercy' whom Jesus Christ has revealed to us as Father: it is His very Son who, in Himself, has manifested Him and made Him known to us.”

So begins “Dives et Misericordia,” the encyclical on Divine Mercy. Pope John Paul II was truly a Saint for our times. It is said that his mission in life was to make known to mankind God’s Divine Mercy. “Be Not Afraid” was the motto of his pontificate. Be not afraid to depend totally upon God’s Love.

“In Jesus Christ, every path to man, as it has been assigned once and for all to the Church in the changing context of the times, is simultaneously an approach to the Father and His love.” And later: “Today I wish to say that openness to Christ, who as the Redeemer of the world fully reveals man himself, can only be achieved through an ever more mature reference to the Father and His love.” #1

There is a perfect Way to follow in the footsteps of Jesus to “approach the Father and His love.” It is called “The Eucharistic Way of the Cross.”

It can best be described by giving some examples of how it combines the traditional Way of the Cross with the message of Divine Mercy. If you are not convinced by My Words, be convinced by My Wounds!

At the First Station: “We adore Thee, O Christ, and bless Thee. Because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world.” Then the following prayer:

“Eternal Father, we offer You in every consecrated host the world over, the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son being condemned to death, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

“Jesus, because You were as truly God as You were truly
Man, You saw each one of us at the moment of death facing our Eternal Judge with the sins of a lifetime upon our souls. So great was Your Merciful love for us, that You substituted yourself for us, taking upon Yourself to expiate our every sin; allowing Yourself, in our stead, to be condemned to the cruel death we so richly deserved.

“Innocent Lamb of God, with Our Lady, we thank You for such an outpouring of your Merciful Love.” Verse: “For the sake of your sorrowful Passion and Mary’s compassion: Have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

So that is how it is set up. There are many really wonderful prayers. For example, part of the prayer for the second station: “Lamb of God, You know far better than we do that true love is proved and measured by sacrifice—that it is only in seeing a person ready to suffer for us we recognize a genuine friend. Jesus, You saw in the cruel Cross imposed on You so unjustly, a golden opportunity of showing the infinity of Your Merciful Love for us. With Our Lady and the whole Heavenly Court, we thank You, Jesus. Help us to see in every cross that comes our way, a golden opportunity of making You a worthy return of love.”

Divine Mercy Sunday is coming up. This is a spectacular Feast for many reasons. As if Easter, the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead, was not already a great enough Solemnity! The fact is that Jesus Himself wanted Divine Mercy Sunday to be celebrated the week after Easter. That’s like the ultimate Authority!

Most of us love to celebrate Divine Mercy as it has been brought into our lives since 1980, the year of the encyclical. I think one of many reasons is the affirmation of “private revelation,” in this case that of St. Faustina, who deserves the credit for being the conduit, or the instrument used by God to bring the emphasis on God’s Divine Mercy to the world when it most needs it. She follows in the footsteps of St. Bernadette of Lourdes, and the three children of Fatima, of the poor and simple souls of the world used by God to confound the “learned and the clever.”

These “private” revelations and others are officially approved by Holy Mother Church. The intervention of God and our Blessed Mother in these latter days increases the faith, hope and love of those who have eyes to see, and a humble heart to understand Divine Wisdom at work in the world. For our devotion, we now have the Divine Mercy Chaplet as well as the Rosary.

Divine Wisdom and Mercy have probably never been so needed by mankind led astray by the Evil One in so many new and creative ways. Spiritual Warfare is upon us, “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12)

Holy Week this year is made special for me by the Eucharistic Way of the Cross, as well as by an accompanying hymn I have also just discovered: “God of Mercy and Compassion.” It fits so perfectly with Divine Mercy, with the prodigal son/daughter returning to the Father:

"God of mercy and compassion, look with pity upon me;
Father, let me call you Father, 'tis thy child returns to Thee.
Jesus Lord, I ask for mercy; let me not implore in vain:
All my sins I now detest them, never will I sin again."

From the Twelfth Station: “Eternal Father, we offer You in every consecrated host, the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ Dying on the Cross for us, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

“Crucified Lamb of God, by dying on the Cross You gave supreme expression to Your love for Your Heavenly Father and for every one of us. ‘There is No Greater Love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’ Everything from all eternity was a preparation for this SUPREME ACT OF MERCIFUL LOVE. Everything since looks back to it as to its source and derives all its spiritual efficacy from it.

“O Precious blood and water gushing forth from the pierced heart of our crucified Jesus to be a fount of mercy for us, we trust in Thee. Pierce us through and through. Purify us in the sacred water, vivify us in the Precious Blood. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that we can love You and Your Father and Immaculate Mother, with the very same love with which You love Yourselves and love us.”

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota

Jesus I trust in you.
Canticle of Praise and Gratitude in the Divine Will...
by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading of Easter Vigil

God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. (Genesis 1:31)

Dear brothers and sisters, this Lent during adoration a meditation came to me quite clearly. As it seemed very Franciscan, I felt it would be appropriate to share it here. (If you would like to see a slide show featuring this reflection please see https://youtu.be/RVvTyRXQTIM)

Blessed be God in all Creation!

Blessed Trinity of Love, in the Divine Will we praise you and thank you for Sister Water, sustainer of life, and container of heavenly grace! You have infused our bodies with water as a sign of the infusion of grace that comes to us in baptism. You rain water upon us from the heavens as a sign of the plenitude of grace that flows from the merciful heart of our loving Father. You cover the earth with water as a sign of the infinite ocean of your mercy. We know that without Sister Water our bodies will die. Help us to know that without your grace our souls will die. Blessed Trinity of Love, we praise you and thank you for Sister Water!

Blessed Trinity of Love, in the Divine Will we praise you and thank you for Brother Sun, sustainer of life, and container of light. The warm embrace of the sun’s rays is a sign of your all-embracing love. The effects of Brother Sun which sustains every creature is a sign that in Christ our Light, all things hold together. The brightness of the sun is a sign of your own wonderful light, and is a pale preview of our heavenly destiny, wherein Christ himself shall be our light. We know that without Brother Sun our bodies will die. Help us to know that without Christ our Light, our souls will die. Blessed Trinity of Love, we praise you and thank you for Brother Sun.

Blessed Trinity of Love, in the Divine Will we praise you and thank you for Sister Moon, a light shining in our darkness, and sign of our Blessed Mother’s loving care for us. Sister Moon generates no light, but only reflects that of the sun, a sign of Mary whose predestinate holiness emanated from her perfect reflection of the holiness of her Son. Sister Moon has a powerful effect on the waters of the earth, a sign of our Blessed Mother’s powerful effect of grace in our lives. Sister moon is faithful in following her divine appointment in the heavens, sign of the perfect fiat of our Blessed Mother. Without Sister Moon we stumble and fall in the darkness. Help us to know that without our Blessed Mother, our souls are in greater danger of stumbling and falling. Blessed Trinity of Love, we praise you and thank you for Sister Moon.

Blessed Trinity of Love, in the Divine Will we praise you and thank you for our Brothers and Sisters the Stars, kindly lights shining in the darkness, and signs of the angels and saints who intercede for us unceasingly. The Stars, invisible by day, are a sign of the unseen presence of our loving, heavenly friends. At night the Stars cheer us. Their countless numbers are signs of the myriad prayers being offered for us by our heavenly allies. We know that without our Brothers and Sister the Stars, the darkness would close in on us. Help us to know that without our loving friends the Saints and Angels we would feel more lonely and sad. Blessed Trinity of Love, we praise you and thank you for our Brothers and Sisters the Stars.

Blessed Trinity of Love, in the Divine Will we praise you and thank you for our Brother Earth, sustainer of life and container of every good thing you have made for us to enjoy. Brother Earth is our loving home and firm foundation, a sign of your holy Church solidly built upon a Rock. The plants sink their roots into Brother Earth for sustenance, a sign of our need to sink our roots into your holy Church for sustenance. There is no end to the abundance and beauty to be found on the earth, above the earth, and beneath the earth, a sign of the deep
and wide riches of the Church. When we die, the Church consigns our bodies to Brother Earth, just as she consigns our souls to heaven. Blessed Trinity of Love, we praise you and thank you for our Brother Earth.

Blessed Trinity of love, by your mercy accept these poor prayers of praise and gratitude offered in the Divine Will in the name of everyone from Adam to the last man.

We praise and thank you for your Divine fiat of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. Grant us the gift of living in the Divine Will, that we might praise you more perfectly and serve you more faithfully. We ask these prayers through the Flame of Love of our Immaculate Mother, Mary. Amen.

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2 Timothy 4:4-5 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the invocation of God in prayer.

"My child, much damage is done when souls refuse to give thanks for God's blessings. For everything that is blessed by God is good. So ask a blessing on all you consume, on all you do, on all you have. Let God determine what is good—not man! So many things are labeled as bad when what they lack is a blessing. Remember too that when you ask a blessing it behooves you not to misuse what has been blessed, but to act with temperance and prudence towards all created things. This age has seen a great shift, a polar reversal, in how creation is treated. That is having a direct consequence in the physical and spiritual planes. For created things are worshiped, abused, used to curse, but rarely blessed. Abomination! My children, make reparation to the Creator of all! So much damage has been done and purchased. Offer sacrifices and ask for blessings. The world is in dire need of blessing."

Jesus, in the Divine Will we ask that you will bless all created things, both on the earth and in the heavens. Bless all things to our use and grant us temperance and prudence so that all you desire may be accomplished, for your glory. Father, please bless all creation. Holy Spirit, come and renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada

(The messages on the Pelianito Journal blog are the fruit of Janet's lectio divina. She submits all messages to her spiritual director, a Catholic priest. You may read his remarks here: http://pelianito.stblogs.com/on-private-revelation/.)

FROM THE 'SPARROW'
The Cross of Christ

Peace to you all my little sparrows. As Holy Week moves on (culminating in) Good Friday, the Cross of Christ should be central to the thoughts of our minds.

"When they came to the place called the Skull they crucified Jesus and the criminals there, one on his right, the other on his left." (Luke 23:33)

Jesus finally meets his fate--crucifixion. Josephus, a first century historian, called it "the most pitiful of deaths.

It is told in three words--"they crucified him." Jesus shares the spotlight with two criminals. They get more "ink" than he does. The sentence of Pilate has been carried out: "They crucified him." It's all over but the dying.

The physical torture Jesus experienced in the crucifixion would have been the worst of his entire life. None of the four Gospels describes his pain. Words can only do so much. "They crucified him," is enough.

The cross. It will become the mark of a Christian...the logo of Christianity...the symbol which leads every procession...the sign I make upon myself...the sign parents trace on the face of a sleeping child...the very first ritual action at Baptism...the first words spoken at every Mass...the last words spoken at the grave.

Let there be no Christian home without it.

Let there not a day pass that I do not look at the cross.

Under the Disguise of the Poor

Peace! One of the Lenten themes, my dear sparrows, has always been how we treated and interacted with the poor. One of the foremost authorities for me is Mother Teresa. The following is her own words taken
from "One Heart Full of Love." Her words should strike home in all of us as sparrows.

'As if that were not enough, Jesus became the hungry one, so that you could satisfy his hunger, cover his nakedness, and offer him shelter. He said, "You did it to me. I was hungry. I was naked. I was homeless." The forgotten man in the street, the one we picked up in the streets of Calcutta, was Jesus bearing this man's appearance. It was Jesus who was hungry. I will never forget the man who was half-eaten by worms when we found him. He was tenderly carried to the home for dying destitute. On the way, he murmured: "I have lived like an animal, but now I am going to die loved and surrounded with care." That is how he died and went home to God. That was Jesus under the disguise of the poor.

'One of our novices had come from a far-off country and well-to-do family. She was sent right away to our home for the destitute who are dying, just like the rest of the novices. Before they left I told them, "During Mass you have seen with what care and tenderness the priest touched the body of Christ changed into the Bread of Life. Do the same in the home of the dying."

'Three hours later the novices came up to me. The newly arrived novice came up to me and said full of joy, "Mother, I have been touching the body of Christ for three hours!" I asked her, "What have you done?" She said she had rescued a man lying in the gutter, half-eaten by worms. I really felt that I was touching the body of Christ as Jesus said, 'I was sick...,' " she continued.

'That young sister was a contemplative. She had been touching Christ for three hours and offering her love to him. To be able to do the same, it is necessary to know the poor.

'The poor are great people. The poor deserve love. Do you know the poor in your midst? It would be sad if you didn't know your own poor. Just as love begins at home, so too poverty begins at home. You need to know who is lonely, unloved, and forgotten in your homes."’ –Mother Teresa

"If the great shadows come and hide the Star of Love; if I seem not to believe in anything but the existence of night of this life—then shall be the moment of perfect joy, knowing that behind the dark clouds my beloved Sun still shines." –St. Therese, the Little Flower

May you, as little sparrows, understand and comprehend the words of Mother Teresa and Saint Therese and keep the poor close to you in your heart during this Lent and Easter season as well as all the days of your lives.

Pax et bonum

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, NC

MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

ST ANTHONY CHAPTER

The St. Anthony chapter of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance was pleased to welcome in March the admitance of three new Postulants to the chapter. On Saturday, March 14th, a welcoming ceremony took place for Jim Tessmar in the Church of St. Timothy’s in Escondido, CA. Then again on Sunday the chapter welcomed Jose Apolinar and Richard Estrada. They have begun their postulant formation and will continue to meet on the Sunday after the regular St. Anthony chapter meeting every 2nd Saturday of the month.

At the regular chapter meeting, Brother Christopher O'Donnell gave a reflection on Obedience, the Heart of Humility. He emphasized that true penance is not about making up for sin or punishment, but for conversion and surrender to God. We too often think we are humble but true obedience is God moving us forward.

On Friday March 20th, the chapter also had the opportunity to serve the community of St. Timothy’s at the Friday, Lenten Soup Supper following evening Mass and Stations. The chapter served soup and macaroni for the kids, who also had several activities including a coloring sheet of our Seraphic Father.

Jim Tessmar

José Apolinar and Richard Estrada
BSP RETREAT
SAVE THE DATE! The annual BSP retreat will be held August 14-16 at Prior Lake Franciscan Retreat Center as usual, with Fr. John Paul Erickson as Retreat Master. He is head of the Office of Worship for the Archdiocese. The general theme will center on contemplative prayer. Details in the next newsletter.

BSP MEMBER WEBSITES
Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis facebook page by Lisa Drago, BSP
The Joy of Penance by Janet Klasson www.joyofpenance.wordpress.com

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 homepage. You will need a credit card or a Paypal account to order. Cost is $10.00 plus shipping.

He is risen indeed!
Blessed Easter to you and yours.
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

Welcome to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance!

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

Website: www.bspenance.org

The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE

of St. Francis

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