BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter IX—Francis’ Passionate Love—His Longing for Martyrdom

5. In the fervor of his love he felt inspired to imitate the glorious victory of the martyrs in whom the fire of love could not be extinguished or their courage broken. Inflamed with that perfect love “which drives out fear” (1 Jn 4:18), he longed to offer himself as a living victim to pay Christ for his love in dying for us and inspire others to love God. In the sixth year of his religious life he decided to go to Syria to preach repentance and belief in Christ to the Moslems. He boarded a ship for the voyage, but they were driven to Dalmatia by contrary winds. There he stayed for some time, but he could not find a vessel to continue his journey and so, feeling that his desire had been frustrated, he approached a ship’s crew who were leaving for Ancona and asked them to take him with them, for love of God. They refused because he had not the money for the fare, but Francis put his trust in God and stowed away on the ship with his companion. Then a man came along who seems to have been inspired by God, bringing the food they needed. He approached one of the sailors, a religious man, and told him, “Keep this safe for the friars who are hiding on board, and give it to them when the time comes.” So it was that when the crew had run out of provisions because the gale-force winds prevented them from making progress for a number of days, the only food they had left was the alms which had been given to Francis. This was not very much but God multiplied it so that there was enough for everyone until they reached Ancona, although the storm continued and kept them at sea for many days. When the crew realized that they had been saved from the danger of death on all sides by St. Francis, they gave thanks to God who shows how loveable and wonderful he is in his friends and servants. They were men who knew the dangers of the ocean and now they acknowledged the miracle God had worked for them.

6. When he left the coast, Francis went on a missionary journey about the countryside, sowing everywhere the seed of salvation and reaping an abundant harvest. However, the prize of martyrdom still attracted him so strongly that the thought of dying for Christ meant more to him than any merit he might earn by the practice of virtue. Therefore, he took the road towards Morocco with the intention of preaching the Gospel of Christ to the sultan and his subjects, hoping to win the palm of victory in this way. His desire bore him along so swiftly that even though he was physically weak he used to leave his companion behind and hurry ahead, as if he was enraptured in his anxiety to achieve his purpose. When he had travelled as far as Spain, however, he fell sick by God’s design, because he had other plans in store for him. Prevented by his illness from gaining martyrdom, Francis realized that his life was still necessary for the family he had founded, even though he was convinced that death was a prize to be won, and so he returned to tend the flock which had been committed to his care.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)
VISITOR’S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

The Necessity of Prayer
Reading (Sirach 48:1-14) Gospel (Matthew 6:7-15)

In the first reading today from the Book of Sirach, we hear the glories of the greatest prophet being sung by the Wise Man, and we are told that there is no one whose glory is equal to that of Elijah (that is, of course, in the Old Testament times). He is the greatest of all the prophets who ever lived, and he is the first of them. When we look at the life of this man, we certainly recognize first and foremost that his call was from God. But to be able to live that call, to be able to be obedient to what it was that God was asking him was difficult. As we know from reading any of the prophets, the things that God would ask them were sometimes very strange, and so it was with Elijah as well.

So we ask ourselves, “How is it possible that this was done?” It is possible only with prayer, which is exactly what we see Elijah doing over and over and over again. For three years, he goes to be a hermit. At the top of Mount Carmel, he bows down and prays. Constantly, he is seeking God in prayer, and that is the only way he would know what it was that God was asking of him. His will was so completely united with the Will of God through prayer that he did only what God was asking of him. That is why the things he was asking for in prayer would be answered. When he called down fire from heaven, it came. It would be an interesting challenge to see how many of us would be able to go out and bring down fire from heaven. The problem is that we are not united completely to the Will of God. So it requires only prayer.

Now, Our Lord tells us in the Gospel how we are to pray, and He makes it very, very simple as far as the words go. Saint Teresa of Avila said very clearly and simply: “Prayer is not thinking much, but loving much.” That is all there is. People think there is something wrong when they go to prayer and they are not rambling all over the place. “Nothing’s happening,” they say. Praise God when that happens. When it is dark, when it is silent, that is God teaching you just to be quiet, to seek Him in the recesses of your heart. You are not going to find God in your mind; you are going to find Him only in your heart. And you are not going to find Him by rattling on and on and on and thinking about yourself. You are going to find Him by seeking Him on the inside in the very depths of your being because that is where He dwells.

When we consider the words of the Our Father, they would make a beautiful meditation. But you do not even need to think about the whole thing; all you have to do, for instance, is take the first couple of words. What does it mean to call God “Father” when He dwells within, He Who loves us, He Who knows our needs before we ask, He Who will provide for what we need if we trust? He is a father. He is the One Who gives us life; He is the One Who sustains life; He is the One Who provides. That is all we need to think about for the rest of eternity, and we will never get bored because that is Who He is.

If we would just simply come before the Lord and place ourselves in His holy presence, if we would open our hearts instead of our heads, just think what God would be able to accomplish within us. It is not an easy task. It is the single most difficult task that the soul will ever endure. It is not always sweet and pleasant; in fact, very rarely is it sweet and pleasant. It is painful because God needs to purify out all the things that stand in the way. Anything that is between Him and us needs to go. That, of course, is where part of our problem comes in: We like the junk that stands between us and God, and we do not want to let it go. So God has to literally burn it out of us, which is why prayer can be so very painful. But when it is done in love, it does not matter how painful it gets because what is most important is our relationship with Him, that we are seeking Him and doing His Will.

We live in a time where prayer has never been more important, and we live in a time where fewer people than ever are actually praying. It is time that we really seek God in prayer. Do not just come and “think”; do not come before Him and tell Him what He is supposed to do (it is not going to work anyway); do not think you are going to change His mind because that is not going to work either – God does not change. Come before Him and open your heart, and ask Him to change you. Ask Him to do whatever it is going to require to unite you with His Will, and then trust Him. Let Him work the way that is going to be the best, which is a way that none of us understand and a way that none of us would ever choose – that is a guarantee! – because God will use the path that is going to be the most effective for purifying your soul. And that is the path from which you would run as fast as you possibly could if it were up to you. So let God be in charge.

Come before Him every single day. It is not an option. As a baptized person, you have made a vow of what you are going to do, and that includes prayer. You need to spend time, substantial time, every single day before the Blessed Sacrament. If you cannot get to the Blessed Sacrament, then at least have a place in your home where you can pray. This is incumbent upon each and every one of us. It is not a nice idea, it is not a good theory, but it is a practical reality that must be at the
essence and the heart of the lives of every single one of us. Otherwise, we are all going to be off doing our own thing and we are going to look like Laurel and Hardy out there banging into each other because nobody is doing what God wants, but everybody is doing what they think is the most important. God is just going to laugh because we are not doing His Will. If we want to be effective, we need to do His Will. And if we want to know His Will, we have to pray. And if we are going to pray, it needs to be simple, it needs to be from the heart, and it needs to be ultimately a pure act of love for God.

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

**ADMINISTRATOR’S MESSAGE...**

**All the way to Heaven is Heaven!**

We read recently that all the way to heaven is heaven. It was in the life of a Saint but darned if we can remember who. We think it was St. Catherine of Siena, but it may have been St. Theresa of Avila. In any event it was not St. Francis. Whomever wrote it though gave us cause to ponder this wonderful message.

To begin we must realize we are made in the image and likeness of God, but we are not God. In heaven we will still not be God but we will thrive on the vision of God that He gives us. This vision, known as the beatific vision, will be such that we always can see God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, before our eyes. Now whether those eyes will be just spiritual, or intellectual, or our real physical eyes we can only imagine right now. Once we are there we will know, and that vision will be an eternal cause for joy. No one in hell will enjoy a vision of God, though they will know He is real just because of what they experience, and that they experience it at all, and it never ends.

Heaven will be a place of incredible joy, we have been told. We can only imagine that here of course, as this place, earth, is not a cause of incredible joy. It is quite the contrary. A place of incredible pain including just the pain of imaging what it would be like not to have the pains of earth to endure. In that there is a message though. When we do have moments or times of great joy here we often say ‘this is like heaven’ and just for those times and moments we do experience heaven.

And heaven will be a place of ‘enduring love’. We love people and things here, but that love is often tenuous, or dented by moments of anger or unrighteousness, even if the love we feel is for ‘loved ones’, those closest to our hearts. The enduring love of heaven will not be dented by moments or times of less love of any kind. Love will just prevail. Love will literally be ‘in the air’ and it will prevail in all of our hearts. Our greatest love will be for God but we will also love everyone else in heaven perfectly. That love of God will be our eternal life and the breath of heaven. We experience that love sometimes here.

In heaven we will contemplate God, which we often do here but without seeing Him. That contemplation will prevail in heaven, and we will see Him whom we contemplate. Contemplation is the prayer of heaven, just as it is the highest order of prayer on earth outside of the Mass here. In heaven we will be in an eternal state of ‘now’, an eternal present, and that time is unimaginable to us now. God will always be God. His ways and thoughts Scripture says are as ‘high as the heavens’ above our ways and thoughts. They always will be. No doubt He will reveal some of His thinking to us as part of our joy to the extent we can absorb it even, but He will remain God, and we will be quite content to reflect on that reality which will always be before us. It will never end and we feel that now, on our way to heaven as it will be in heaven forever.

The surroundings in heaven are going to be perfect, and permanently beautiful. We read once that it was revealed to a saint that you can even walk in the flowers in heaven and never crush them! Imagine that! We have beauty here, on the way to heaven, and we see it sometimes, but we crush our flowers if we walk on them, we pollute our rivers, and we burn our forests. We need to reflect on what life will be like in heaven. The beauty of heaven we can see in the beauty God has given us here. The beauty of persons, and of nature. This beauty can draw us to God, and in heaven it will be a permanent part of what we enjoy, and will go unblemished. So, here too, on the way to heaven we see a bit of heaven.

Of course, the greatest beauty of heaven will be the beauty of persons. The Person of the Son of God, whom we will all see and know, His Father, and His Spirit. The beauty of His Mother, Queen of heaven, and most perfect of persons. In them we will see the beauty we each possess and love will pierce and penetrate our deepest soul, and prevail like air that we breathe. We will see the beauty in each other and be in constant communication with others whom we love, and we will love everyone. We have moments like that here and these moments teach us what is to come. On top of that in heaven we will travel to what or whom we want to see at the speed of thought. We can only imagine that now.
So, this is a beautiful meditation and that meditation is a foretaste of what is to come in heaven too. In heaven we will all live in a state of meditation. Grateful and loving. Thankful and happy. Always prayerful, and always loving God in a spirit of perpetual gratitude. We have moments like that here and it is fine to realize these moments are a reflection on what is to come.

This meditation on heaven is a delight on earth. It brings us to remember our primordial spiritual roots and to overcome the tendency to sin that our flesh brings on us. It is a prayer, and in meditating on heaven we become heavenly, and our prayer rises like incense to God and lifts our hearts from this valley of tears. So, it is worthwhile to consider how we have heavenly moments here. To let these moments dwell in our hearts and souls and lift us to God. Though they are not permanent, they are refreshing and delightful, and a gift from God.

Our Rule is also a gift from God too, from St. Francis and the Church, a gift that brings our whole life to focus on the things of heaven. The promise of the Rule is that if we live it we will go to heaven, so its core elements are meant to draw us to a deeper and more permanent reflection on the things of heaven. May we live our Rule in peace, and share our faith with others to draw them to the things of God. Let this be joy for us! Pray always, and the desire to pray is also prayer.

May the Lord bless and lead us all!

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

NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)

Part II

At the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference Summit, aka Copenhagen Summit, Communist China, the world’s biggest polluter by every possible environmental standard, nonetheless came to the conference with impeccable environmental credentials. And what were they? China had executed four hundred million unborn children through its one-child policy. Humans cause pollution, therefore humans need to be eliminated. That’s the bottom line for the Environmental Movement: population control, along with necessary government control to force its anti-human agenda on the world. Who is the one who sponsored such a horror?

How does a person of faith in God join with such a movement? Last month and in previous articles I have chronicled the outright fraud and deceit that is part and parcel of the leadership of the Environmental Movement. It’s a tragedy, because millions of good-hearted people want to join with others in being good stewards of God’s creation. But participation with a morally toxic group is hardly a viable option. We as Franciscans have a special interest in this area due to the magnificent influence of our holy father Francis. However, St. Francis never had to deal with a corrupt Movement that gives rights to animals and takes them away from the crown of God’s creation, mankind. I don’t believe he would tolerate such duplicity for an instant.

An unholy alliance. To bring about population control, the emphasis of the Environmental Movement from the beginning has been on pollution as a means to blame and control human activity, producing one coercive regulation after the other. What a great way to limit human freedom. When that got old, there needed to be a new crisis.

In the early 70’s, we were warned of the coming Ice Age, quickly followed by the coming catastrophe of Global Warming. Quite a trick to morph from one into the other virtually overnight. Man-made pollution would now cause the death of the planet. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) swung into action, loaded their computers with questionable data, and predicted dire consequences for poor Mother Earth. The fact that the computer predictions are wrong, and nothing dire has happened for eighteen years doesn’t matter a whit. The agenda must be served, and there is no turning back. No recourse to the truth, no apology for whipping up unnecessary hysteria by feeding the world erroneous information. The devil is the father of lies, and the lies continue unabated. He must be served.

In April of this year Pope Francis met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to discuss environmental issues. A high Vatican official said: “The ideology surrounding environmental issues is too tied to a capitalism that
doesn’t want to stop ruining the environment because they don’t want to give up their profits.” This statement was made by Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez Maradiaga, the “closest advisor” to Pope Francis on environmental issues, according to the Boston Globe’s Crux blog. Maradiaga “castigated conservative climate change skeptics in the United States, blaming capitalism for their views.”

Really? That’s made me proud to be a US citizen, joining with my fellow “climate change skeptics” to stand for the truth! The facts concerning Global Warming are now irrelevant. The greatest scientific hoax in history is taken as gospel truth. And those who criticized the Church’s handling of Galileo are doing the same thing themselves! They are intolerant of any opposing opinion. Is that how science operates? Meanwhile the Cardinal is placing environmental issues squarely in the midst of the perpetual conflict between Socialism and Capitalism. A new twist.

The Heartland Institute raised its voice in a message to Pope Francis just before he met with the Secretary General of the UN: “Please do not put the enormous weight of your moral authority behind the discredited and scandal-prone United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). There is no need for a radical reordering of global economies that will cause massive reductions in human freedom and prosperity. Instead, speak out for the poor and disadvantaged of the world who need affordable and reliable energy to escape grinding poverty.”

Said Heartland Institute’s President Joseph Bast: “The Holy Father is being misled by ‘experts’ at the United Nations who have proven unworthy of his trust. Humans are not causing a climate crisis on God’s Green Earth – in fact, they are fulfilling their Biblical duty to protect and use it for the benefit of humanity. Though Pope Francis’s heart is surely in the right place, he would do his flock and the world a disservice by putting his moral authority behind the United Nations’ unscientific agenda on the climate.

People of all faiths have a moral calling to continually seek the truth. That is why Heartland is sending a contingent of real scientists to Rome next week. We are bringing the Vatican a message of truth for all with open ears: The science is not settled, and global warming is not a crisis. The world’s poor will suffer horribly if reliable energy – the engine of prosperity and a better life – is made more expensive and less reliable by the decree of global planners.”

The Heartland Institute is right on the money. The “Climate Crisis” is being used as a vehicle for something else by the “Father of lies and a murderer from the beginning” for population control, eliminating especially the poor of the world (cf. UN promotion of all the means of the Culture of Death: contraception, abortion, homosexuality, et al). It appears the Vatican is using it for at least a more laudable goal: the re-distribution of wealth from the rich to the poor, to help the poor of the world and increase their number. Those two goals are incompatible in the extreme! The United Nations and the Environmental Movement are united in the goal of population control by any means possible. The Catholic Church stands for the Gospel of Life and the flourishing of mankind! Good vs. Evil. Good joining Evil? An unholy alliance.

I pray that those who follow the Way, the Truth and the Life are not misled into following the way of the world, the flesh and the devil. We follow a higher standard, one set by God our Creator, not His and our arch-enemy. God is in charge of the earth, all that is in it, on it, and above it. Mankind is totally dependent upon God for the most elementary things like the sun and the rain to make our crops grow, and the changing seasons. We couldn’t alter the climate if we tried; the whole idea is ludicrous. It takes colossal pride to even imagine we had such power.

Ours is to humbly accept the awesome power of God and give Him glory! That’s what St. Francis does in his “Canticle of the Sun.” And that’s what Janet did in her April article: “Canticle of Praise and Gratitude in the Divine Will.”

“My heart is surely in the right place, he would do his flock and the world a disservice by putting his moral authority behind the United Nations’ unscientific agenda on the climate.”

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 link 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, 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 fiats 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.”

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota
Silence…
by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading, Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Job 38:1-4 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding...” (Job 38:1-4)

This dramatic Scripture passage recounts the beginning of God’s rebuttal to Job’s complaint at feeling abandoned by God in spite of his righteous life. God’s stinging rebuttal continues from here as he asks Job where he was in all the glorious acts of creation. In the end Job is properly humble and contrite as we can see by his response: “See, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth. I have spoken once, and I will not answer, twice, but will proceed no further.” Job’s reply is silence, and his silence is more eloquent than all he has said before.

As Scripture tells us and Job recognized, there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” (Ecclesiastes 3:7)

Silence in Scripture often denotes reverence, awe, and a waiting that speaks louder than a trumpet blast. “When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.” (Revelation 8:1)

St. Thomas Aquinas, probably the most prolific theologian that ever lived, was himself struck silent in the presence of God near the end of his life. According to the Thurston and Attwater revision of Alban Butler’s Lives of the Saints, he had a life-changing vision:

“On the feast of St. Nicholas [in 1273, Aquinas] was celebrating Mass when he received a revelation that so affected him that he wrote and dictated no more, leaving his great work the Summa Theologiae unfinished. To Brother Reginald’s (his secretary and friend) expostulations he replied, ‘The end of my labors has come. All that I have written appears to be as so much straw after the things that have been revealed to me.’ When later asked by Reginald to return to writing, Aquinas said, ‘I can write no more. I have seen things that make my writings like straw.’”

Like Job, faced with the awesome power and majesty of God, he was reduced to silence.

I usually include an excerpt from my Scriptural prayer journal at the end of my newsletter article, but today I want to interject it in the middle as it is what has set me pondering on what exactly a “time to keep silence,” means in our day.

Psalm 69:12 I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the gate; and the drunkards make songs about me.

“My children, guard your tongues well. Now, more than ever, is it important to measure your words and take every thought captive to Christ. Be deliberate in your speech. Let grace be on your lips. Do not let evil talk or flippant speech issue from your mouth. The tongue is an easy tool for the devil and therefore must be guarded with great diligence. It is far better not to speak than it is to speak rashly or thoughtlessly. Let silence be your prayer and do not rush to fill every silence. Say only what is needed to build others up, taking care not to flatter. Speak with sincerity, honesty, and kindness. If you cannot manage this, it is best to remain silent. There are times when a rebuke is needed, but let it be as gentle as it is honest, measured and weighed to fit the situation. There is much silence in Scripture. Study the silence and you will be given many graces.”

O my Jesus, you were silent before your accusers. Help me to set a guard over my tongue, and to be measured and deliberate in my speech. Hold me in the glorious silence of your embrace—a place of immense majesty where words fail. Jesus I love you! Set a guard over my mouth, that I will speak only and always in the Divine Will. Amen.

As you can see by the prayer at the end of the journal entry, the first Scriptural image I had after recording this was the image of Jesus, silent before his accusers. One can only speculate on why he was silent at this critical moment, but I believe the best explanation is that it served God’s purpose. Certainly Jesus was capable of mounting a plausible defense on his own behalf. He could have easily convinced Pilate that the trumped-up charges against him were not deserving of death. But he knew that God’s purpose and timing were aimed at our ultimate good—the salvation of the human race. And so he remained silent and was tortured and
put to death “as a ransom for many”.

When I posted that journal entry on my blog, a reader sent me a quote from St. Catherine of Siena that she had received that day: “We’ve had enough exhortations to be silent! Cry out with a hundred thousand tongues. I see that the world is rotten because of silence”. She wondered with all the injustice in the world, why we were being exhorted to silence.

I replied that certainly the silence that allows sin to fester is the wrong kind and not the kind our Lord was referring to here. This is in one way referring to the silence that is an antidote to rash and flippant speech. There is too much “chatter” in the world. We need more contemplation. Less impulsiveness and more deliberation. Thinking twice before speaking instead of speaking twice before thinking.

There are issues that require that we speak out. But we are called to measure our words carefully, and say only what will make a real difference, not just what will make us feel good. Chewing somebody out who does not agree with us usually pushes them farther down the wrong path. A measured response invites discussion based on reason. There is too much emotion in speech these days and not enough reason. Sincerity, honesty, and kindness are the marks of the Spirit.

There is a time to be silent, as Our Lord was before his accusers. When our words will fall on deaf ears, what is the point? If hearts are closed, our prayers and penances will accomplish far more than our words. Sometimes God requests our silence, even when every fiber of our being wants to shout.

It is good to remember that there are whole communities founded on silence—the contemplatives—without whom the world would have spun out of orbit long ago!

But there is, I believe, a more compelling reason than merely cutting the chatter. The Catechism tells us that the Church must follow Christ into his death and resurrection. I do not think it is a stretch to say the Church has in our time entered into the Passion of Christ. Many recent Christian martyrs have testified to that with their lives. This exhortation to silence, to the weighing and measuring of our words, I believe, shows us that at this point in our Passion narrative, the Church is on trial before the world, and that we need to discern carefully when it is time to speak and when it is time to keep silence.

Prayer and discernment. We are living in perilous times. If we are facing Pilate, it is so very important that we discern the Divine Will and live in it to the best of our ability. May the Holy Spirit be in our hearts and on our tongues! May we pray with the Psalmist: “Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips.” (Psalm 141:3)

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 Lord’s Compassion

Peace! As a sparrow, one of the most significant Gospel stories to me is the Prodigal Son. What a beautiful glimpse Jesus’ parable gives us into the Father’s heart! The father sees his prodigal son a long way off because he was looking and watching for his return. He feels powerful compassion and takes immediate action to restore and show kindness to his long-lost son.

Jesus uses this specific word for compassion only two times in His parables. Both times illustrate the Father’s deepest love for those who are truly “hopeless” and “admit their need.” The merciful king, confronted with a debt that could not be repaid, compassionately forgives all that was owed—a vast fortune! The Good Samaritan, too, takes immediate, compassionate action to bandage the wounds of a traveler near death.

Do you feel lost, hopeless, even unworthy of God’s care and compassion? If so, know that the Father still is watching and waiting for you. Our merciful King longs to forgive your every sin, your every debt, for Jesus’ sake. Out of compassion and truest love, He even offered up the life of His beloved Son to heal the deep, mortal wounds of your soul. How will He not also, along with Him, graciously give you all things? As for this sparrow, and perhaps some of you other sparrow as well, there have been times that I have felt “hopeless” and have openly “admitted my need” for God’s love and compassion...there has never been a time I did not receive from Him what I needed to make me whole again...He is faithful!”
God’s Eraser

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Peace! My dear little sparrow friends forgiveness for a prisoner's sins and crimes are an ever present thought in an incarcerated person's mind. A fellow prisoner, a man who is deeply involved in spiritual matters, told me of a dream he had wherein he came to feel the forgiveness of God in an unexpected way.

In this dream, he told God that he wished to be forgiven for the wrongs he had done in life both in and out of prison. God responded by asking him to list his transgressions on a blackboard. He started writing a list of what he considered to be "minor sins." To his surprise, as rapidly as he wrote God erased his words. Amazed, my friend wondered what would happen with more “major sins.” He began to add what he thought to be more serious offenses. Almost in disbelief, he saw the same erasing occur. No matter what he wrote, God quickly erased it.

Waking from the dream, he thought of the Bible verse above about becoming a new creation and that God's love is like that of the prodigal's father. My friend believes that God welcomes us and erases our transgressions just like in the dream when we go to confession.

We can confess all misdeeds and sins, both large and small, ask for forgiveness, and know that God not only forgives but also erases our sins as if they had never existed. With our slate wiped clean, we are new creations...and that, my little sparrows, is really “good news.” Pax et bonum

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, NC

A Reflection on Statute 18 d. by Janet Klasson, BSP

"Let the members lovingly serve others outside their house-hold by participating, as much as obligations, time, finances, and health permit, in the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy, following the guidance of God and their spiritual director or confessor. Let them serve all with the charity and mercy of Christ."

Blessings Brothers and Sisters. In my own journey with the BSP (and perhaps you have experienced this as well) I sometimes get so focused on the prayer, fasting, and simplicity, that I forget that the Works of Mercy are also part of our Rule of Life. I wanted to put this reflection at the end of the little Sparrow’s reflections because I know that many of us have benefitted spiritually from our brother Bob Hall’s writings. In case you may be unaware, Bob Hall is a professed member of the BSP and minister of the Little Flower Chapter whose members, like him, are all serving time in a federal penitentiary in North Carolina. Praised be Jesus that He sent some holy sisters to minister to them and work for their healing and conversion. Those holy souls are living very actively the Corporal Works of Mercy.

But what about us? I have been haunted by Bob's words in the May newsletter: "Whenever I am asked what is the most difficult to deal with, the answer readily comes to mind. It is not the cold steel bars, the imposing walls and fences, or the peril (within) them. It is the separation from family, the abandonment by friends, and the despairing heart." Oh my! As Brothers and Sisters are we not his family? Through the intimate sharing of his writings, have we not come to know him as a friend? Can we not do a little to ease his despairing heart? North Carolina is very far away from where most of us live, and for most of us, visiting prisons is beyond what we feel we can do. However, one does not have to physically go to the prison to alleviate the prisoner’s suffering. What about dropping a postcard in the mail? A greeting card with a funny or inspiring message? A holy card? A letter of introduction? A card of thanks telling the sparrow what his writings have meant to you?

One of the Corporal Works of Mercy is to visit the sick and imprisoned. Bob Hall is both. I think that hearing from his Brothers and Sisters would touch him deeply. If you want to write to Bob, please send an email to webmaster@bspenance.org and I will be happy to send you his mailing address. However, please do not send anything thicker than a greeting card, no books or gifts, as the prison will send it back to you. Believe it or not contraband can be hidden even in a book’s binding!

May God give us grace and lead us into his holy will! Fiat!

Corporal Works of Mercy
- To feed the hungry;
- To give drink to the thirsty;
- To clothe the naked;
- To shelter the homeless;
- To visit the sick and imprisoned;
- To ransom the captive;
- To bury the dead.

Spiritual works of mercy
- To instruct the ignorant;
- To advise the doubtful;
- To correct sinners;
- To bear wrongs patiently;
- To forgive offences willingly;
- To comfort the afflicted;
- To pray for the living and the dead.
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.

BSP Retreat: August 14-16, 2015
Friday 4:00 pm to Sunday 2:00 pm
at the Franciscan Retreat Center
Prior Lake MN

“Difficulties in Mental Prayer”

With Retreat Master
Fr. John Paul Erickson

Fr. John Paul Erickson was ordained in 2006 by Archbishop Harry Flynn. He is currently serving as Director of the Office of Worship for the Archdiocese of Saint Paul-Minneapolis.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Cost: $160.00
(includes accommodation & meals)

To reserve a place send $25 to:

BSP Retreat
c/o Paul Beery BSP
2108 Pleasant Ave, #114
Minneapolis, MN 55404

For more details on the retreat see the July BSP newsletter or call Paul Beery: 612-871-2852 (Home); 612-730-4500 (Cell)
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 minncc@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

65774 County Road 31
Northome MN 56661