BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

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

7. Still his passionate love urged him on, and a third time he set out to preach faith in the Trinity among the pagans by shedding his blood. In the thirteenth year of his religious life he made his way to Syria where he courageously surmounted all dangers in order to reach the presence of the sultan of Egypt. At that time fierce fighting was taking place between the Christians and the Moslems and the two armies were drawn up opposite each other at close quarters in the field, so that there was no means of passing safely from one to the other. The sultan had decreed that anyone who brought him the head of a Christian should be rewarded with a Byzantine gold piece. However Francis, the knight of Christ, was undaunted and had high hopes that he would soon realize his ambition. The thought of death attracted him, instead of frightening him, and so he decided to make the journey. He prayed and was strengthened by God as he chanted the words of the Psalmist, “What though I walk with the shadow of death all around me? Hurt I feel none, while you are with me,” (Ps 22:4).

8. He took with him as his companion a friar named Illuminatus who was an enlightened man of great virtue, and as they set out on their way they met two lambs. The saint was overjoyed at the sight of them and he told his companion, “Place all your trust in God, because the words of the Gospel will be fulfilled in us, ‘Remember, I am sending you out to be like sheep among wolves’ (Mt 10:16).” When they had gone farther, they were met by men of the sultan’s army who fell upon them like wolves upon sheep and seized them fiercely. They ill-treated them savagely and insulted them, beating them and putting them in chains. Then, exhausted as they were by the ill-treatment they had received, they were dragged before the sultan by God’s providence, just as Francis wished. The sultan asked them by whom and why and in what capacity they had been sent, and how they got there; but Francis replied intrepidly that they had been sent by God, not by man, to show him and his subjects the way of salvation and proclaim the truth of the Gospel message. He proclaimed the triune God and Jesus Christ, the Savior of all, with such steadfastness, with such courage and spirit, that it was clear the promise of the Gospel had been fulfilled in him, “I will give you such eloquence and such wisdom as all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand, or to confute” (Lk 21:15).

When the sultan saw his enthusiasm and courage, he listened to him willingly and pressed him to stay with him. Francis, however, was inspired by God to reply, “If you are willing to become converts to Christ, you and your people, I shall be only too glad to stay with you for love of him. But if you are afraid to abandon the law of Mahomet for Christ’s sake, then light a big fire and I will go into it with your priests. That will show you which faith is more sure and more holy.” To that the sultan replied, “I do not think that any of my priests would be willing to expose himself to the flames just to defend his faith, or suffer any kind of torture: he had just caught a glimpse of one of his priests, an old and highly esteemed man, who slipped away the moment he heard Francis’ proposal). Then Francis continued, “If you are prepared to promise me that you and your people will embrace the Christian religion, if I come out of the fire unharmed, I will enter it alone. But if I am burned, you must attribute it to my sins; on the other hand, if God saves me by his power, you must acknowledge “Christ the power of God, Christ the wisdom of God” (cf. 1 Cor 1:24) as true God, the Lord and Savior of all.” The sultan replied that he would not dare to accept a choice like that, for fear of a revolt among his people.

Then he offered Francis a number of valuable presents, but the saint was anxious only for the salvation of
souls; he had no interest in the things of this earth and so he scorned them all as if they were so much dust. The sultan was lost in admiration at the sight of such perfect disregard for worldly wealth and he felt greater respect than ever for the saint. He refused, or perhaps did not dare, to become a Christian, but at the same time he implored the saint to take the gifts and give them to the Christian poor or to churches, for his salvation. Francis, however, did not want to be bothered with money and besides he could see no sign of a genuinely religious spirit in the sultan, and so he absolutely refused to agree.

9. Francis now realized that there was no hope of converting the Moslems and that he could not win the crown of martyrdom, and so by divine inspiration he made his way back to the Christian camp. So it was that by the disposition of God’s merciful providence and by the merits of his holiness, Christ’s lover longed to die for him with all his heart, but never succeeded; he was saved from death to be afterwards decorated with an extraordinary privilege, and yet he had the merit of martyrdom for which he longed. The fire of divine love burned the more perfectly in his heart for all that it only became clearly visible in his flesh later on in his life. It was well for him—his body never fell by the tyrant’s sword, yet it was marked with the likeness of the Lamb that was slain; he was doubly happy—“he did not lose his life in persecution, but he was not deprived of the martyr’s palm” (cf. Breviary, Office of St. Martin of Tours, ant. at Vespers).

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)

VISITOR’S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...
“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you...”

Reading (Jeremiah 1:1, 4-10) Gospel (St. Matthew 13:1-9)

In the first reading today, we hear the call of the prophet Jeremiah, God calling him to the work that the Lord has appointed him to do. The important thing of seeing this is that each one of us has also been called by God for a specific purpose. We can also say along with the prophet, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” From all eternity, God knew that He was going to create you, which also says something about our despicable law regarding the killing of babies. From all eternity, God knew that He was going to create those babies. He knew that those persons were going to be formed in their mothers’ wombs, and so to suggest that somehow they are not human, or to suggest that somehow they do not have dignity, or that somehow they are not human until they are born, or whatever they want to say is all complete nonsense because these children have been planned by God from all eternity.

Now, for all of us, we have this call from God, and just like the prophet we will probably try to suggest to God that we cannot do what it is that He is asking us to do. And it is true that by ourselves we cannot. Jeremiah, for instance, when he hears the call of God, rejects it and complains because he says he is too young. How can he go out and speak? He does not have the eloquence, for one; and, number two, who is going to listen to him when he is young? But because it is the Lord Who is doing the work and it is His call, God will give the grace. That is exactly what He tells Jeremiah: I place My words in your mouth. This day I have set you over nations and kingdoms. It is God’s Word, it is God’s work. And so it is in us. Perhaps we are not called to be prophets to the nations, but it does not matter what it is that God is calling us to; what matters is that we accept His call and do His work and that we do it with Him. Remember how we struggle with thinking that we have to do this by ourselves—“This is mine to do, therefore, I have to do it with my strength.” It does not work. All it does is exhaust us and we do not accomplish a whole lot. But when we recognize that it is God’s work and it is His strength that we need to be able to do His work, then we will accomplish much because it is He Who will be accomplishing it in us.

What we need to do is to pray so that we can get out of the way, so that we can know what God wants, so that we can do it. God is spreading that seed, as we heard in the Gospel reading, upon each and every one of us; and He expects that it is going to produce thirty or sixty or a hundredfold. It is up to Him as to what He expects from us; it is up to us to cooperate. Imagine on the Day of Judgment having to stand before the Lord without much fruit and hear Him say, “I gave you this call, I planted this seed within your heart, and I expected thirty or sixty or a hundredfold harvest. Where is it?” What are we going to say? “I did it my way?” “I did what I thought was going to be the best”? “I thought this was something that would be pleasing to You”? What are we going to try to explain to Him? It is His work. We are there to do the work, and we have the privilege of being chosen by God for a very specific and set purpose. But that means we have to cooperate with Him. It is not that we are given an assignment and told to go out on our own and do it, but rather we are to cooperate with Him and we are to allow Him to work in us and through us. So we have to make sure we are
praying, and we have to make sure we are seeking His Will because it is He Whom we serve. If we are willing to do it His way (that is, if we are willing to seek His Will and get out of the way) then we become the instrument through which His work is done. When we are allowing Him to do the work in us and through us, then it will bear fruit – thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold – and that fruit will last because it will be God doing the work in us and not us trying to do the work that we think might be the best.

So as we see the prophet being called, just remember it is not something that is specific only to a prophet; each and every one of us has been called by God. The question is simply: To what have we been called? What does God want of us? That will only be learned in prayer.

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

**ADMINISTRATOR’S MESSAGE...**

**To a God Unknown**

In the Acts of the Apostles for Wednesday of the Sixth week of Easter we read of how St. Paul went to Greece, which was very pagan in his times. When he arrived in Athens he went to the Aeropagus, which was the centerpiece of Greek paganism where they honored all their gods. It is interesting to read that he does not criticize them for their stupidity in believing in all these pagan gods and having chapels built to honor them. He says nothing about that. Rather he mentions to them that they have a shrine inscribed “To a God Unknown”. Then he proceeds to tell them about the real God and his son, Jesus Christ, who he raised from the dead to verify His message. At that point they decide to walk away from St. Paul, and some sneer at him, but a few convert. In any event it is very worthwhile message for us to consider in living the Rule of 1221 in these days.

In these days the world has many false gods too, and many shrines built to honor them. Think about it. Whether you consider cars, or clothes, or hobbies, or crafts, or even family activities, not to mention sex, the world has crafted shrines dedicated to them to attract us and hold us and get us to buy what they offer. These shrines are commercials dedicated to ‘these unknown gods’. So, here we come, The Brothers and Sisters of Penance, and we live a message of peace and justice and mortification in a world where the vast majority of people, including Catholics, want nothing to do with us. So, like St. Paul in Athens, how do we proceed? How do we move in this world in such a way as to influence those around us to know the real God?

Well, we need to take some cues from St. Paul. We cannot win by criticizing others, or pointing out their false gods. St. Paul did not do that. We can acknowledge that the call to pray and do penance and believe in God and our Lord, Jesus Christ, is real, but how would we do that? Maybe referencing to Our Lady’s Fatima message would help, where the angel who appeared to the children cried out: “Penance! Penance!”

Just living it ourselves will help but since we don’t talk about how we live the Rule in our own lives, or shouldn’t, we are stuck with figuring out other ways to do it. Probably the easiest way to promote the Rule of 1221, which is our Vision of the BSP, might be to let others read it because when you read it you cannot miss the penance in it. The call to fasting, abstinence, or prayer. It is in reading it that most people DO NOT want to follow it! It should lead to some good conversations though.

We cannot be negative. Paul was not negative in his visit to Athens. In some real sense we need to be positive, and happy people, as we live a life of penance. That is always at least a puzzle to others. But why shouldn’t we be happy, right? We are on the way to heaven. That is the promise to those that live the Rule and we are living the Rule. That, we can tell others. We are happy as we are on the way to heaven. They might ask us, “How do you know that”, and bingo, the door is open to explain the Rule. Not to tell people that is how we are living. To tell them how St. Francis said we should live, i.e., to tell them about the Rule of 1221. The people of his day asked him to tell them how to get to heaven.

We cannot be judgmental either. Scripture of course says we should not judge others. St. Paul did not judge the Athenians when he came to them. Focus on what is important. How should people be living their lives to live holy lives? Does anyone these day want to follow but it leads to eternal life. We know that the promise to those that live the Rule is explicit. St. Francis says we should live, i.e., to tell them about the Rule of 1221. The people of his day asked him to tell them how to get to heaven.

A good way to promote it is to start BSP Chapters where we live. Article 19 of the Rule is explicit. St. Francis says in it: “All the brothers and sisters of EVERY CITY AND PLACE (CAPS ADDED) are to foregather every month at
the time the ministers see fit, in a church the ministers will make known, and there assist at Divine Services.” This call is to all of us who are striving to live this Rule, and it is imperative to the life of the Association that we form Chapters where we live.

To form a Chapter all you need is one other person not of your own immediate family, and a place to meet. There you can begin to come together monthly, wherever you are at in formation, and share the journey, the faith, and your life, with others who come.

In this we form a family in the Church and fulfill our Vision of the BSP, i.e., that we are a family in the Church. Stay in contact with the Administrators during this time and they can help you start a Chapter, and get it going. We need to create a structure in this Association that lasts and will carry forward into the future. Chapters are how we can do that.

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

“God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them, saying; ‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.’” (Genesis 1:28)

A doctor, an engineer and a lawyer met. The doctor said, “Our profession came first because we were needed during the removal of Adam’s rib to create Eve.” The engineer said, “No, we were needed to bring order out of chaos.” The lawyer said, “Who do you think created the chaos?”

To bring order from chaos, Pope Francis issued his much anticipated encyclical Laudato Si’ recently: “On Care for our Common Home.” My first reading of the encyclical was to find what place our holy father St. Francis was given. I didn’t have to go far. In the Introduction, as it were, we come upon a beautiful description of St. Francis in the following three paragraphs:

Saint Francis of Assisi

10. I do not want to write this Encyclical without turning to that attractive and compelling figure, whose name I took as my guide and inspiration when I was elected Bishop of Rome. I believe that Saint Francis is the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically. He is the patron saint of all who study and work in the area of ecology, and he is also much loved by non-Christians. He was particularly concerned for God’s creation and for the poor and outcast. He loved, and was deeply loved for his joy, his generous self-giving, his openheartedness. He was a mystic and a pilgrim who lived in simplicity and in wonderful harmony with God, with others, with nature and with himself. He shows us just how inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society, and interior peace.

11. Francis helps us to see that an integral ecology calls for openness to categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what it is to be human. Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them “to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason”.[19] His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists. His disciple Saint Bonaventure tells us that, “from a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with even more abundant piety, he would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of ‘brother’ or ‘sister’”.[20] Such a conviction cannot be written off as naive romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behavior. If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.

12. What is more, Saint Francis, faithful to Scripture,
invites us to see nature as a magnificent book in which God speaks to us and grants us a glimpse of his infinite beauty and goodness. “Through the greatness and the beauty of creatures one comes to know by analogy their maker” (Wis 13:5); indeed, “his eternal power and divinity have been made known through his works since the creation of the world” (Rom 1:20). For this reason, Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.”

The only problem with leaving a part of my garden untouched is that wild weeds grow there and spread over all creation, making enemies of my fellow gardeners! Pope Francis moves on to “the relationship of human beings with the world,” as found in paragraph 65.

The Bible teaches that every man and woman is created out of love and made in God’s image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26). This shows us the immense dignity of each person, “who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons”.[37] St. John Paul II stated that the special love of the Creator for each human being “confers upon him or her an infinite dignity”. [38] Those who are committed to defending human dignity can find in the Christian faith the deepest reasons for this commitment. How wonderful is the certainty that each human life is not adrift in the midst of hopeless chaos, in a world ruled by pure chance or endlessly recurring cycles! The Creator can say to each one of us: “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you” (Jer 1:5). We were conceived in the heart of God, and for this reason “each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”

That last line is such a precious statement, taken from a homily by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Pope Francis then gets to the nub of the ecological “problem:”

The creation accounts in the book of Genesis suggest that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken, both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin.

What is sin? We live at a time in which the very concept of sin has been completely distorted. The greatest Commandment is: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and your neighbor as yourself.” Of the three “closely intertwined relationships,” the first two are vastly more important than the third. Yet the third, our relationship with the earth, has become primary, so that there is more concern for a “carbon footprint” than a human footprint. Save the whales and kill the babies. It’s a worse “sin” today to mine and use fossil fuel than destroy the basic unit of society, the family, in the Plan of God. Creating “Wilderness” where no humans are allowed is somehow a noble thing. Using resources which God has put on the earth for mankind’s benefit is a bad thing? How did we ever get to such a place?

Un-God-ly principles such as that need to be challenged, not accepted. We do not participate in pagan Earth Worship. We do not raise nature above nature’s God. We do not give animals “rights” and deny them to people. Human ecology cannot take second place to that of nature. We are both good stewards of creation, and good Images and Likenesses of the Creator. That’s the balance St. Francis struck. Pope Francis gives him the ultimate compliment:

The harmony between the Creator, humanity and creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf. Gen 1:28), to “till it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). As a result, the originally harmonious relationship between human beings and nature became conflictual (cf. Gen 3:17-19). It is significant that the harmony which St. Francis of Assisi experienced with all creatures was seen as a healing of that rupture. St. Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, St. Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence.

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota
O Adorable Divine Will...
by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading, Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord. (Jeremiah 23:3-4)

I find that the Holy Spirit often teaches in themes. Recently, from many sources and directions, I have been led to the writings of Servant of God, Luisa Piccarreta which speak of the fulfillment of the Lord’s petition in the Our Father: “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” the coming Kingdom of the Divine Will, which corresponds with the “Triumph of the Immaculate Heart” promised at Fatima, a time in which the Will of God reigns in the hearts of all. It is an era of peace longed for by God since the Fall of Adam, and alluded to in Jeremiah’s passage above.

In the writings of Luisa, we are taught to exchange our human will for the Divine Will. I find Luisa’s writings fit very well with the rule of life that we follow, as we are called daily to die to self. Indeed the graces promised are remarkable. Luisa’s life was uniquely holy, and her writings startling, fresh, and completely in line with Scripture and Church teachings as those who have studied them in depth have testified.

Luisa Piccarreta was born in Corato, Italy on April 23, 1865. She received only a first grade education, and was called to serve our Lord as a victim soul at the tender age of 16. From the time of her First Communion she began to have frequent locations and even apparitions from Jesus. She was frequently in ecstasies that left her unable to move until a priest came to bless her. As a victim soul, Our Lord asked her to share thoroughly with him all his sufferings and she received the mystical marriage and stigmata at age 23. As well, he requested of her to be confined to her bed, which she was for 64 years. During most of that time she existed on the Eucharist alone, only taking food out of obedience, but usually vomiting it up again right away. Her food, like Jesus, was to do the will of the Father, and, like Mary, to give Him her unending “Fiat!”

In 1899, out of obedience to her spiritual director, she began to record a diary of her spiritual experiences, which she continued until 1938 resulting in 36 notebooks which detail her intimate rapport with heaven. Her extraordinary spiritual director and Censor of her Writings was Saint Annibale Maria Di Francia.

Luisa’s cause for canonization and beatification was begun on November 20, 1994. Although she wrote 36 volumes of writings, somewhere between 6,000 and 8,000 pages, there has been a problem with translation of the volumes, and so there are restrictions on how they are able to be shared. The translation process is a long one as the volumes must be vetted by theologians once translated. In the meantime, there are some writings that are approved for distribution, although there is some confusion yet on what is approved. It is my understanding that the first 19 volumes, translated by Saint Annibale himself, may be read. Also “The 24 Hours of the Passion” in which Christ describes to Luisa the inner workings of his soul during his passion. Another approved work and a rare treasure is “The Virgin Mary in the Kingdom of the Divine Will”. All these writings are powerful and insightful. There is so much to be said about this new and divine holiness. This article is only to give you a very brief introduction and a list of resources, especially if you have not yet heard of Luisa.

One of the simplest and most succinct works I have read recently is Daniel O’Connor’s free book, The Crown and Completion of all Sanctity, which may be downloaded here: https://danieloconnor.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/the-crown-and-completion-of-all-sanctity.pdf.

Fr. Joseph Iannuzzi, eminent theologian, has written a doctoral dissertation on the writings of Luisa. I recently watched a YouTube video of a talk in which he gave an overview of the devotion and my heart quickened when I heard what he had to say. The talk may be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWiUQU_pyw.


Fr. Robert Young, O.F.M. has a wonderful introduction in this audio from Radio Maria: http://www.cin.org/divinewilltallahassee/INTRO%2092310.mp3, and more of his talks can be found at that website under the Radio Maria archives listed on the left sidebar.

Thomas Fahy of The Luisa Piccarreta Center For The Divine Will, Jacksboro, TN also has some very good resources at http://www.comingofthekingdom.org/. If you are one of our print readers and can’t access the online resources, you may phone the center at 423-566-5178.

Finally, this site originates in Corato, Italy, Luisa’s home
town: http://luisapiccarreta.co/. That gives a very good starting point I think.

Of course the Holy Spirit is always active, and after reading Paul's "No Greater Love" column before sending this off, I had to add one more thing. Paul's last paragraph quotes the Holy Father’s encyclical, Laudato Si’. The last line he quotes the Holy Father as saying, "St. Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence." This is exactly the teaching in Luisa's writings, that Adam’s mission before the Fall was to give perfect glory to God for all creation. After the Fall he was not able to complete his mission and so there has been this "conflict" between man and creation ever since. As man rebelled against the Creator, creation rebelled against man! Our call in Luisa’s writings is to complete this mission in the Divine Will. St. Francis, our Seraphic Father, can be our model and our ally in embracing this mission. Luisa’s writings are a perfect fit for the followers of St. Francis!

All around us things appear to be disintegrating more rapidly than we ever imagined possible. But Scripture tells us, “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” (Rom 5:20) I believe the grace of living in the Divine Will as taught by Luisa Piccarreta is a grace specifically made for this time, God's desire to shine the brightest light in our darkest hour. This light is a beacon that will lead us triumphantly into the Kingdom of the Divine Will. May God be praised by all people in all times, forever! Fiat!

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

Ephesians 4:20-21 Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

"Beloved do not doubt! I am showering graces in greater abundance than ever before upon those who are open to receiving them. This has nothing to do with your own merit of grace, but has everything to do with the significance of the times. Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. Then do not limit what I wish to do in you and through you. Believe that I am acting in new ways. Throw yourself into my service. Hold nothing back. Let go of all that you cling to. This will make the coming trial easier to bear. Become love. Love those I send you. Repent as soon as you sin. Pray ardently. Desire to live in complete union with me. Fuse your own will into mine. I am calling you anew, dear children. Look into your lives and cast off what is unnecessary. Cling to me. Become love. Children I am calling. What is your response?"

Beloved Father of my heart, by your grace, my response is, Fiat! In the Divine Will I beg for the grace to give my will completely over to you. Help me to accept every gift and grace it pleases you to give me. Help me to pray more ardently and divest myself of all unnecessary attachments, that I might become love and live only and always in the Divine Will. Jesus and Mary please obtain for me these graces, especially that I might fuse my will into the Divine Will. Here I am Father, I come to live in your holy and adorablc will. 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’

Stand Firm...

Peace my sparrow friends! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood firm in their faith. Despite King Nebuchadnezzar’s deadly edict, these young men trusted so strongly in God that they would not turn from Him even if He chose not to save them from the furnace’s flames. Faith trusts in God’s will, whether or not His will is physical preservation. They knew that even if God did not save their physical lives, He would preserve them spiritually because they trusted in His promise of a Savior who would rescue them from their sins. Through faith, the young men were assured they would either remain here on earth to serve the Lord or they would be with Him in heaven forever.

The world remains a dangerous place. In many countries, Christians are subject to punishment that ranges from verbal abuse to death. If we are not in physical danger, we are always in danger of Satan’s attempts to turn us away from God. In any danger, God helps us stand firm and trust in His strength to preserve us. God is our stronghold. No matter what happens to us physically, we know that we are saved spiritually, for
eternity, because of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. (Psalm 9:9)

Poor Also Help the Poor...

Peace to all the little sparrows! Being Franciscan it was one of my greatest pleasures at one time in my life to work with the poor street people of Houston, Texas. People who work with the poor can tell a hundred stories about the poor.

A hundred stories.

One story that broke my heart even to this day is still fresh in my memory. I was walking through St. Francis Mission with a hundred things on my mind. I was thinking of where I would get the food for the next meal for the street people...where was the money for medicine going to come from? There were just so many things that was keeping my mind occupied that I didn't really notice the one of the mission's street people, a bag lady, was standing along the way in which I was walking and just passed her by without speaking as I was deep in thought. When I was a few feet past her she let out a bellowing cry of pain and started to cry profusely.

Quite startled I turned back to her and asked her what was wrong. I was completely undone when she said, "Brother, you've walked by me twice before today and didn't even notice me and say hello." All the poor woman needed from me, or anyone, was to have someone notice her and say hello and that would have made her world a brighter place. I failed her in that moment but I made a promise to myself that I would pay more attention to those special needs people around me and not get so hung up with the cares of the world that I'd miss the greatest treasure of the Lord's heart...and that is the little people that He has put in our path to share His love with.

Prisoner's Life...

Peace! In reading through some scripture I came across 2 Timothy 4:16-18 which capture a painful time in St. Paul's life when he was teaching as an apostle. As he sat in a prison cell, he knew that death was imminent. He had devoted the last years to teaching, training and winning souls for Christ, but he now stood alone, unsupported during his trial and time in jail. Loneliness must have seemed overwhelming.

Paul felt abandoned, yet he didn't blame anyone or pity himself. Instead, he met suffering with courage. What motivated him to stand with strength during this time of trial?

For the apostle, an awareness of Christ's presence gave comfort and motivated him to persevere. He knew God was right there with him in the current moment; he also recalled earlier times when the Lord intervened. For instance, years before, Paul had a vision telling him not to fear during a storm on the sea. And though the ship ran aground, all of the men survived (Acts 27:22-24).

For us little sparrows who know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, strength is readily available in His intimate presence. Our heavenly Father promises that He will never abandon His children—even when everyone else has left. We are never left alone for He watches over us.

The light of God surrounds me.
The love of God enfolds me.
The power of God protects me.
The presence of God watches over me.

Where ever I am, God is!

Love Is a Choice

Peace! Let's believe in God's love, and let's be faithful to Him. If you look at the cross, you will see His head lowered to kiss you. You will see his arms stretched out to embrace you. You will see His heart open to welcome you. Don't be afraid. He loves us, and He wants us to love one another. He loves us in spite of how poor and sinful we are. His love is true, and we should believe in His love. If we truly believe, it will not be hard for us to identify with the poor, even the poor in our own homes.

Pax et bonum
Brother Sparrow
Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, NC
**MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...**

**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](http://www.joyofpenance.wordpress.com)

**HANDBOOK OF THE ASSOCIATION...**

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

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.

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**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

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