BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter X—Francis’ Devotion to Prayer

6. St. Francis was accustomed to recite the divine office with great reverence and devotion. Although he suffered in his eyes, his stomach, his spleen, and his liver, he never leaned against the wall or partition for support while saying the psalms; he stood upright with his head uncovered and his eyes closely guarded as he said the hours without shortening them. If he was travelling he would stop, and he never abandoned this practice if it happened to be raining. He was want to say, “If our bodies must take their food in peace—our bodies which will one day be the food of worms, just like the food we eat—what peace and quiet should not our souls enjoy to receive their food, which is the food of life?”

He regarded it as a serious fault if his mind wandered or was full of empty imaginings, when he was trying to pray. Whenever it happened, he confessed it without delay and atoned for his fault immediately. This careful attention had become a habit with him, so that he very seldom suffered troublesome distractions of this kind.

During Lent one year he carved out a dish to occupy his spare moments and prevent them from being completely lost. Then when he was reciting Tiere, it came into his mind and distracted him a little. At that he was seized with fervor and he threw the dish into the fire, saying, “I will make a sacrifice of it to God, because it interfered with his sacrifice.” He said the psalms with as much attention and fervor as if he could see God there before his eyes and when God’s name occurred in them he seemed to lick his lips, it gave him such pleasure.

He was anxious to honor God’s name with special reverence, whether it merely came into his mind, or he saw it written down or heard it pronounced. He once told the friars that they should pick up any pieces of paper they found lying around and put them aside carefully, for fear that God’s holy name might be trodden underfoot, if it happened to be written on them.

When he pronounced the word “Jesus” or heard someone say it, he was filled with joy and he seemed to be completely transformed, as if he had suddenly tasted something marvellous or caught the strain of a beautiful harmony.

7. Three years before he died St. Francis decided to celebrate the memory of the birth of the Child Jesus at Greccio, with the greatest possible solemnity. He asked and obtained the permission of the pope for the ceremony, so that he could not be accused of being an innovator, and then he had a crib prepared, with hay and an ox and an ass. The friars were all invited and the people came in crowds. The forest re-echoed with their voices and the night was lit up with a multitude of bright lights, while the beautiful music of God’s praises added to the solemnity. The saint stood before the crib and his heart overflowed with tender compassion; he was bathed in tears but overcome with joy. The Mass was sung there and Francis, who was a deacon, sang the Gospel. Then he preached to the people about the birth of the poor King, whom he called the Babe of Bethlehem in his tender love.

A knight called John from Greccio, a pious and truthful man who had abandoned his profession in the world for love of Christ and was a great friend of St. Francis, claimed that he saw a beautiful child asleep in the crib, and that St. Francis took it in his arms and seemed to wake it up. The integrity of his witness and the miracles which afterwards took place, as well as the truth indicated by the vision itself, all go to prove its reality. The example which Francis put before the world was calculated to rouse the hearts of those who are weak in the faith, and the hay from the crib, which was kept by the people, afterwards cured sick animals and drove off various pestilences. Thus God wished to give glory to his servant Francis and prove the efficacy of his prayer by clear signs.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)
In the first reading today, we hear from Saint John that we are to love one another. He speaks all about love and how love comes from God and that anyone who loves is in God, and if we love we know God and God knows us. Now the problem, if we ask ourselves, "Do we really know God?" is that most of us would probably say "no". Have we ever really experienced the depth of God? Probably not. If that is the case, then there is only one reason: because we do not love the way that we are called to love. It is not that we do not love at all, but that we do not love with the fullness of our being.

Most of us do not love with the fullness of our being because we are not willing to be vulnerable enough; we are not willing to open our hearts because that requires a risk. The risk, of course, is that you could be hurt – you could be rejected, you could be violated, you could be abandoned – and all of us in our lives somewhere along the line probably have been. Because it hurts, we are afraid and we refuse to open our hearts. In our heads we can say, “But this is God. He isn’t going to hurt me and He isn’t going to reject me or abandon me, so why am I afraid?” It is because we are so terrified that we are going to get hurt at the deepest level that we refuse to open our hearts. Now, in refusing to open our hearts to God, what we are then doing is refusing to love the way God created us to love; therefore, we keep ourselves at a distance from God. We do not know Him because we do not love Him, and therefore we plod along in our daily lives loving God to some degree but not with the fullness of our being.

So what Saint Therese teaches us is what she calls her "Little Way". Her Little Way is simply one of love; all you have to do is love. Saint Augustine basically made the point sixteen hundred years ago when he said, Love, and do what you will, because as Saint Paul says, Love never wrongs the neighbor. If we love we will not sin because love always seeks the good of the other. But the point Saint Therese is making is that if you want to be a great saint it is very simple. We can read some of the saints and all the extraordinary things they did with all the penances and all the struggles, and then we look at Saint Therese and she says, “No, it is a very simple way, a little way – and it is just love.” It is exactly what we were created for, so it is not something which is difficult for us, it is not something which is beyond us, but it is the very fulfillment of our being. It is why God made us.

But in order to do that, as Our Lord makes clear in the Gospel, we have to become like little children. What do little children do? They love; they trust; they have complete confidence; they are simple. That is what we are called to be like, to have that kind of trust and confidence and simplicity when it comes to God Who loves us, God Who is love. We are afraid because we think that if we open up, if we allow ourselves to be vulnerable, something is going to happen. Do we really think that God is going to violate us? Do we really think that He is going to hurt us? This is the confidence that Saint Therese would be talking about, to have absolute confidence even to the point almost of what would seem to be audacity; but it is simply saying, “If God is my Father and He loves me, then if I love Him I can have absolute confidence in Him because He has promised that He will do all of these things for those who love Him.”

So we see that what Saint Therese is asking of us is to open our hearts, to go deeper, in fact to plumb the very depths of our being, and in so doing to find true happiness, the joy that we really desire. And that is a joy that Our Lord promises us He is going to give to us because it is His joy. If we give ourselves entirely to Him and we receive His gift entirely to ourselves, then He will live in us in His fullness and His joy will be in us and our joy will be complete. That is what He promised if we would become like little children. This is where He says that His yoke is easy and His burden light. When you love somebody, it is not a difficulty to struggle for them, to suffer for them, to offer yourselves for them, to reach out to help them, to do anything for them, because love makes it easy, it makes it sweet. There is nothing that is more beautiful or pleasant, and there is nothing that is more natural to us.

But the devil, in his vile way, has seen to it that most of us have been hurt, and hurt badly somewhere along the line. Therefore, we refuse now to trust God; we refuse to be as little children in the arms of God; we refuse to have the confidence and the simplicity that we need in order to do what we were created to do. That is exactly what Satan wants. He wants us to shut down; he wants us not to love; he wants us to be like him. Unfortunately, that is the trap most of us fall into. If we can say with Satan, “I will not serve,” that means “I will not love,” that means “I will be caught up in myself; I will look out for me; I will not be vulnerable; I will not put myself on the line because I’m afraid.” That is the work of the devil.

The work of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is to open our hearts, to be vulnerable. Look at the Cross. His heart is completely exposed; His arms are wide open; His side has been pierced; He is totally vulnerable and He gives Himself completely in love to each one of us. When you look at that Cross, can you really think that He is going to hurt you when He loves you so much that He would endure that? For Him, that was easy, and it was sweet because it was done out of love. That is exactly what we learn from this wonderful little saint who gave herself entirely to God and was willing to offer herself as an obligation. She is not a cutesy little saint – she is an extraordinary woman who teaches us that if we want to be saints it only requires one thing, and that is to love, to become like a little child and to love God with our whole heart and soul and strength, which is exactly what Our Lord has commanded us. In that
ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

GIFTS

We are inspired by the new prioress of Duluth’s St. Scholastica Monastery, Sister Beverly Raway, who is to speak about gifts this month in the local Catholic paper. She spoke of them to her sisters as her opening address to them.

She said, and we say, we have been given an abundance of gifts, and they have not gone away. They include education, our common life, family, and each other. We are gift to each other and by being in this Association we give this gift to each other. We receive the gift, the gift that we each are also, and we need to give this gift away. Gifts are best realized when they are given away.

We have an abundance of gifts in this Association. We need to remember them and especially remember that wherever we are right now we are part of the BSP community, part of a family in the Church that does penance for the good of souls, and an important part of the Church. The angel at Fatima came crying “Penance!” “Penance!” We do penance. This call and the call to live our Rule is the greatest gift God has given most of us. It is a call to heaven. To live it now on earth and to spread the message that it is both real and attainable. St. Francis gave this gift of the Rule to the world three times when he lived. Our Rule, the Rule of the Priests, and the Rule of the Sisters.

Gifts! We are gift to each other. You are not alone out there. Whether you start a Chapter or not you are not alone. You are part of a worldwide family that is slowly growing and in some cases is reaching out at the next level to those around. Martin Wolter, who lives in Moosach, Germany, translated the entire Rule and Statutes into German and put them on the Internet after he joined in 2008. Father Jacob Gerard, who lives in El Paso, Texas, did the same, and translated the entire Rule and Statutes into Spanish and put them on the Internet, after he joined the BSP in 2010. He hopes it reaches into Mexico. The gift goes out and the gift goes on.

We have invited every new member in every country to do the same! Spread the Word! Translate the Rule and Statutes into your native language. Put it on the Internet and publish it around you. Tell people about the BSP as a way to go to heaven. As a gift from St. Francis. We invite everyone in the world to do this again in this message.

Forget about us, Bruce and Shelley. We are just the Administrator’s and happy to be able to help people come into the BSP and live this Rule. Remember this Rule is verbatim what St. Francis gave the world. Also remember that to promote this Rule is to promote the Gospel and to join the Lord in begging the Harvest Master to send laborers out to get His harvest.

Never forget that this Rule is one of the narrow gates that lead to eternal life, and few there are who follow it. You who read this are probably already one of those few on the narrow way. Respect that gift in yourself. The Rule is God’s gift to us through St. Francis. Our gift to God is to live it for love of Him. Give that gift to others, gently, and respectfully, as Saint Peter says in his writings. If you have some way to do that go for it! Reach out to the world around you and let them know the gift that St. Francis gave us!

And remember the many other gifts God has given you. Family, and friends, and wealth, or poverty. All are His gift to us. As it says in the Imitation of Christ, by Thomas A. Kempis, where Christ is speaking to us, “My son, this is how you must stand if you want to walk beside Me: you must be as ready to suffer as to rejoice, as willing to be needy and have abundance.” (Chapter 17) We need to realize that life is a gift, and everything we have is a gift within it.

And the Kingdom of Heaven, that awaits us, is pure gift. In it are people the Lord has given us as His gifts, and they include His Mother. On the cross Jesus said to His Mother: “Woman, behold they son. Son, behold they mother.” (Jn. 26:27) In that simple but closing act in his life he gave us the greatest gift we could receive here, a mother. Now she is Queen of heaven and earth, and she guides us and helps us all of our life as a mother always does. In October, the month of the holy rosary, spend time with your mother.

Let our life be filled with gratitude for the many gifts the Lord has given us, and may the Lord bless and lead us always.

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP, Administrators
Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota
Being on vacation, Donna and I have had the time to watch much of the visit of Pope Francis to America. It has been phenomenal, the coverage Fox News has given his visit! (As a matter of principle we don't watch the alphabet channels due to their extreme liberal worldview, dishing out mainly Christophobic, Secular Socialist propaganda). We switched between EWTN and Fox News and found virtually the same coverage. Following are some initial impressions.

Due to the emphasis by Pope Francis on care for the poor of the world, much ink has been spilled on his abandonment of doctrinal issues, steering the Church in a "new" direction. Wishful thinking. It's like the age-old argument on which is most important: build Churches and catechize the faithful, or help the poor. The answer has come from Jesus Himself: "The poor you will always have with you." The Church could spend every penny it has, and there will still be poor people that need help. The Apostles found that out in their own way with the early Christian Community in Jerusalem. The ideal of selling all they had and giving it for the common use of all was not very realistic. Wonderful theory, didn't work. The Apostle Paul even had to take up collections for the Church in Jerusalem. Down through history it seems only Religious Orders have had success with this model, for obvious reasons.

After Jesus, our Blessed Mother has given us guidance on the issue. In almost all her visitations over centuries the first thing she asks for is to build a church. Worship of God always comes first, as befitting the First Commandment: "Love the Lord Your God with all your heart and soul..." Those who don't believe in God don't understand this, nor can they, that we were created to give glory to God. If we fail to do that we fail to fulfill the reason for which we were born. First love God, and that love overflows into love for the poor. Pope Francis perfectly blends his love for the poor, with concern for the Church as the Vicar of Christ. No one could accuse him of promoting mere social work at the expense of doctrinal issues.

But the media is nevertheless constantly looking for "liberal" tendencies in Pope Francis. Two issues immediately stood out for me in this area: contraception and capital punishment. On the first, it's not what he said, but what he DID! Pope Francis made a quiet, unscheduled visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor. By that he showed his support for their cause, which is to sue the Obama Administration over the clause in Obamacare that forces them to have contraceptive coverage in their medical insurance. Can you believe the Little Sisters of the Poor being forced to provide contraception coverage? That is what's happening to Religious Freedom in America, and conscience rights. Before this issue is settled, there may have to be a new Religious Rights Crusade modeled on the Civil Rights activity of Martin Luther King, requiring civil disobedience.

I believe the adoption of the Contraceptive Mentality is the main cause of the incredible moral depravity we see today, leading to a Great Apostasy. Pope Paul VI wrote the most prophetic encyclical of all time, Humanae Vitae, in which he predicted everything that has come to pass from the Sexual Revolution of the 60s. With the acceptance of the contraceptive mentality, individuals no longer make God the center of their lives, but take unto themselves the prerogatives that belong to God alone. They seek to take total control of their lives, even to the most intimate details, and leave nothing to Divine Providence. True discipleship rather mandates complete submission to the Father's Will, as Janet has been pointing out. That's not always easy, as Jesus demonstrated in the Garden of Gethsemane, but it is essential to strive for the proper attitude of discipleship, or it will never be attained. To accept the contraceptive mentality is to say NO to God, and YES to what could end up as a totally self-centered and narcissistic lifestyle. It is to take the apple in the Garden of Eden and becoming a law unto ourself, instead of being obedient to the law of God.

This "independence" from any restraint of one's passions is the opposite of the kind of TOTAL DEPENDENCE God wants from us. "Unless you become like little children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus spells out the attitude needed by His followers. Children have to be and are totally dependent on the parents. God has a parental love for us, His children. Pope Francis mirrors this love, as he showed so well in his obvious love for children.

His second reference to the issue of contraception was during his talk at the United Nations, in which he used the term: "Ideological Colonization" of poor third world countries by the UN itself in league with Europe and America. That is, financial and other aid to poor countries is dependent upon those countries accepting contraception and abortion, as well as the Gay Rights Agenda. The worldly aim of the "Haves" is to make sure the "Have-nots" never get theirs. Population control is the pre-eminent principle of the Environmental Movement, which has a stranglehold on the Secular Socialist elites in the world, those who have the power to coerce the powerless into submission. Not only do these elites seek to impose their sexual immorality upon the poor of the world, but also stifle their efforts at development by forbidding the use of fossil fuels to sustain economic progress. That is the ultimate irony in having people of faith uniting with this radical anti-human Movement—which is no friend of the poor! Not only is the Environmental Movement—home of the elites of the world—seeking to limit the population of poor countries by the most evil means imaginable, it will then stifle their economic development by not allowing them to use now overly abundant and inexpensive fossil fuels, which fuel the engine of freedom and the free world.

To restrict access to inexpensive energy sources would be a catastrophic handicap to the poor of the world. But then, that's the whole idea.

As Pope Francis, following up on the exhortations of St.
John Paul II, called for the abolition of the death penalty, I thought of the link that should be made by every person of faith. Many people who advocate for the elimination of the death penalty for guilty criminals have no problem advocating for abortion of the most guilt-less among us! Can you imagine the impact it would have had if when Pope Francis called for the abolition of the death penalty he would have immediately added: "and that includes executing innocent children in the womb!" A huge opportunity lost. Why is this link not made every time the issue of the death penalty comes up? I have long considered abolition of the death penalty something of a farce, a liberal red herring as cover for the promotion of the rest of their grossly immoral Culture of Death, so they can claim "moral" superiority. There were 46 criminals executed in America in 2011, down to only 35 in 2014, compared to a million abortions annually! Where is the sense of proportion in these numbers? There is none.

There is no due process for the unborn convicted of being conceived! Every murderer who goes on death row goes through the most extensive hearings and trial, with lawyers, evidence presented, appeals, years of deliberation, before the sentence is sometimes carried out. With DNA evidence it's virtually impossible for an innocent person to be executed. The unborn have none of that. They have no trial, no advocate, no evidence of human life blossoming, no appeals. Their death penalty is carried out immediately, crudely, and with their body parts frequently sold to the highest bidder. And every one of them is completely innocent of any crime, but merely have the misfortune to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, the most dangerous place in the world today: in a mother's womb. What has happened to our sense of values? Genesis says that "Pharaoh's heart was hardened" against Moses and the Israelites. How many hearts are being hardened today over the violence done to the unborn? Many feel "violence" to nature is a worse crime. Slightly misplaced values.

Pope Francis also spoke out strongly for Religious Freedom numerous times. That will be the main fight in America for the next several years as immoral laws are passed forcing people of faith to refuse to participate. On the plane-ride home he backed those who refuse to comply with unjust laws. This is really difficult ground for those of us who have championed living by the Rule of law, which differentiates between first and third world countries. Now we, the traditional law-abiding citizens are having to contemplate "breaking the law" because it is immoral. We remember the 60s and how the Hippies began the process of breaking the law to get the immoral things that they wanted. It was dreadful to live through that era and see the triumph of lawlessness to achieve immoral behavior. Now we contemplate the process of breaking the law to achieve moral behavior. That's a tough pill to swallow. It would be better to have a Christian nation with nothing but just laws, but that time has passed. In post-Christian America, we are living in the midst of a lawless society with no governing principles, not even any concept of the natural law. It is Might makes Right. Those who considered themselves oppressed are now the oppressors. We are witnessing the triumph of the Gay Rights Agenda, and it's not a pretty sight.

Pope Francis said: "Conscientious objection must enter into every juridical structure because it is a right. It is a part of every human right." This was a really important statement for many people of faith, who are now being forced to stand up for their faith in Jesus Christ, exposing themselves to serious consequences. I know this can't compare with the persecution of our Christian brethren in the Middle East and Northern Africa. It's just something new here, and hard to deal with at first. We have had it easy up to now. It will definitely get worse, for the devil never relents in his campaign to bring down the human race.

I really enjoyed watching the visit of Pope Francis to America. He impressed many people who are not easily impressed. His joy and love for all God's people is obvious. He witnessed to millions of people and attracted them to the message of Christ. His "favorable" ratings are extremely high, which makes people who would not otherwise give him the time of day—stop and listen to what he has to say. That's a great first step in the process of conversion. Christians march to a different drummer. They do not speak on their own, with mere human wisdom, much less self-interest. They give witness to Jesus and His Divine Intervention in history, repeating the divine wisdom they learned from Him. The world desperately needs to hear with moral clarity true wisdom leading to the knowledge and love of God, and living a morally righteous life. The pope as the Vicar of Christ is the perfect person to give this witness.

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota

The Family of God
by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading, 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.' Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. (Genesis 2:21-24)
Having just celebrated the World Meeting of Families and anticipating the Synod on the Family, and in light of this reading from Genesis for October 4, we have been given much food for thought with regard to the family. In addition we have the words of the Holy Father during his recent missionary visit to ponder. During one of his talks in Philadelphia, Pope Francis dispensed with his prepared speech and spoke "off the cuff" as he often does. In reading some of his comments I was struck by how they may also be applied to the Family of God, the Church.

"Families have a citizenship that is divine. The identity card that they have is given to them by God so that within the heart of the family truth, goodness and beauty can truly grow."

Certainly this is an image of the divine citizenship that the Church gives us through baptism. God gives us the Church so that within its heart, "truth, goodness and beauty can truly grow."

"Families have difficulties. Families—we quarrel, sometimes plates can fly, and children bring headaches."

Has this ever been more true for the Church? Have there ever been more "plates flying"? It seems everyone is at odds these days. The Church's many children are the cause of many headaches. This should give us pause. Are we the cause of suffering in the Body of Christ? Do we so idolize our own opinions that we hurl the family china at anyone who disagrees with us? If you are foolhardy enough to read the comment boards on even Catholic websites, the vitriol you see among brothers and sisters in Christ is a scandal to the Church. Can we not disagree without hurling insults? This is not civilized discussion. This plate-hurling is a grave sin, and probably several grave sins, most of which begin with self-idolatry.

"However, in families, there is always light...Just as there are problems in families, there is the light of the resurrection...The family is like a factory of hope."

As in most families, even when we in the Church disagree (that is, when we disagree in a civilized way) we still know that at our core is a love which binds us together. Even in our darkest times, when understanding seems lost, we know that the light is undimmed. Even though we may not be able to see it in a given moment, in faith we know and believe that the light of hope shines as brightly as ever.

"In the family, there are indeed difficulties...But those difficulties are overcome with love. Hatred is not capable of dealing (with) or overcoming any difficulty. Division of hearts cannot overcome a difficulty; only love can overcome."

If our earthly families are only able to overcome difficulties through the power of love, how much more true this is for the Church! The Church will not be one in love unless we live in the power of that love, Who is God. This can only be done by daily dying to self, the opposite of self-idolatry. Be thankful for your call to penance, dear brothers and sisters. Daily dying to self is a sure path to the heart of God, and a sure hope for the Church.

"Never let the day end without making peace. A society is strong, it's solid if it's edified on beauty, goodness and truth."

We who profess to be Christian must take this word to heart and live it. Are we building a strong family or undercutting it at every turn. Are we making peace when we can? Are we admitting our faults in humility and making amends? In order that we may grow in humility, the BSP rule stipulates that we must confess often, at least once a month. Our rule also stipulates that in any conflict, we must be the first to reach out in peace.

STATUTES: ARTICLE 26

a. All are to make peace with members of the Association and all others, seeking, if necessary, the consultation of the Church.

b. The penitent must daily pray for all those who refuse to make peace with them and must forgive such people all wrongs they have done at least in their heart.

c. The brothers and sisters are always to take the first steps toward reconciliation. Under no circumstances are penitents to hold grudges or wish ill to anyone.

Humility, humility, humility!

The Holy Father also spoke of the children and the elderly. These words are perhaps the most touching of all. Simple yet profound. About children he said they are "the strength that moves us forward," and about grandparents that they "are the living memory of the family...they transmitted the faith to us."

How true for the Church! The youth move us forward. They give us energy and creativity. The elderly preserve the faith and provide wisdom. Both are necessary and valuable.

"To look after grandparents and children is an expression of love. A person that does not know how to look after children and grandparents is a person that has no future because it does not have the strength or the memory to go forward."

Powerful words! When complain about the noisy children at Mass, or lament that there are too many old people in the church and they hold us back, we are trashing treasures at each end! We need strength AND memory. We need to cherish every soul in the family and put to death any thoughts of irritation or superiority. We can disagree, but with charity.
Love, love, love! And we can find no better apostle of love than St. Therese of Lisieux. Here is an excerpt Office of Readings for October 1, her feast day:

“Then, nearly ecstatic with the supreme joy in my soul, I proclaimed: O Jesus, my love, at last I have found my calling: my call is love. Certainly I have found my place in the Church, and you gave me that very place, my God. In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love, and thus I will be all things, as my desire finds its direction.”

The family of God more than any other family must be united in love! Sins against unity are sins against the Trinity, whose inner force is pure loving unity. God forbid we should ever be found guilty of tearing apart the Body of Christ from the inside.

Mary, Mother of the Church, during this month of the Rosary heal and strengthen your family. Make us one in spirit. Teach us to love one another as Jesus first loved us. Draw us ever deeper into the heart of your Son. “Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” (Mark 10:9) Amen.

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

Ephesians 4:1-3 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“Beloved child, the Body of Christ is being torn from without and within. Ponder these words (from Scripture). Do not be one who shreds the Body from the inside, as one who eats glass. Be as humble, sweet, and trusting as an infant at the breast. Do not pull away from the breast to wail over things that are not yours to change. Focus on what has been given to you. Do that well and completely and you will have peace and joy. You will be building a peaceful kingdom. You will be a herald of the Triumph of the Immaculate. Man your own tiller and no one else’s and you will be living in the will of God. Shalom, dear child.”

Heavenly Father, in the Divine Will I ask for grace upon grace in order that I might man my own tiller and no one else’s. Help me to keep my eyes on our Mother and be docile to her leading. May your Kingdom come and your will be done, on earth as in heaven, O God, my God! Amen.

(Note: Ephesians Chapter 4 has been an important, recurring passage in my journal. It speaks of unity in the Body of Christ, a theme that our Lord has particularly wished to stress with me. If you wish to read more messages that pertain to Ephesians Chapter 4, please see: http://pelianito.stblogs.com/ephesians-chapter-4-unity-in-the-body/.)

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’

A Heroic Death...

Peace to my little sparrow friends. Last night and today are special days to me...you see I am a “Theresian” which a Latin word that describes one who follows or practices the ways of St. Therese of Lisieux or better known as the Little Flower. Over thirty years ago I read her autobiography “The Story of a Soul.” In the interim years since then I have re-read her book about four times. In fact I have a copy of it right now...so yeah I’m sort of hung up on her and her Little Way.

Last night at 7:20 P.M., we celebrated her death because it was at that time on September 30, 1897, that she, after suffering the ravages of Tuberculosis for a couple years, passed into eternity. Each year at 7:00 P.M., I start to read about the last moments of her life and I sit quietly till 7:20 P.M. has passed. I do this out of tremendous respect for the heroic death that she endured. As I have shared with you in previous Sparrows I live on the floor where the most sick federal prisoners are sent to die. There have been 800-900 prisoners die here in just a few years. So I’m somewhat a pseudo-expert on watching people suffer and die. That is why her death, and the courage she displayed in dying, really had an impact on me.

This excerpt from her book will make my point here:

(The scene is Therese on her death bed at the Convent.)

Therese sighed: “Mother! (Mother Superior) Isn’t this the agony? (The agony of dying and death.) Am I not going to die?”

“Yes, my poor child, but God perhaps wills to prolong
it for several hours.”

“Well, all right! Ah! I would not want to suffer to a shorter length of time.”

Her head fell back on the pillow and was turned toward the right. The Prioress had the infirmary bell rung, and the Sisters quickly returned. “Open all the doors,” she ordered. Hardly had the community knelt at her bedside when Therese pronounced very distinctly, while gazing at her crucifix:

“Oh! I love Him!” And a moment later: “My God, I love you.”

Suddenly her eyes came to life and were fixed on a spot just a little above the statue of the Blessed Virgin. Her face took on the appearance it had when Therese enjoyed good health. She seemed to be in ecstasy. This look lasted the space of a “Credo.”

Then she closed her eyes and expired. It was 7:20 in the evening.

St. Therese died a very painful and lingering death wherein she suffocated most of the time. Yet she would not shorten the period of suffering so the God’s holy will could be accomplished in her. This little French girl had more heart than many of the hardened men I’ve seen that were meeting their respective ends. That kind of spiritual stamina in a grace of God. St. Therese was filled with the grace of God...that is why I am a Theresian...she died like a hero.

An added point to my story is that while she was at the moment dying a huge flock of mixed birds settled all around the Convent and started to sing loudly. There were even sparrows in the gathering...as in her death we sparrows were there and we are still with her in spirit.

The Road Less Traveled...

Peace to my sparrow friends. I was asked recently from whence I chose the name “Sparrow”. It touched a part of my history as a Franciscan that will be very hard for you to understand unless I put it in the vernacular of what happened many years ago. Please have some patience as I try to share with you this unusual spiritual insight.

In the 1980’s I was exposed to St. Francis of Assisi after I’d had a really powerful conversion experience. I was befriended by a Franciscan Nun who took it upon herself to teach me all about the Saints by mailing me many, many books about them. But she sent more about St. Francis than any of the others. I became enamored by his life and spirituality. Therein started the major struggle within myself. To go on living as an “infamous outlaw” or to take up the Cross of Christ and follow as St. Francis had done. This was not an easy transition as I struggled day in and day out with what I was going to do.

In the middle of this conversion story I was sent to the U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth, Kansas. Needless to say Leavenworth is the most famous and well known prison in the world. It was at that time the most dangerous prison in the U.S. and it was housed with the most violent and anti-social convicts in the country. Once there a situation arose that made me make a decision of how I would live the rest of my life. Some prison gang members approached me and told me in no uncertain terms that I had to prove myself to be worthy enough to hang out on the prison compound. They told me that to pass their “initiation test” that I would have to kill a prisoner for them or be killed myself. I didn’t even know the prisoner that I was supposed to end his life.

For clarity’s sake, I have to stop my story here, and interject for my readers of the Sparrow, that I was NOT a killer nor have I ever murdered anyone up to then and especially now. Rather it was these other prisoners’ idea to MAKE me commit murder and thereby usher me into their world for life."

That “order” from the prison gang to kill or be killed left me in one of the hardest places a man can find himself in throughout the world. At the same instant I was drawn by the Lord (and the ideas of living the Gospel like St. Francis did) to walk with God. It would be nice to say that it was an easy choice...but unfortunately it was not. It’s one thing to have good spiritual insights of what it is like to make a decision for God. It is another thing to make that decision when you are surrounded by 40 foot walls with machine guns pointed down at you and a couple thousand hardened criminals waiting and watching to see what your decision is going to be. In other words they are waiting to see if you chose to live or die. The most ironic thing about that is MOST wanted you to die...and that creates a psychological pressure all its own.

Everyone draws back from a prisoner who has to make that kind of decision. I was left alone...all alone. I felt like the most alone person on the face of the earth as I was trying to reason my way out of this life-ending problem but I couldn’t see what I was supposed to do as I sat on the ground. All of a sudden a little brown house sparrow landed right in front of me and just looked at me. The sparrow did not move but just kept its gaze on me. Somehow I knew that with the sparrow’s presence that the Lord was near...very near. As the little sparrow continued its vigil I heard the Lord speak in my soul very loudly, “I AM here. There is nothing to worry about. Do not fear for I will not leave you or forsake you.” With that the nightmare around me started to break apart and the Lord led me off the prison yard and eventually out of the U.S. Penitentiary at Leavenworth with one miracle after another.
As my spirituality grew and the Lord gave me insights to write about the Holy Spirit gave me the idea of using that “sparrow in the prison yard” as the name of my short spiritual insights. So the “The Sparrow” was born and I’ve been writing it for 30 years as a reminder to me every day of the Lord God who rescued me from the dangers and evils of the world because He said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” He, to me, is awesome and faithful, He is I AM!”

--St. Therese, the Little Flower

Pax et bonum
Brother Sparrow
Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, NC

MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

UPDATE FROM THE ST. ANTHONY CHAPTER, ESCONDIDO CA

By Matt Hefernan BSP

The St. Anthony Chapter of the BSP met on August 8 for their Annual Retreat at Mission San Luis Rey in Oceanside. The focus of the retreat was on Mary, the Mother of God. Father Tom Herbst OFM led the reflections on Mary as the new Eve, her role as Queen of Heaven and the Ark of the Covenant. The morning began with Mass and Liturgy of the Hours and included time for silence and reflection. All were rejuvenated by contemplating Mary’s humanity as well and how we can follow her with our own Fiat.

During the retreat, we also admitted our newest postulant, Aida Estrada who, as a mother, was able to identify with our Blessed Mother and brought wonderful insight to the retreat.

On September 25, Father Albert Haase OFM provided the chapter with a reflection on St. Bonaventure. On Saturday the 26th at San Rafael parish in Rancho Bernardo, Father Haase shared his insight on discerning God’s Call. This popular preacher, teacher, spiritual director, author, and radio personality has authored eight books on popular spirituality and released three bestselling DVD’s.

We are also saying farewell to our Minister and longtime friend Rose Rypka who is journeying back to Minnesota to be closer to her family. Rose has been the Vice Minister and Minister for our chapter since professing in 2012. She has been invaluable to the success of our chapter and we will miss her. The good news is that she will be closer to the administrators of the association and can provide support to the Association on a larger scale in the future. Thank you Rose for your amazing leadership.

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.

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.
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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