



...IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT, FOR CHRIST!

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter XV—The Canonization of St. Francis and the Solemn Transfer of His Remains

5. Francis' friars and sons who had been summoned to his deathbed spent the night on which he died singing God's praises with all the people, so that it seemed as if angels were keeping watch and no one would think obsequies were being celebrated for the dead. In the morning the crowd which had gathered took branches from the trees and brought his body to Assisi, singing hymns and canticles and carrying a multitude of lights. As they passed the church of San Damiano where the noble Virgin Clare who is now in glory in heaven lived with her sisters, they made a short stop and let them see and kiss his body with its heavenly jewels. Eventually they reached the town with great rejoicing and reverently laid the precious treasure they were carrying in the church of San Giorgio. It was there that he had gone to school as a little boy, and it was there that he afterwards preached for the first time; there too, he found his first resting-place.



6. Our holy father left this world on Saturday evening, October 3, in the year of our Lord 1226, and he was buried the following day. He immediately became famous for the numerous and extraordinary miracles which were worked through his intercession, because God looked with favor upon him. In his lifetime his sublime holiness was made known to the world in order to show people how they should live by the example of his perfect uprightness. Now that he was reigning with Christ, his sanctity was to be proclaimed from heaven through the miracles worked by God's power, to strengthen the faith of the whole world. All over the world the glorious miracles and the wonderful favors which were obtained through his intercession inspired countless numbers to serve Christ faithfully and venerate his saint. Word of what was taking place, as well as the facts themselves, came to the ears of the pope, Gregory IX so that he was aware of the miracles God was working through his servant Francis.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

Reading (Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95) Gospel (St. John 8:31-42)

Our Lord, in the Gospel reading today, tells us that if we remain in His Word then we will truly be His disciples. Again, we have lots of people who want to say that they are followers of Christ, but they really want

to do what they want to do and not what Our Lord has told us to do. He told us that if we remain in His Word then we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. This is where the problem comes in for most of us. As we have talked about so many times, the fear that we have is the fear of changing, it is



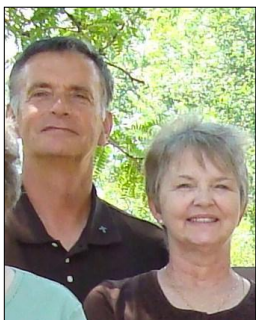
the fear of letting go of things, it is the fear of the detachment. We are afraid that if we detach from these various things that the joy we get is going to be taken away or the pleasure is going to be removed or whatever it might be, and so we do not do God's Will. Our Lord makes very clear that anyone who sins is a slave to sin. If we want the true freedom of the children of God, there is only one way to get it and that is to get rid of sin, to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

If we look at the first reading, we hear what Nebuchadnezzar has to say when he sees the three young men in the furnace unhurt. He says, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and then goes on to say that they were willing to sacrifice their bodies rather than to worship any other god except their own – because there is only one. Now if we have things that we are unwilling to give up, they are ultimately little idols in our lives. And so we need to look at it and say, "How many gods am I willing to worship? There is only one, but if I have set up all kinds of little false gods then I am giving honor to something that is not God. Therefore, I have become a slave to something else; whereas if I worship and honor only the one God, then I will have true freedom if I am doing God's Will." As Saint Paul tells us in his Letter to the Hebrews, that in our fight against sin we have not yet come to the point of shedding blood, we see that same basic point in the first reading, that these young men were willing to die rather than violate the

commandment to worship God. That is the way we have to be as well. How much does it really mean to us to get rid of sin? How much does it mean to us (to put it the other way) to have true freedom? to know the truth and to have the truth set us free so that we will be true disciples of Christ, so that we will be true members of the household? That is what Jesus is telling us.

Only if the Son sets us free will we be members of the household. If we choose sin, we become a slave, and a slave is not a member of the household in a permanent sense. We want to be permanently part of this household. The alternative is to be permanently apart from the household of God, and that means to go to hell. That is not what any of us wants. So if that is the case, we need to get rid of sin and we need to do whatever it is going to require, to sacrifice our bodies rather than worship anything other than the one God, to be willing to suffer rather than to sin. Whatever it is going to require, we need to make sure that we are willing, as the saints would say, even to do violence to ourselves, meaning that we know how severe the temptations can be at times and we have to be willing to say "no" and to suffer the immediate consequences for the long-term gain. If we are convinced of Who Jesus is and the freedom that He offers us, then we have to be willing, as He tells us, to remain in His Word. If we are going to remain in His Word, it means to be obedient to Him, to do what He has commanded us to do. That means to get rid of sin and to serve Him alone.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... Our search for perfection...



St. Francis said that the first Rule for all his Orders was the Gospel of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. To live the Gospel perfectly was the way of perfection. We have all read that many times, but

we need to really ponder what this call means. The Gospel of Mark tells us what the Lord asked of his apostles when they went out on their first missions. We can assume that this call to them was the way of perfection which the Saints, and the Church, often refer to. It states:

"Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two... He instructed them to take nothing on the journey but a walking stick—no food, no traveling bag, not a coin in the purses on their belts. They were, however,

to wear sandals. 'Do not bring a second tunic,' he said, and added: 'Whatever house you find yourself in, stay there until you leave that locality.'" (Mk 6: 7-13)

When we consider this relative to our own lives, if our objective is to live the Gospel and seek perfection in our own lives, we see how far we are from it. This is not a bad thing. Objectives we set in our lives are always set for things we don't have. Things we want. That said, we need to understand that our call is different than for the apostles, or for priests or bishops in our day. We are lay people, not apostles, not bishops, and not priests or sisters. The way of life that St. Francis gave us was different than he gave to his First and Second Orders, that is the priests and brothers, and sisters who came to follow him. The Rule he gave them called them to perfection. Many do not attain it. It is a challenge for

them. So even today some Franciscan friars say it is easier to admire St. Francis than follow him.

There really is no doubt that St. Francis, himself that is, followed this direct call of Our Lord towards personal poverty and perfection. He was known for his poverty, and he always pointed out to his brothers that they were to live in poverty too. So, they, no doubt, were expected to take no food, no traveling bag, and no money for their journeys. They were also, no doubt, allowed to wear sandals although some of them were disalced, that is bare foot, and even are today. They also were not to have extra clothes with them. So his expectation for these first brothers, and sisters, we believe, is contained in this Scripture and the Lord's 'first call' to his apostles. There is no mention either of their having homes to come back to just as there was no mention of the apostles ever going home. They were to be permanent floaters in doing the Lord's work. Moving among the people, promoting the kingdom of God, and trusting in Divine Providence to provide for them. Perfection for them rested in their being this 'floater'. No doubt the Lord wanted them to learn to trust God the Father, and his care for them, in that they would all grow strong in the service of the Lord, and attain perfection.

We have a different role though, being lay people. We still want to live our lives as perfectly as we can for the Lord but we need to eat, to work, and we need to have homes. Most of us have families that rely on us. We need clothes, often for our work, and we need our traveling bags when we travel. The expectations of others is that we will provide for ourselves. People don't expect to provide for their lay visitors, even often their friends, when they come visiting. And so we go and we take what means we need to get by day by day wherever and whenever we go. It is that way with us.

Yet, as lay penitents of the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis, which we are when we live the Rule of the BSP, we have much we carry with us, invisibly. Our way of perfection is invisible. Between us and God. We carry the Rule with us. In our hearts and in our means. In what we bring and wear and eat, or don't eat, and in how we live, though we live it without making a big deal out of it, in our daily lives. We dress simply, fast, abstain, and pray, and

the world around us, wherever we are, doesn't have a clue. Yet in living this Rule we live the mission the Lord has given us in our lay lives. Jesus did not give a first mission to lay people. He gave it to his apostles, who were the first bishops of the Catholic Church. Nowhere do we see him giving any such commands to the laity around him. For them he had other commands. The teachings of the Gospel, as in Luke 9-23, where he says: **"If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."** This was aimed at the masses. This simple verse of Scripture holds our call. This is our mission. This is the way of perfection for us. To live it we also need to know the Gospel. How else can we follow Christ?

When St. Francis gave us our Rule to live, *Memoriale Propositi*, the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis, it encompassed our call and mission. It was designed for us. For that reason, self-denial is a definite part of our Rule. Self-denial and prayer and living simple lives which entails taking up our cross. That is our lives, for the love of God and to fulfill the call of the Gospel in our lives. Living the Rule is our way of perfection. Living the Gospel too. It precedes the Rule. It was in place before our Rule came to be. It came first, for everyone!

Yet we do well to ponder that first mission of the apostles. It is still a fair and holy objective for us to see how close we can come to what those apostles were asked to do. In other words, how can we more perfectly approach that poverty and simplicity that the Lord was asking of them and was so perfectly embraced by St. Francis? It is a real challenge for us. It is an unstated part of our Rule, and we do well in this season of Lent to ponder that challenge.

Each of us lives our lives differently. We cannot tell anyone how they need to live but we all do well to ponder how we live the spiritual side of our lives, especially in this holy season. So, let's do that. Let's spend some time actually looking at our lives and considering how we can live this life of penance and simplicity more perfectly. If we do that, and embrace our Rule fully, we will have a holy Lent. We will be better spiritually for it, and grow in our love of the Lord and the way he has called us to, lay people as we are. Our Rule is a good barometer. It is holy.

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 shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Matthew 22:37)

"We will spend all eternity with the one we love the most."

This profound statement was made at a talk I heard recently by a priest who is the spiritual director of our local Seminary. It struck me to the heart. Think about it. I have talked to several people who have difficulty giving the right answer, for it seems there can only be one right answer for the believer. The creature is, or should be in complete awe of his Creator, especially when he realizes how much he is loved by the One who gave him life. So what on earth do we love, and who do we love the most?

Our Creator has clearly communicated how He feels about us in His lengthy love letter called the bible. If we acknowledge that GOD IS LOVE, then there is NO GREATER LOVE than the love God has for us. Even a tepid response on our part has to be the greatest love we are capable of giving. That would be a logical and reasonable response. Love returned for love given. Somehow attempting to imitate the greatness and incomprehensible nature of divine love.

Our holy father Francis knew this well, in his Letter to All the Faithful: *"Those who love God are happy and blessed. They do as the Lord Himself tells us in the Gospel – 'You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul...' We must love God, then, and adore Him with a pure heart and mind, because this is what He seeks above all else, as He tells us, 'True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth.'"* Jn. 4, 23

Do we give God "what He seeks above all else?" For those of us who are blessed with a "marriage made in heaven," the love of our spouse ranks very high. The love of parents for their children is an imitation of God's parental love for us, His children. And true friendships in the Lord can be extremely fulfilling, right up there in competition for "the one we love the most."

Our emotions play such a big part in trying to determine our priorities in life. Today we see passions inflamed as seldom seen before, not towards love, but towards hatred: who do they hate the most, and how can they most visibly show that hatred? It is not a pretty sight. And that from people who formerly declared themselves to be the most loving and compassionate people on earth. Quite incomprehensible.

This is not the time to get caught up in the latest

worldly drama, or to lose sight of the Four Last Things: life, death, heaven and hell. It's not time to yell and march about, but rather to take concrete steps to prove we have the intention to love God above all else, for everything else pales in comparison. That's a pretty good reason why we have become members of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis, and/or seek to live a life of penitence. Such a venture is not for the faint of heart. Or for the mediocre, who are always at their best, and have already attained their goal in life. There is something more we thirst for.

Another positive action we can take is to acknowledge the greatest gift God has given us to attain this love: the same Mother that God the Father hand-crafted to make a suitable dwelling place for His only begotten Son! Can we ever be fully aware of what a privilege it is that the Mother of Jesus Christ should also be our (spiritual) Mother? A full consecration to Mary is in order, for she will lead us most directly to Jesus her Son.

Perhaps the most important step we can take to love God above all else is to receive Jesus in Holy Communion. Every day. It's a great benefit for those of us who are retired or semi-retired to attend daily Mass. I don't think this privilege can be over-stated. Donna and I are taking a Catholic history course. We just studied the Revolution (incorrectly called the "Reformation"), in which the number one target of the Evil one was the priesthood and the Mass. Above all the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, where Jesus becomes present to us in His Body and Blood.

"The man who does not eat His flesh and drink His blood cannot enter the kingdom of God (cf. Jn 6: 54). We should visit churches often and show great respect for the clergy, not just for them personally, for they may be sinners, but because of their high office, for it is they who administer the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. They offer It in sacrifice at the altar, and it is they who receive It and administer It to others. We should realize too, that no one can be saved except by the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy words of God, and it is the clergy who tell us his words and administer the Blessed Sacrament, and they alone have a right to do it, and no one else."

Know the strategy of the enemy of mankind, and one is forewarned about what should be most important

in our lives. His strategy is to attack the clergy, even to this day, and diminish their importance in bringing Jesus in the Eucharist to the faithful. St. Francis certainly understood this very clearly. What a great opportunity for reparation this Lent to make up for all the sacrileges given our Savior in the Blessed Sacrament, meant to be a sacred treasure.

Combining these last two points, Our Blessed Mother and Jesus in the Eucharist, we have to say with Elizabeth, "Who am I, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" I would like to share a bit from an article titled: "Our Lady in the Sacred Liturgy," by James Monti. He asks, "What role does our Lady play in the sacred liturgy, and particularly the Mass? She is in a sense, present at every Mass."

He cites Pope John Paul II and his 2003 encyclical 'Ecclesia de Eucharistia.' "Mary is present with the Church, and as the Mother of the Church, at each of the celebrations of the Eucharist. When we celebrate Mass, in our midst is Mary, Mother of the Son of God, and she introduces us into the mystery of His Offering of redemption."

Monti states that this is not merely a theological abstraction, but in the pope's words, a "reality with profound implications for our own personal

participation in the liturgy. As she participated in the early Masses of the Apostles, and received Holy Communion at their hands, it meant welcoming once more into her womb that heart which had beat in unison with hers, and reliving what she had experienced at the foot of the cross.

"And is not the enraptured gaze of Mary as she contemplated the newborn face of Christ and cradled Him in her arms that unparalleled model of love, which should inspire us each time we receive Eucharistic Communion? As for her life now in Heaven, her participation in every Mass celebrated throughout the world until the end of time follows from the fact that in every Mass the Communion of Saints in Heaven is joined in prayer to the Church Militant on Earth.

"In each and every Mass our bond with the Blessed Virgin is renewed, for in each Mass Christ's gift of His Mother to us on Calvary is wordlessly re-presented. In the 'memorial' of Calvary, all that Christ accomplished by His Passion and Death is present. Consequently, all that Christ did with regard to His Mother for our sake is also present. Thus at each Mass Christ silently says to us anew: 'Behold your Mother!'"

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



"I thirst!" by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the Gospel Reading, Third Sunday of Lent

"Do you not say, "Four months more, then comes the harvest"? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, "One sows and another reaps." I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.' (John 4:35-38)

"I thirst." The words of our Lord from the cross. It has long been understood that what Jesus was referring to primarily was his thirst for souls. From the podium of the cross, Jesus could certainly have produced something to quench his earthly thirst without earthly assistance. But he waited for human intervention—a sponge of sour wine lifted on a branch of hyssop.

Again in John 9:6-7 we read about Jesus using ordinary human means to work extraordinary miracles: **"(Jesus) spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the (blind) man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in**

the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see."

What we can take from this is that our intercession for others, our participation in their salvation is not something God needs—it is something he greatly desires, and a critical piece in the economy of Divine love. Jesus tells Catherine of Siena:

"I ask you to love me with the same love with which I love you. But for me you cannot do this, for I loved you without being loved. Whatever love you have for me you owe me, so you love me



not gratuitously but out of duty, while I love you not out of duty but gratuitously. So you cannot give me the kind of love I ask of you. This is why I have put you among your neighbours: so that you can do for them what you cannot do for me—that is, love them without any concern for thanks and without looking for any profit for yourself. And whatever you do for them I will consider done for me.” (Catherine of Siena, Dialogue)

The more we pray for souls, especially those for whom we may feel repugnance, the more grace is poured over them and us. However, our motivation must always be purely to please God and do good to our neighbor. He tells Catherine that atonement is made, not by ‘any suffering simply as suffering, but rather by suffering borne with desire, love, and contrition of heart ... The value is not in the suffering but in the soul’s desire.’ Catherine explains:

“The soul in love with [God’s] truth never ceases doing service for all the world, universally and in particular, in proportion to her own desire and to the disposition of those who receive ... The soul who is hungry for [God’s] honour is never content with a fraction of them [souls] but wants them all ... She would have the imperfect become perfect. She would have the bad become good ... She wants them all, whatever their condition, because she sees them all in [God], created by [God’s] goodness in such burning love and redeemed by the blood of [His] only-begotten Son, Christ crucified ... Indeed, apart from prayer, obedience, and intercession, such persons ‘have found no other way than this to show their love for [God].” [Ibid.]

Our Lord teaches Catherine the importance of our intercession in the service of His mercy:

“I do leave some just ones among the wicked to hold back my justice so that I may not command the very stones to rise up against them, nor the earth to swallow them up, nor the beasts to devour them, nor the demons to carry them off soul and body. Indeed, I am continually finding ways to be merciful to them, to make them change their ways. And I put my servants who are healthy and not **leprous** in their midst to pray for them.

“You see, you have bound me with that chain [of intercession]—and I myself gave you that chain because I wanted to be merciful to the world. I put into my servants a hunger and longing for my honour and the salvation of souls so that I might be forced by their tears to soften the fury of my divine justice.

“How many charges I could bring against

humankind! For they have received nothing but good from me, and they repay me with every sort of hateful evil. But I have told you that my wrath would be softened by the tears of my servants, and I say it again: You, my servants, come into my presence laden with your prayers, your eager longing, your sorrow over their offense against me as well as their own damnation, and so you will soften my divinely just wrath.” [Ibid.]

Which brings me to the journal message I wish to highlight this month. The Gospel reading for the Sunday before Ash Wednesday had a profound effect on me, even though I have heard it countless times. Here is what I recorded in my journal and on my blog on Ash Wednesday. It calls us to enter into the Divine Will to participate in healing the world of the leprosy of sin.

A leper came to (Jesus) begging him, and kneeling he said to him, ‘If you choose, you can make me clean.’ Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I do choose. Be made clean!’ Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. (Mark 1:40-42)

“Dear children, let this Scripture passage be your focus this Lent. Do you know how ardently I long to cleanse and heal you? Then come to me on your knees and ask with faith and trust. I will not refuse. But more than that, I long to heal the leprosy of sin that has filled the world with death and decay. The stench permeates everything and only the fervent incense that rises from those few faithful keeps me from annihilating my beloved creation. So offer this leper’s prayer most fervently in the Divine Will on behalf of all—even the worst sinners. The bandages are being removed; the festering wounds are being exposed. Children, pour the balm of the Divine Will over the world. Let our desires merge and fuse. Let my longing be your longing, and let your prayers perfectly reflect the Divine Will. Conversion is what I desire, not condemnation. You, my children, are being called anew to participate in the salvation of souls. Enter into the Divine Will and pray!”

O Blessed Trinity of Love, fusing myself in the Divine Will I praise you for your words of love, mercy and great hope! I fall on my knees and repeat the leper’s prayer: **Lord Jesus, if you choose you can make me and the whole world clean!** I trust in your merciful response, and wait with joyful hope the renewal of creation and the coming of the kingdom of the Divine Will. I love you and I thank you with your own Divine

Will, for the unimaginable gift of being called to live and act with you in your most holy Will for the salvation of souls. Keep me faithful and attentive, that your kingdom may come and come quickly. Amen. (<https://pelianitoblog.wordpress.com>)

As followers of St. Francis, who had a special ministry to the lepers, I feel this message has a very particular and clear meaning for us. I invite all to ponder and pray over this scripture passage often this Lent for the love of God and our neighbor, in the love of Christ.

Let us be encouraged in our efforts also by the words of St. Pope Pius XII: "The salvation of the many depends on the faithfulness of the few."

(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: <https://pelianitoblog.wordpress.com/about-2/on-private-revelation/>.)



FROM THE 'SPARROW' Elijah and Job

Peace dear sparrows! In comparing a couple of Bible reading some points to be considered concerning following the lead of God are herein discussed. Following God carries no guarantee of an easy life! (Need I explain that?) It didn't for Elijah (see Kings 17) and it will not for us. All God requires is that we do His will and trust Him to take care of the details. It was God who hid Elijah by the brook at Cherith to be fed by unclean, ravenous, and wary birds (not sparrows though!). This miracle is explainable only as the provision of God.

After about a year, God had Elijah move on to Zarephath. Imagine that—he was now within the territory of Jezebel's father!

Yet we hear no complaint or question from Elijah; he must have been relying completely on God's care. Then for another year or so, Elijah was hidden from Jezebel even though he lived practically under her foot. Did he feel God's providential care, or was he worrying about the future?

In His Hand

Peace my fellow wounded sparrows! Yes wounded we all are...some wounded physically, others mentally...perhaps a combination of them all. The Book of Job seemingly could be a training manual for penitent Christians especially in view of the physical and mental torments Job had to endure. Still it could be written concerning his plight that he said, "I had

A final word from Our Lord to St. Catherine:

"Never relax your desire to ask for my help. Never lower your voice in crying out to me to be merciful to the world. Never stop knocking at the door of my Truth by following in his footsteps. Find your delight with him on the cross by feeding on [the salvation of] souls for the glory and praise of my name. And with a restless heart bewail the death of this child, humanity, whom you see reduced to such misery that your tongue could not tell it. Through this lamentation and crying out it is my will to be merciful to the world. This is what I require of my servants and this will be a sign to me that you love me in truth. Nor will I spurn your desires, as I have told you." [Ibid.]



Why do we especially feel that God is providing for us when lives are going well, or our bank account is growing larger, or we travel safely to another state and back? Yes, that is God's care. But God is also providing for us when business dwindles to almost nothing, or our vehicle is demolished in a wreck, or our lives are interrupted by some unforeseen disaster. What are our thoughts then? Do we still hold fast to our integrity as Job did?

Suppose the devil told God that if only he were allowed to have a shot at our possessions or our health, we would give up on God. If God should give him leave, would we still feel that He is providing for us? Even if we find ourselves in that condition, grace is available for us to say with Job, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." (Job 1:21)

"Walk cheerfully and with a sincere and open heart as much as you can, and when you cannot always maintain this holy joy, at least do not lose heart or your trust in God."

—St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina

heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you." (Job 42:5) Even in the midst of his trials he made no incriminations towards God.

Like Job, the Lord has finally brought me to where I think He wanted me all along! I cannot take a step without my hand in His. Being Franciscan, the fact is

not lost on me, as a paralytic for five years today, the Lord has allowed me to become so weakened in the body that I have to rely on others for a majority of my activities of daily living (ADL). Now, the only way to get around is to constantly reach out my one good hand for a doorjamb or doorknob, or to take the hand that some stranger reaches out to me. God has brought me to full dependence on Him. Now, at times, the body literally seizes up to the point of immobility.

The Lord has peeled away the facade of my own strength and shown me the weakness of selfish love and boastful independence. What has it taught me? (I thought you'd never ask!) When I am truly out of the way, then maybe—just maybe—He can make me useful even yet. But if God has brought me to where He wanted me, He has also brought me to where I have always WANTED to be: in His hand!

At first it surprised me, and then the realization dawned. This dependence is, as a Franciscan, exactly what I have craved and sought for many years—as did St. Francis. (As a wounded sparrow there are times I can't see the forest for the trees!) It is to be embraced in the loving hands of the

merciful Father; to be completely dependent on Him...this, of course, was the greatest desire of the Poverello himself...it should be the desire of all penitents.

To understand how this came to be, let's us take a peek into the past. I'll call this medical debilitating journey "a stroke with a purpose." Maybe others could refer to their own personal infirmity or trial as "cancer with a purpose" or "heart disease with a purpose" or "emotional illness with a purpose." The point is that God wants us in His hand. Sometimes He takes drastic measures to accomplish what He desires. Hopefully we all wake up one morning to the truth that we are exactly where we have always longed to be: in His hand.

"How sweet is the way of love. Yes, one may fall or commit infidelities; but love, knowing how to draw profit from everything, quickly consumes whatever could displease Jesus, leaving at the bottom of the heart only humble and profound peace."

—St. Therese, the Little Flower

pax et bonum, Bro. wounded Sparrow
Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, N. Carolina



LENT IS UPON US!" **(and this is a good thing)**



LENT, coming from an old English word meaning to lengthen, reminds us of springtime and longer days but also and more importantly, a time of spiritual cleansing and renewal. In Latin, a common word used is Quadragesima, which means first Sunday in LENT or 40 days of LENT. So, we see there are different ways of expressing the meaning of LENT, however the prayer and fasting is in

the same manner with the same point or goal in mind.

A call to conversion (or metanoia) which leads us to turn away from sin and live the Gospels. We hear this said by the Priest on Ash Wednesday when we receive our Ashes because we are striving more intently on deepening our relationship with Jesus.

As Penitents in the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, we of course have our Rule of Life in our hearts while also remembering how St Francis was the ultimate example for us as a Penitent! In reading The Geste

of the Great King (The Office of the Passion composed by St Francis), there is mention of how we ward off the evils in guarding our soul, and using the opposite virtue to do this. For example: Each virtue confounds vices and sins. Holy Wisdom confounds Satan and all malice. Holy Charity confounds every diabolical and carnal temptation and all carnal fears. So, it is important to remember we are not only cleansing our souls, but guarding it against any future temptations. Added to this would be our prayer of reparation for our world and Church.

Fasting during LENT, is not merely what we can give up as a trade-off to God, but a lesson in self-discipline to strengthen us for times we may feel weak or defeated. Remember how St Francis abhorred lepers? Then he went against his grain and embraced a leper and kissed him too – this was a major turning point in St Francis' conversion.

Recently I had a visit to Florida for a short vacation and suddenly realized when I was there, that this was a nature retreat as well as a time with family. To gaze upon the beautiful Gulf of Mexico out our back

door each morning, deep in thought at the beauty and grace given by God in all this water and sky was so refreshing and such a reminder that when returning home—to stay connected to nature. I also had a visit to a local outdoor bird hospital; each having his own habitat to recover in and be set free again to fly high in the skies over the ocean. Being from Canada, I noticed there were Blue Jays and Canada Geese among these injured birds and thought how kind it was for these dedicated Americans to care for our birds! This all reminded me too of St Francis and his divine relationship with

nature and animals. He extended his divine love and grace to all people and creatures around him.

Fr Robert Young, ofm and presenter of Divine Will teachings (may he rest in peace) has said that even though St. Francis was not living IN the Divine Will, he was certainly doing God's will which made him one with God and Creation. So, as we journey together through LENT, let us stay close to God our Creator, but also extend it to His creation and creatures. As LENT (and winter) pass, we will soon take time to stop and smell the roses!

Submitted by "Penitent"



From the Desert Fathers

Abba Anthony said to Abba Poemen,

"This is the great work of a man:

*Always to take the blame for his own sins before God
and to expect temptation to his last breath."*

MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

STAY CONNECTED...PLEASE!

If you wish to connect with your Brothers and Sisters in the BSP, please remember that the **BSP Forums** on our website are set up specifically for that purpose. Remember too that there is also a prayer forum. Don't underestimate the prayers of a few poor penitents under the patronage of Father Francis and St. Clare!

Hope to see you on the Forums! <http://bspenance.org/forum/>

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.

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

"But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said.'"

Matthew 28:5-6



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, Administrators



Welcome to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance!

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

[Website: www.bspenance.org](http://www.bspenance.org)



The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF
PENANCE



of St. Francis

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