BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:
Some of the miracles which took place after St. Francis’ death
I. The Power of the Stigmata

6. At Potenza in Apulia there was a cleric called Roger who was an honorable man and a canon of the principal church. He was stricken with illness and one day he went into a church to pray. There was a painting of St. Francis there which showed the stigmata and he began to have doubts about this sublime miracle, because it was so unusual and seemed impossible. As the wound of doubt pierced his heart and his thoughts were taken up with all kinds of baseless ideas, he suddenly felt a heavy blow on his left hand beneath his glove. At the same time he heard a noise like the sound of a javelin being thrown from a catapult. He was dumbfounded at the sound and he felt a pain in his hand. He pulled off his glove in order to see with his eyes what he had perceived by his hearing and touch. There had been no trace of an injury on his hand before, but there in the middle of his palm he saw a wound which looked as if it had been inflicted by an arrow. The pain was so great that he thought he would faint. Strange to relate, there was not trace of wound in the glove; the pain of a wound which was inflicted without any sign was the penalty for the hidden wound of doubt in his heart. Goaded by the terrible pain, he went about for two days screaming and telling everybody how he had been unbelieving. He affirmed his belief in the stigmata of St. Francis and swore that every shadow of doubt had disappeared. He humbly begged the saint to help him by his stigmata and he lent weight to the prayers of his heart with a flow of tears. Once he renounced his incredulity and his heart was healed, his hand was healed too. The pain disappeared, so that he did not feel its burn any more and there was no trace of the blow. By God’s loving providence the hidden illness in his soul was cured by visibly cauterizing his flesh, and once his soul was healed, his body was healed too. He became humble and earnest in his religious duties and he was a good friend of the Order and St. Francis. This public miracle was certified under oath and we learned of it in a letter sealed with the bishop’s seal.

There can be no doubt, therefore, about the stigmata, and there should be no sour looks because God is good, as if a gift of this kind were not in harmony with his goodness. Many members of Christ’s body adhere to their Head with the same seraphic love as Francis, so that they are found worthy to wear the same armor in battle and will be raised to the same glory in heaven. No one in his right mind would claim that this was for anything but the glory of Christ.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)
As we celebrate today the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, we are called immediately by the Church to this point in the first reading, that after the Resurrection of Our Lord the apostles gathered in prayer together with some women and our Blessed Lady. They understood instinctively that they needed to be where Our Lady was. They gathered around her and she taught them to pray. She formed them so that they would be able to do what they were called to do. They had spent three years with our Blessed Lord and they did not understand; they did not get it. But through the work of our Blessed Lady—and especially, of course, through the Holy Spirit, Who was given to them—suddenly they became aware of what it was they were supposed to do. They understood what it meant to be conformed to Jesus Christ, and that was the way they lived their lives from that point forward, everyday becoming more and more conformed into the very likeness of our Blessed Lady.

Well, the same is true for each one of us. If we are going to be conformed to Christ, it is in a particular way to be able to place before ourselves the very mysteries of His life, of His death, and of His glorification. That is exactly what we have in the Rosary. We meditate upon the mysteries of Our Lord’s life; we place them before us every single day; and in so doing, slowly, little by little, we become conformed to the mysteries upon which we meditate. Our Lady is at the very center of all of that, and it makes perfect sense. God chose her, as we heard in the Gospel reading, to be the mother of His Son. Our Lady, being a mother, has formed then but one child, and she formed Him perfectly. She was perfectly conformed to Him so that He could become perfectly conformed to Christ. That is the power of the Rosary. The Rosary is able to take a situation which seems impossible and help us to see God’s Will, to turn it into something which is not only completely possible, but something which is going to give the greatest glory to God. That is what we have to be about.

Through this very humble means, we see that we have the most powerful of all weapons. It is a weapon to be wielded on the spiritual realm, a weapon that is used against Satan. Through the Rosary, all things are possible for those who really pray it, for those who trust in the power of God. Through Our Lady’s intercession, everything can be obtained through the prayerful recitation of the Most Holy Rosary.

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

October 4th is the feast of St. Francis. In this month we can all be most grateful for the life that he gave us in 1221 which we now cherish and promote in the BSP. Any of us who wish to promote this lifestyle, if we are ourselves professed, can do that on our own. We can form a Chapter of the BSP where we live. All we need to do is find another person willing to live the life and get organized in doing that so that you meet monthly or thereabouts and discuss and promote the life of penance in those friendships. Just let us know if you plan to do that and we can send you some simple information to get you started. It is what St. Francis wanted to for those who decided to accept his First Rule, which is the Rule of the BSP.

Father Altier remains our only active Visitor but he is strong and dedicated and supports us wholeheartedly in living our Rule. Much has been written about him and his homilies are available on line for anyone interested and able to look on the Internet. Last month we
reported on our meeting with him, which generally has to be a phone interview and discussion largely because he is always busy and also because we factually live 250 miles away from him.

He did say, in his meeting with us, that he is available to answer questions and needs in the BSP but that we would have to coordinate the communications to him. So everyone can know that. If you have things you think need to be brought to the Visitor get them to us and we can set up a time to go over them with Fr. Altier.

We will continue to communicate to our members and professed through the newsletter but we are available to all for open communications one-on-one if someone cares to write to us via email or postal mail. As we have mentioned in other reports and the newsletter we are authorized to be spiritual directors to anyone in the BSP on living the Rule, and we often answer questions on the Rule for our members in that role. We cannot act as spiritual directors on other matters whatever they might be.

All of our members can use their personal confessor as a spiritual director if they like and usually in the confessional it is easy to get advice on how to live your life and often some pointers on living the Rule. Just keep in mind what St. Theresa of Avila said about spiritual direction. A bad spiritual director, she said, was worse than none. A bad spiritual director would be one who does no support the life of prayer and penance we live, as this way of life was given to us by a great Saint, and we need not fear it.

Finally, we are in the process of setting up a meeting with Archbishop Hebda, our new Archbishop, and Father Altier, which is primarily informational in scope and purpose, but is something the Archbishop has said he wanted. It is now doubtful that will happen before next year just due to schedules of those involved, but it is an important and exciting meeting for us. Please keep this meeting in your prayers.

May the Lord bless and lead us all.

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

If you haven’t already done so, please update the official BSP Administrator email address in your address book from minncc@aol.com to minncc03@gmail.com.

NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

“Well done, good and faithful servant...Enter into the joy of your Lord.” (Matthew 25:21)

This will be my last regular article for the BSP newsletter. I have wanted to fade into the sunset for quite some time, and that time has come.

One could compare my dilemma to an athlete past his prime. I like to use sports analogies. It is often painful to see how age or health concerns catch up with athletes at a certain point. Very few retire when they are at or just past their prime. Most linger on with diminishing skills, causing a dilemma for themselves and their respective teams. At some point these diminishing returns cause a crisis. Once the face of the franchise, who will tell this athlete he is not that good anymore, and someone better is waiting in the wings to take his place? Memories don’t win games. What can you do for us today?

I certainly don’t feel I can do today what I did yesterday in so many areas. In today’s world I feel more and more like a displaced person. I know in the plan of God that as one grows older, he or she becomes more detached from the things of the world, to yearn for the things of heaven. We have all seen how beautiful this can be in some people’s lives, for as they prepare to enter eternal life, they must let go of many formerly important things, while yearning to get re-acquainted with old friends and family in the Presence of God.

Health has been a big issue. Cancer and half a dozen heart problems and their various treatments have taken their toll physically. And I suppose mentally and emotionally. For one who has always been very active, that is difficult to cope with. It’s been a case of trying to prioritize more and more limited resources.

It has been a privilege and honor to contribute in some small way to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis. It has been a highlight of my life that God has allowed me to associate with some of the best people in the world here in the BSP, who strive for holiness in earnest, who remain faithful to Jesus and His Church while walking in the footsteps
of St. Francis, beloved imitator of Christ.

I hope to God I hear those words above at some point: well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of the Lord. Truly, there is NO GREATER LOVE than the love God has for us. Let us share it always!

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota

A word of gratitude to Paul Beery

To everything there is a season...

Paul Beery has been a regular contributor to the monthly newsletter of the BSP for over a decade. It is a loss for all of us that we will no longer be challenged by Paul’s deep convictions born of his steadfast faith. Paul is the last one who would want any credit or praise, but I do want to say it has been an honor to work with him in the field of the Lord. He is an honest, humble man and the BSP is richer for his presence.

Let us keep Paul in our prayers as he battles his serious medical conditions. As they say, growing old is not for the faint of heart, but as penitents, I believe it is when we are called to do our best work, which gives another spin to the words, “golden years”. I am sure God will take great joy in showing us what we were able to purchase with the treasure chest of sufferings and indignities we acquired in our final years.

Brother Paul, on behalf of all readers of the newsletter, and all members of the Association, I offer you heartfelt thanks for your faithful service and example. May God bless, lead, and guide you in the next chapter of your life, after which I am quite sure you will hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

Janet Klasson (newsletter editor)

Evangelical poverty… by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the Gospel reading for the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Jesus, looking at (the rich man), loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.” (Mark 10:21-27)

The scripture story above is repeated in Luke 19:18-25 and is one of the three readings on which St. Francis based his Rules of life for his three Orders. As Franciscans it is certainly good to meditate on those three scripture passages from time to time, particularly when one of them comes up in the Sunday Lectionary, as it does this October 14 and certainly as we prepare to celebrate the Transitus of our Seraphic Father.

We Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis live out our vocations “in the world but not of it, for Christ”. In contrast to a Franciscan priest or brother, or a Poor Clare sister, the lives we live as lay BSP members are bound to appear as different from one another as our individual members. Some have good health, some do not. Some of us are members of large families, some are alone. Some may have jobs or careers while others are retired or living on fixed incomes. Some of us have enough material goods, some are struggling. The focus of Rule is less on conformity of our externals than it is on conformity of the internals, the disposition of our hearts. So, while we do not wear a habit or live in a convent, still we follow a single Rule of Life and live a simple lifestyle, all the while trying daily to divest ourselves of attachments, striving always to live the gospel message to the best of our ability.

Recently I had a phone meeting with another BSP
member in which we discussed an article on St. Clare’s call to evangelical poverty, written by Fr. Steve Grunow on his Word on Fire blog. (https://tinyurl.com/ydhvaa4m) While we are not called to the radical poverty of St. Clare, she can teach us ways to live our own calling with fidelity and joy. Here are some quotes from Fr. Grunow’s article:

“Evangelical poverty is about belonging to Jesus Christ with the whole of one’s being. Such a commitment requires a rigorous detachment from one’s desires. The spiritual commitment of evangelical poverty is directed as a contrary to all that false beliefs that continually assert that we are defined by what we own, by how much money and property that we can accumulate, by our status or class, and by our need for security and control.

“Our relationship with Christ insists that more important than any of these things, which are by their nature finite and passing away, is our eternal identity as the children of God in Christ.

“Such dedication is a mysterious spiritual path that all are called to consider, but few are called to embrace in its totality.”

Again, we are not called to the same radical poverty of St. Clare, but by laying our desires at the foot of the Cross through living our Rule, we become daily more detached from the world and, through the grace of discipline, more immune to its allures.

Fr. Grunow also explains the great benefits of evangelical poverty:

“The practical benefit of evangelical poverty is love. In choosing to have less, we offer to someone else more and discipline ourselves to accept that it is of greater value to give than to receive.

“The other gift of evangelical poverty is humility. Evangelical poverty necessitates that one eschew honors, rewards, and recognition. It demands that we take our place not with the mighty and the powerful, but as the servant of the poor and afflicted. It radiates the peace of mind of a disciple, the contrary disposition to the worldly who, fearing that loss of their worldly things, are beset with anxiety and fear.

“The witness of Saint Clare reminds us that it is integral to our mission as disciples of the Lord to accept the full implication of our act of faith in him. God gives to us his Beloved Son, a grace which has value beyond that of anything in the world. The gift of Christ is so tremendous that all our desires and attachments are relativized in his wake. We have in Christ everything, and all things find their proper place in relation to his priority.” (My emphasis.)

Yes, Christ is all. The Rule is itself only a means to an end, a course in detachment, growth in holiness, and deeper intimacy with Christ. Like St. Paul and St. Francis, we “put on the new self, created in God’s way in righteousness and holiness of truth.”

May Jesus and Mary, through the prayers of St. Francis and St. Clare, grant us every grace to become poor in spirit and rich in holiness, love, and service.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada

The Three readings on which St. Francis based his Rules of life for his three Orders

The Conditions of Discipleship (Matt. 16:24,25)

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”


After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, “The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way.”


An official asked him this question, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother.’”
And he replied, “All of these I have observed from my youth.” When Jesus heard this he said to him, “There is still one thing left for you if you wish to be perfect: go, sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” But when he heard this he became quite sad, for he was very rich.

Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

FROM THE ‘SPARROW’

Christian Flowers

Peace and all good things to each of you! This inaugurates a special time of the religious calendar to me especially and to many of you as well. Starting with the feast of St. Padre Pio (September 23), then moving to the Archangel St. Michael (September 29), followed by St. Therese of Lisieux-the Little Flower (October 1), then the Guardian Angels (October 2), and onward to the Seraphic Father St. Francis (October 4) and culminates with Our Lady of the Rosary (October 7)! A two-week period that I experience a number of spiritual insights each year. We shall share one such insight that came along in just the last few days.

Many early writers described some of the first followers of St. Francis as "little flowers" of the Poverello. Join to this that St. Therese of Lisieux was known and referred to herself as the "little flower" (smile). Does not take too much imagination to see the connection being hinted at does it? Now how about a coincidence or two to spice up our little parallel. Add to that is that little known fact that she was allegedly buried on October 4th! And her feast day on the early European calendar was October 3rd and later moved to October 1st...seems like these two little Saints were inseparable in some ways unbeknown to the casual onlooker!

Now flowers (quantum leap of faith here) are only found in the wild or in cultivated gardens and with our two little flower Saints as our backdrop we now delve into our subject proper "Christian Flowers." There was an interesting statement made of recent date: "Christians are like flowers. If they are not growing or dying, they must be artificial." This statement had the distinctive resonance of truth that causes one introspection as to which of the three categories one finds themselves in and is a constant reminder of our need to continue growing in our relationship with Jesus.

The Bible makes many comparisons of humans to plants. Isaiah 40:7-8 says twice that "the grass withers, the flower fades." It is evident that life is fleeting and our existence will leave little or no lasting impression. But the Bible also tells us something that will remain, something we can put our trust in continually. Isaiah 40:8 closes with the comforting promise that "the word of God shall stand for ever." This, then, is the water that sustains the flower(s) of spiritual life.

During the last few months of summer with the hot weather and sun beating down many of you nursed your gardens to prevent them from withering. Let’s us remember that we need to take time to nurture our spirits as well. As we take in the refreshing water by reading God’s Word, we are taking steps to prevent spiritual withering and possibly even spiritual death.

Without water, the stress and heat of the day will, devour our gardens. But more importantly, our relationship with our Lord will die if we fail to drink in His blessings found in the Sacraments and the Liturgy. There are no exceptions to the rule for Christians; if we are not growing or dying, we must be fake! Let’s us examine our heart and seek to know how we stand before an almighty God. If we find that our relationship is only, in part, an artificial exhibit, we should then take time to partake of the Sacraments and drink deeply of His Word. Then then we shall blossom, as did Therese and Francis, into the beautiful creation that the Master Gardener intended for us to be.

The words of a fellow Franciscan who chronicled St. Francis and the concept of the "little flowers" of the early order are of significance in expressing what the love Master Gardener felt for all little flowers of then and those of today:

"Turn back, O soul: With His hands spread out on the Cross, Jesus Christ calls to you. Come back: The whole abyss of the Trinity awaits your return. O how long He has been expecting your coming! Alas! How
long He has tolerated you in your sins! Return now, O soul, as Christ on the Cross, awaiting, His Head bowed to kiss you, His arms extended to embrace you, His hand open to reward you, His Body extended in order to devote His whole Self, His feet affixed in order to remain, His side opened that He might place you there within.”

—St. Bonaventure, Soliloquium, I,38-39

Sancte Francisce, ora pro nobis.
(St. Francis of Assisi, pray for us.)

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

The Admonitions continued...

XXI THE FRIVOLOUS AND TALKATIVE RELIGIOUS
Blessed is the servant who, when he speaks, does not disclose everything about himself under the guise of a reward and is not quick to speak, but who is wisely cautious about what he says and how he responds.

Woe to that religious who does not hold in his heart the good things the lord reveals to him and does not reveal them by his behavior, but, under the guise of a reward, wishes instead to reveal them with his words. He receives his reward and his listeners carry away little fruit.

XXII CORRECTION
Blessed is the servant who endures discipline, accusation, and reprimand from another as patiently as he would from himself.
Blessed is the servant who, after being reprimanded, agrees courteously, submits respectfully, admits humbly, and makes amends willingly.
Blessed is the servant who is not quick to excuse himself, and endures with humility, shame, and reprimand for a sin, when he did not commit the fault.

XXIII HUMILITY
Blessed is the servant who has been found as humble among his subjects as he was among his masters.
Blessed is the servant who always remains under the rod of correction.
Faithful and prudent is the servant who does not delay in punishing himself for all his offenses, inwardly though contrition and outwardly through confession and penance for what he did.

XXIV TRUE LOVE
Blessed is the servant who loves his brother as much when he is sick and cannot repay him as when he is well, and can repay him.

XXV THE SAME POINT
Blessed is the servant who loves and respects his brother as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him, and who would not say anything behind his back that he would not say with charity in his presence.

XXVI LET SERVANTS OF GOD HONOR THE CLERGY
Blessed is the servant who has faith in the clergy who live uprightly according to the rite of the Roman Church.
Woe to those who look down upon them; for even though they be sinners, no one should judge them because the Lord alone reserves judgment on them himself. For just as their ministry is greater in its concerns for the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they receive, and they alone administer to others, so those who sin against them commit more of a sin than (if they had sinned) against all other persons in this world.

XXVII VIRTUE PUTS VICE TO FLIGHT

Where there is charity and wisdom there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger or disturbance. Where there is poverty with joy, there is neither greed nor avarice. Where there is rest and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor restlessness. Where there is fear of the Lord to guard an entrance, there the enemy cannot have a place to enter. Where there is a heart full of mercy and discernment, there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.

XXVIII HIDING THE GOOD THAT IT NOT BE LOST

Blessed is the servant who stores up in heaven the good things which the Lord shows to him and does not wish to reveal them to people under the guise of a reward, because the Most High himself will reveal his deeds to whomever he wishes.

Blessed is the servant who safeguards the secrets of the Lord in his heart.

*Note: While many of the admonitions are for those in religious life, they can still apply to those striving for holiness. God bless you!

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI THE SAINT EARLY DOCUMENTS VOL 1
Submitted by: Penitent

From the Desert Fathers

Abba Zeno said, “If a man wants God to hear his prayer quickly, then before he prays for anything else, even his own soul, when he stands and stretches out his hands towards God, he must pray with all his heart for his enemies. Through this action, god will hear everything he asks.”
MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

GREG CROSBY PROFESSION

It is with great joy that we share the good news of the profession of BSP member Gregory Crosby of Miami, Florida on May 20 of this year, Pentecost Sunday. Every profession blesses the Association and the whole world. May the Holy Spirit continue to lead and guide Greg and all members of the BSP into His holy and adorable Will.

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.
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

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