

"FOLLOW ME!"

Luke 9:23



Monthly Newsletter of The **BROTHERS AND SISTERS** **OF PENANCE** of St. Francis

July 2011

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter III—The Foundation of the Order—the Rule is approved



7. Another good man came to the Order about this time, bringing the number of Francis' sons to seven. Then like a good father he gathered all his sons about him and spoke to them at length about the kingdom of God and the need to disregard the world and do penance, renouncing one's own will. Finally, he told them that he had decided to send them all over the country. Although his spirit

was one of poverty and lowliness, free from all pretense and devoid of life-giving powers, Francis had already attracted seven followers and he was anxious to invite the whole world to repent and give it new life in Christ. So he told his companions, "Go and bring to all men a message of peace and penance, that their sins may be forgiven. Be patient in trials, watchful in prayer, and never cease working. Be considerate in your speech, well-ordered in your actions, and grateful to your benefactors. Remember that for all this an eternal kingdom is being made ready for you." The friars humbly

cast themselves on the ground before him and welcomed the command of obedience with true spiritual joy. Then he addressed each one of them individually, telling them, "Cast the burden of your cares upon the Lord, and he will sustain you." (Psalm 54:23) This was what he always used to say to any friar on whom he imposed a command in virtue of obedience.

Francis knew that it was up to him to set an example for the friars and he was anxious to practice what he preached; and so, when he had sent the other six in different directions set out himself in a fourth direction. After a short while, however, he was anxious to see them all again, and as he had no means of summoning them himself, he prayed to God "who called the banished sons of Israel home." (cf. Psalm 146:2) So it was that by God's gracious providence they all met unexpectedly shortly afterwards without being summoned by any human means, much to their surprise. Another four worthy men now came to join them and this brought their number to twelve.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier: Christ's invitation to love

Our Lord tells us that He no longer calls us slaves, but He calls us friends. The reason that He calls us friends, He tells us, is because He has made known to us everything that He has received from His Father. If this is the case, we see the kind of relationship that the Lord has called each one

of us into. It is to be a close associate, not just an acquaintance, it is to be a friend, but He is really even calling us to something deeper. On our own part however, I think if we were honest, we would probably all have to admit, we have not been real good friends to Our Lord. We have probably violated that friendship many, many, many times over. We have sinned against Him time and



again, and yet because of His friendship, because of His love for us, He continues to take us back. Beyond just being a friend, the Lord then tells us what it is that is required of us, and that is to love.

Now there are different levels of love. We see, for instance, in the 21st chapter of St. John's Gospel, where Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Him. He first asks Peter if he loves Him with charity, with the highest kind of love. Peter says, Lord you know I am your friend. Jesus asks, do you love Me, once again, with charity. The second time Peter says you know I am your friend. So the third time Jesus says Peter, do you love me with the love of a friend. Peter says, Lord you know everything, you know that I love you, as a friend. The word that is used there is a different word.

What the Lord is asking of us is to at least love Him as friends, but not to stop there. In other words, He has lifted us up, just as we heard in the psalm, from the dung heap, to place us with the princes of the people. He is asking us now to not simply be mindless servants, (we can certainly be freely chosen slaves of the Lord in the sense that St. Louis de Montfort speaks of) but He places us in a friendship, on an equal kind of basis with Him. Then He asks us to go beyond that. He gives to us the grace, but the choice has to be ours. He is not going to force us to love Him. Not only will He not force us to love Him as friends, He will not force us to love Him with that

perfect kind of love, that higher love, the kind of love with which He loves us.

He tells us there is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends. He has demonstrated the charity for us, and asks that we would return with friendship. Yet at the same time, He invites us to love Him with charity, with the highest kind of love, to lay down our life, if we want to call Him a friend, and to go beyond just the natural kind of friendship, to a supernatural union with Jesus Christ. He is inviting us to that, not requiring it absolutely, but He is calling us to it. He is giving us the opportunity to make that choice to lay down our lives, for the One who laid down His life for us, to die to self so we could live for Him, and more than that to die to self so that He can live in us and through us.

That is the only way that we are going to be able to love Him with that divine love is if He dwells in us. If He lives through us, then it is with His own love that we are loving Him in return. He literally will take us from the level of being slaves, from the level of nothingness, through Baptism in which we are raised up, and then through our own choice to unite ourselves perfectly with Him, and love Him not only with the love of friendship, but with perfect friendship, with a marital kind of love, with perfect charity in union with Jesus Christ. That is the glory that He is calling each one of us to, but it comes with a cost, to lay down your life for your friend.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...Spellbound

One of the things that is most apparent, for those who grow in the love of God, is that we get increasingly spellbound about God and what he does. Just as Jesus left the crowds spellbound at his teaching (Matthew 7:21-29), he still leaves us

spellbound at the motion of His Spirit and what he does in our souls, and what He is in Himself.

He is God! Praise God. He is the one who said "I am who am." ¹ Just that phrase alone opens the door to holy awe, which is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but only for those who care to know God.

In the BSP we all care to know God better, and we will become increasingly spellbound with God as we move deeper into His Love.

How deep is His Love? How deep is the ocean? It is deeper than we can imagine, and He created it. How high is the sky? It is higher than we can see, as heaven is above it.

We are spellbound at His love, which was so great His

Son came to become a man and die for us so we could be with him forever. Why would God do that? Only because of love. Can we really understand His Love? Can a creature know the Love of His Creator? Not likely.

We are spellbound at His power. We can hardly conceive of the power of a hydrogen bomb, which can be up to or beyond a 100 megatons. A megaton is a million tons of TNT explosive. An explosion that mimics the sun but is in fact only a tiny fraction of the power the sun lets loose each day. Yet, our God made the sun, and the atom, and their forces which we have discovered to make nuclear bombs. We can only be spellbound to consider how great the power of God is to have done this.

We are spellbound if we consider the Judgment of Jesus Christ when we die. He knows everything, every word, thought, and deed, that is ours, and He will call them all to mind to judge us. He knows what we did and why and when we did it and who it affected. Thank Him for His mercy, and love him for His Love. Therefore His judgment will be perfect, and his decision final regarding our eternal future. We can only be spellbound to consider he knows that about us, and each of us the same, at the same time.

We pray, and He hears us as if we are the only one alive,

1 Exodus 3:14

and he hears everyone the same way, at the same time. We can only be spellbound to consider how he does that, and perfectly.

The fact is, He misses not a thing of his smallest creation. He is infinite in His power and presence. As Shelley always says to me, when I comment on how incredible God is, "He is God." That is about all we can say, and should say, with deep love.

So, that is our God and much more. More than can be

written. As we move deeper into the spiritual life we need to ponder his awesomeness, and rejoice to be spellbound. We will be in awe of God forever. His power, His presence, His grace to us, and His love. It is most beneficial to be held spellbound for the Love of God, and it is the essence of our Rule and the prayer of contemplation, and our journey into eternity in His Love.

In all things we belong to Christ. He knows us, loves us, and is our God. We are "In the world, but not of it, for Christ."

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



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery BSP

"In the course of the night, Jacob arose. Then some man wrestled with him until the break of dawn. When the man saw that he could not prevail over him, he struck Jacob's hip at its socket, so that the hip socket was wrenched as they wrestled. The man then said, 'Let me go, for it is daybreak.' But Jacob said, 'I will not let you go unless you bless me.' 'What is your name, the man asked?' He answered, 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.' Jacob then asked him, 'What is your name?' He answered, 'Why do you want to know my name?' Then he blessed him there. Jacob named the place Peniel, 'Because I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared.'" (Genesis 32:25-31)

Pope Benedict highlights this passage at his May 25 general audience. He is giving a new series of catechesis on prayer, and he makes some very interesting points, which I quote at length:

"This is not an easily interpreted passage, but it is an important one for our life of faith and prayer; it recounts the story of Jacob's wrestling with God at the ford of the Jabbok. As you will remember, Jacob had taken away his brother Esau's birthright in exchange for a dish of lentils and then, through deception, had stolen the blessing of his father Isaac who was already quite advanced in years, by taking advantage of his blindness. Having escaped Esau's fury, he had taken refuge with a relative, Laban; he married and had grown rich and now was returning to the land of his birth, ready to face his brother.

"Jacob is suddenly attacked by an unknown figure who wrestles with him for the whole of the night. It is this hand to hand battle that becomes for him a singular experience of God. Night is the favorable time for acting in secret. But it is Jacob who is surprised by an unexpected attack for which he was not prepared, a mysterious battle that overtakes him in solitude without the possibility of organizing an adequate defense."

I think every one of us can see ourselves in this combat, for who of us has not had a similar experience of wrestling with "an unknown figure." And we are always taken off guard, though if it happens at night we should be prepared. Pope

Benedict goes on:

"The rival asks, 'What is your name?' And the patriarch responds, 'Jacob.' To know someone's name implies a kind of power over the person. In biblical thinking, the name contains the most profound reality of the individual; it unveils his secret and his destiny. Knowing someone's name therefore means knowing the truth of the other, and this allows one to be able to dominate him. When Jacob reveals his own name, he is handing himself over to his opponent; it is a form of surrender, of the total giving over of himself to the other.

"But in this act of surrender, Jacob paradoxically also emerges as the winner, because he receives a new name, together with an acknowledgement of victory on the part of his adversary, who says to him: 'Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed.' Jacob therefore prevailed, but his new identity, received by the same adversary, affirms and testifies to God's triumph. His adversary will refuse to pronounce his name, but He will reveal Himself in an unequivocal gesture, by giving him His blessing. That blessing is not a blessing grasped by deception, but one freely given by God, which Jacob is able to receive because now he is alone, without protection, without cunning and deception. He gives himself over unarmed; he accepts surrendering himself and confessing the truth about himself. And so, at the end of the battle, having received the

blessing, the patriarch is able finally to recognize the other, the God of the blessing: 'I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared.'"

This episode explains a lot about our prayer life. The Catholic Catechism states: "The spiritual tradition of the Church has retained the symbol of prayer as a battle of faith and as the triumph of perseverance." Anyone who has struggled through periods of dryness in prayer can attest to the "battle of faith and the triumph of perseverance." Consider similar struggles of trying to submit to the will of God, surrendering ourselves into His hands. For the human to recognize the divine, confess the truth about oneself, and submit to God as Jacob did, is the great adventure upon which one and all have embarked, whether they know it or not. Pope Benedict continues:

"Jacob's night at the ford of the Jabbok becomes for the believer a point of reference for understanding his relationship with God, which in prayer finds its ultimate expression. Prayer requires trust, closeness, in a symbolic 'hand to hand' not with a God who is an adversary and enemy, but with a blessing Lord who remains always mysterious, who appears unattainable. For this reason the sacred author uses the symbol of battle, which implies strength of soul, perseverance, tenacity in reaching what we desire. And if the object of one's desire is a relationship with God, His blessing and His love, then the battle cannot but culminate in the gift of oneself to God, in the recognition of one's own weakness, which triumphs precisely when we reach the point of surrendering ourselves into the merciful hands of God."

That one sentence outlines the goal of our lives. I don't know how others "do battle" with God, but I am keenly aware of how I have. Blessed with faithful Catholic parents, they made me aware of God and the obligation of the creature to respond to the Creator at a very young age. In a sense, the battle in my own personal life was something of a rout, and I was clearly on the 'losing' side. I didn't have much of a defense, as cynicism and skepticism had not yet crept into the soul, and the culture of id-Western small town America actually aided in the formation of virtue.

I know every person born into the world is a child of God. I wonder how He makes His Presence known to each of them in turn. My heart received a very clear message: "Follow Me: for there is no real alternative." That is, what did the world have to offer that could in any way compare to the promise of eternal life? How could happiness be found anywhere but in the pursuit of the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ?

"Why did God make me? God made me to know, love and serve Him in this life, and be happy with Him for all eternity." Thank God for the Baltimore Catechism. Thank God for real catechesis. Thank God for Pope Benedict who is bringing back real catechesis, the starting point of which is our fundamental relationship with God. If we are not grounded on the firm foundation of an intimate love relationship with our Creator, we are subjected to the winds and vagaries of a stormy life trying to find our way to a safe port. All of that can be avoided by agreeing to book safe passage on our Savior's Barque of Peter.

"Dear brothers and sisters, our whole life is like this long night of battle and prayer that is meant to end in the desire and request for God's blessing, which cannot be grasped or won by counting on our own strength, but must be received from Him with humility, as a gratuitous gift that allows us, in the end, to recognize the face of the Lord. And when this happens, our whole reality changes; we receive a new name and the blessing of God."

How about a reference to the place of Jacob's struggle? Some of us will be meeting at a certain place the last weekend of July to receive the blessing of God:

"Jacob, who receives a new name, who becomes Israel, also gives a new name to the place where he wrestled with God; he prayed there and renamed it Peniel, which means 'The Face of God.' With this name he recognized that place as filled with God's presence; he renders the land sacred by imprinting upon it the memory of that mysterious encounter with God. He who allows himself to be blessed by God, who abandons himself to Him, who allows himself to be transformed by Him, renders the world blessed."

Paul Beery BSP - Morning Star Chapter - Minnesota



The Sufferings of this Present Time... A MEDITATION by Janet Klasson BSP

From the Second Reading on the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

"Brothers and sisters: I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us." (Romans 8:18)

My friends the times we are living in are becoming more perilous to those living out the life of faith. The freedom of worship we in the west have enjoyed for centuries—a freedom we mostly took for granted—is now undoubtedly in jeopardy. The more God's laws are trampled upon, in

practice and in secular law, the closer we draw to an outright persecution of the faithful. Anyone who follows the news can see that a clash is coming between those who uphold the laws of God and those who celebrate transgression.

There is an early manuscript called *The Didache*, which

outlines the Christian practices of the fledgling Church. The authors of this manuscript urged Christians to "fast for those who persecute you." We must remember that the trials of this world are exercises for growth in virtue, a training ground for those who seek above all to imitate Christ in this life so as to live forever with him in the next, and opportunities to participate in the saving power of Christ. The Catechism tells us:

*"The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks." Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.""*²

—Catechism of the Catholic Church, Section #1816

As penitents, we are no strangers to suffering, and even in our small way seek it out by living the rule of St. Francis of 1221. What this accomplishes in the spiritual realm, we cannot know in this life. But we have the assurance of St. Francis and the example of Christ and his saints that by some mystery of grace, the little we do matters!

But there is another dimension to penance besides the simple practice of it. St. John of the Cross once said, "*And I saw the river over which every soul must pass to reach the*

² Matthew 10:32-33

kingdom of Heaven. And the name of that river was suffering....And I saw the boat which carries souls across the river, and the name of that boat was LOVE." This second dimension is one we should ponder deeply—that love is what makes the sufferings of this life not only bearable, but as the martyrs often testified, it can even make it sweet. How much we do is far less important than how much we love.

Our life of penance is a wonderful opportunity to practice suffering with love. Practice makes perfect as they say, and if we cannot suffer with love in small matters³, how will we do so if we are faced with persecution or even martyrdom? As someone who has been a professed member for four years, I know how easy it is to slip into a "routine" of penance. We penitents must consciously season our offerings with love. This becomes more imperative the more the world rejects the Christian. As Christ died for us while we were still sinners⁴, we too must be willing to suffer for sinners, and even for those who may be out to hurt or even destroy us. Christ died for us all. He is asking us to suffer for their souls, to mount the cross on their behalf as he did. In this way we strip the victory from the evil one, who counted those souls as his own. That is love, and that is the victory of the cross.

So, even though things may look bleak, we are not without hope! On the contrary. In joy or sorrow, in consternation or consolation, in life or death—for the Christian who knows how to suffer with love, all is gain, "for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."⁵

In all things—thanks be to God!

³ Matthew 25:23

⁴ Romans 5:8

⁵ 1 John 4:4

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

"It is time for the LORD to act; they have disobeyed your teaching." (Psalm 119:126)

"My child, can the Lord fail to act when his laws are mocked by so very many? Little one, if your God has not acted up to this point, is it not so that his mercy will have more time to act on souls? Those who are agents of mercy, those who have prayed, fasted, and offered sacrifices for souls have been a balm to my wounds. My children, would it surprise you if your Creator thanked you for this? The gratitude of the Creator to the creature is no small thing. Be assured that you will be rewarded for your sacrificial love tied to the cross. Many souls will be eternally grateful to those who have interceded on their behalf. But, my child, the day of mercy is nearing its end. Like a runner who puts on a final burst of speed at the end of the race, I ask my faithful ones to reach into the depths of their hearts at this time and see what more can be offered. I have asked much of you, my children, and now I ask more. Out of love for me and for poor sinners, what will you do?"

Jesus, merciful, generous, and just, show us what to do and then grant us the grace to do it. Without you, we cannot please you. Come Holy Spirit! Fill us with your gifts, so that we can put on a burst of speed in this final stretch. Show us clearly what you desire and make us willing to assist you out of love for you and for the souls you died to save. Holy Gloriana, pray for us! Mother of All Nations assist us. Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter



"Even in the midst of this life of tears and tribulations, what happiness, what great joy it is to realize that we are God's flock!"

—St. Augustine



FROM THE 'SPARROW'...Trust in God

Peace!

Many of us, as little sparrows, have shared the Lord's Supper since childhood.

But if we are honest, we must admit that this has not

brought us as close to Jesus and one another as we had hoped that it would. Why?

Perhaps it's because we tend to view the Lord's Supper as a meal: a time of receiving. We forget it is also a sacrifice: a time of giving and forgiving. We forget that unless we walk with Jesus in the shadows of Good

Friday (sacrifice), we won't be able to walk with him in the blazing sunlight of Easter (meal).

How faithfully, as little sparrows, are we walking with Jesus in the shadows of Good Friday? How might we walk even more faithfully?

"The effect of our receiving the body and blood of Christ is to change us into what we receive."

—Pope Saint Leo the Great

May the sacrifice you receive at Mass change you into Him!

Bob Hall BSP. Little Flower Chapter



MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

A brother goes home to the Lord...



With sadness we inform you that Brother Patrick Heath BSP, who vowed to the Rule at the retreat last year, died of leukemia on May 27th. Please pray for the repose of his soul.

The Rule prescribes:

RULE: ARTICLE 23

23. And if the ailing person depart from this life, it is to be published to the brothers and sisters who may be present in the city or place, so that they may gather for the funeral; and they are not to leave until the Mass has been celebrated and the body consigned to burial. Thereupon each member within eight days of the demise shall say for the soul of the deceased: a Mass, if he is a priest; fifty psalms, if he understands the Psalter,* or if not, then fifty Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at the end of each.

STATUTES: ARTICLE 23

a. If a member dies the other members of the Association in

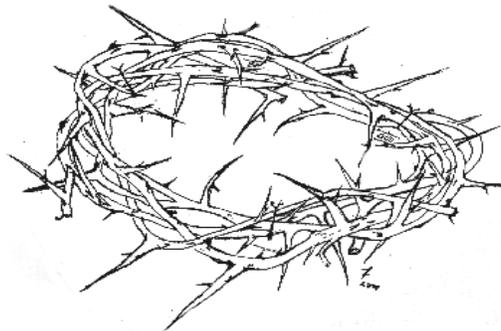
the area should gather for the funeral if distance, work and family commitments allow. They are not to leave until the Mass is celebrated and the body consigned to burial. Penitents are encouraged to designate someone they know to notify the BSP Administrators of their death so they can be prayed for.

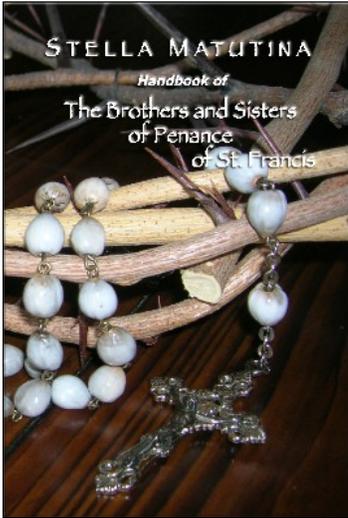
b. Within eight days of the demise, each member shall say for the soul of the deceased: a Mass, if a priest, otherwise fifty Psalms. If a member cannot read the Psalter, he or she may say fifty Our Father's with the words "May the souls of the faithful departed through the Mercy of God rest in peace" following each Our Father.

c. Penitents may, if they wish, add the ejaculation, "Lord, have mercy on _____'s soul" or the Glory be, after praying each psalm.

Thank you, and God bless you,

Bruce and Shelley





ANNOUNCING... THE BSP HANDBOOK IS NOW READY TO ORDER!

We are very pleased to announce that the BSP Handbook, titled ***Stella Matutina: Handbook of The Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis*** is now available for order. We have used a print-on-demand service at Lulu.com to print the book. This means we do not have to keep a stockpile of books, but customers order directly from Lulu, which prints them as they are ordered and ships them directly to the customer. This simplifies the ordering process for the administrators.

There is a link to the ordering page on our BSP Homepage. You will need a credit card or a Paypal account to order. Cost is \$10.00 plus shipping (\$3.99 for a single book).

If you will be at the retreat we will have a supply of handbooks there for purchase.

We have been eagerly awaiting this day, and thank God for putting all the pieces into place. May the Rule of 1221 lead many souls on the path to holiness.

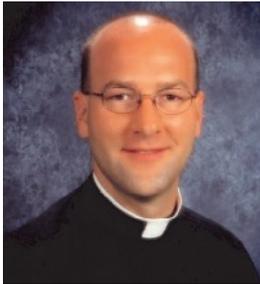
Bruce and Shelley Fahey, Administrators



BSP Retreat 2011 July 29-31, 2011



Imitating Our Lord in Prayer and Penance July 29-31, 2011



**Franciscan Retreat Center
16385 Saint Francis Lane
Prior Lake, MN 55372**

**Father Randal Kasel – Retreat Master
BISHOP LEE PICHE WILL CELEBRATE MASS ON SUNDAY MORNING**

Fr. Kasel serves as Parochial Administrator at the Church of St. Charles in Bayport, MN. He is also the Archdiocesan Director of the Legion of Mary. Father will speak on imitating Our Lord Jesus in the practice of prayer and penance. Emphasis will be given to the meaning of redemptive suffering as practiced by St. Francis of Assisi, and other Franciscan Saints.

Cost: \$150.00. (No one turned away for lack of funds.)

To reserve a place send \$25 to:

**BSP Retreat, c/o Paul Beery BSP, 2108 Pleasant Ave, #114, Minneapolis, MN 55404
For further information call: 612-871-2852 (Home); 612-730-4500 (Cell)**

**"Insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God
who has loved me and given himself up for me."**

(Galatians 2:20)

The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE OF ST. FRANCIS

A.k.a. BSP, is a non-profit Private Association of the Faithful, which is dedicated to renewing the ancient way of penance as contained in the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of 1221 for lay people in our modern world. We have the blessing of the Catholic Church to do this through several of its Archbishops, Bishops, and priests. If you are bound by another Rule of life in another profession of the way of St. Francis that does not permit you to enter other religious families you are nonetheless invited to add the elements of this beautiful way of life that Saint Francis of Assisi gave us to the lifestyle of your profession.

All members, and Franciscans, are welcome to submit articles for consideration for inclusion in this newsletter if they are directed towards the spiritual formation of members or are the outgrowth of the lifestyle of the Association. Just send them to the BSP at minncc@aol.com. Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends or neighbors. It is intended to be the primary monthly communication of the Association, and ongoing formation for all members and friends. And if you can find it in your heart and in your budget remember that donations to the BSP are used strictly to promote the lifestyle and are tax deductible.

We remain, always, sincerely yours in the love of Jesus Christ!

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP, Editors

Welcome to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance!

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



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