

"FOLLOW ME!"

Luke 9:23



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

January 2011

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter II—Francis gives himself completely to God and rebuilds three churches.



5. Now that he was free from the bonds of all earthly desires in his disregard for the world, Francis left the town and sought out a place where he could be alone, without a care in the world. There in solitude and silence he would be able to hear God's secret revelations.

Then as he was walking through the forest joyfully singing in French and praising God, he was suddenly set upon by robbers. They threatened him and asked him who he was but

he replied intrepidly with the prophetic words, "I am the herald of a great King." Then they beat him and threw him into a ditch full of snow telling him, "Lie there, rustic herald of God." With that they made off and Francis jumped from the ditch, full of joy, and made the woods re-echo with his praise to the Creator of all.

6. Eventually he reached a neighboring monastery where he begged an alms and received it without anyone recognizing him or paying attention to him. Then he went on to Gubbio where he was recognized by an old friend

and made welcome and there he got an old coat which he accepted like one of God's poor. After that, in his love for true humility, he devoted himself to the lepers and lived with them, waiting on them all, for the love of God. He washed their feet and bound up their sores, drawing off the pus and wiping them clean. He was extraordinarily devoted to them and he kissed their wounds. He was soon to play a part worthy of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel.

As a reward, God endowed him with such power to heal that his influence over ills of soul or body was miraculous. For example—to mention only one of the many instances which occurred as his name became better known—there was a man from the neighborhood of Spoleto who suffered from a disease which had eaten away his lips and his cheek. The doctors could do nothing for him and he made a pilgrimage to Rome to invoke the intercession of the apostles. As he was on his way home, he met St. Francis. He wanted to kiss the saint's footsteps in his devotion, but Francis would not allow that and he kissed him on the mouth. In his compassion he touched the horrible sore with his lips and immediately the disease disappeared and the sick man was restored to health. It is hard to say which we should admire most, his wonderful condescension in making such a gesture, or his exceptional power in performing this miracle.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier: Mary, Mother of God



In the first reading tonight from the Book of Numbers, we heard God telling Moses the way that he is to bless the people of Israel. Part of that blessing says, "The Lord let His face shine upon you and be gracious to you! The Lord look kindly upon you and give you peace!" That is precisely what we celebrate today: the fullness of

God's blessing in this manner, that God has indeed let His face shine upon us. As Saint Paul says, "In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom from the law all those who were subjected to it so that we could receive our status as adopted sons."

The only way that we can receive that status is by looking upon the face of Christ, by looking upon the Lord because He has let His face shine upon us. It is not because of any worthiness of our own; it is purely a gift from God because He loves us infinitely. That is something each one of us needs to be able to accept. When we look at the feast that we celebrate today, the Divine Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, how grateful we need to be for this incredible woman, the most humble creature that God ever made, and the one that He has exalted now above all creation. To this beautiful young woman, the angel Gabriel was sent, and she said 'yes'.

Now we have difficulty accepting that God would even come into this world and that He would die for us, that He would want us to be part of Himself, that He would choose us from all humanity to be incorporated into His Mystical Body to be members of Christ, to share in His life. But that is exactly what we heard in the second reading. It was not merely that, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son to ransom us; that was not enough for God. Now God has made us His own sons and daughters, members of Jesus Christ. He has given us His Holy Spirit to dwell within us, welling up within us to cry out "Abba, Father!"

And in recognizing the fatherhood of God we inherently recognize the motherhood of Mary, the spiritual maternity of Our Lady. She is the Mother of God. She is also the mother of all of us who are members of the Son of God. Today in a special way we celebrate the Divine Maternity of Our Lady, but the Church also reminds us of the spiritual maternity of Mary: that each one of us is a child of Mary, each one of us is a member of Christ, each one of us is a son or daughter of God. We are heirs with Christ to the eternal glory of God Himself where we will be able to look upon the face of God for all eternity. The blessing that God told Moses to give to the people of Israel will be ours in its fullness.

We are able to gaze upon the face of Christ, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. And yet, we are not able to see Him face-to-face. He is hidden, if you will, under the form of bread in the Blessed Sacrament. Yet He has called each one of us to the glory which He has won for us, the glory to be able to look upon the face of His heavenly Father, as well as that of His own beautiful countenance. We will be able to look upon the face of Christ and glorify Him for eternity and God will indeed bless us and be gracious to us.

We struggle with that. To be able to hear those things, they are so beautiful and yet we recognize that we are not worthy of them—so we doubt. We doubt whether it is really true; we doubt whether God can love us that much; we doubt whether or not it could happen within us. But all we need to do in the face of our doubts is to look back 2,000 years ago to a beautiful young woman in the presence of an angel: The angel invites her to be the Mother of God. Imagine what happened in the heart of Our Lady. Of course, we have all the sin and all the problems and she did not have that—she was humble, most of us are not. She recognized what God wanted to do within her. We see that God has given us His grace. We see that He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and we see the glory that He has called us to, but imagine if an angel appeared to you and asked you to do something even remotely similar to what he asked of Our Lady. Who of us would say yes? We would come up with all the grand justifications of why this cannot happen just as we continue to do now—why God cannot really love us and call us to Himself and hold out heaven for us and allow us to be His sons and daughters and share in His life and share in His glory and behold Him face-to-face one day. We have trouble believing that. Yet we have absolute faith—and thanks be to God for that faith—that what Mary did was real: that she brought God to birth in human form, that she looked upon the face of God in that beautiful little face of a baby who is God, that she worshiped and glorified God from the first moment of her conception, and when she looked upon her own little tiny infant Son she continued to worship God in the person of her Son.

Mary said yes to God. And we owe to her an infinite debt of gratitude because were it not for her fiat when the angel asked her if she would be willing to be the Mother of God, none of us would be saved, none of us would have the opportunity to be freed from our sins so that we could be able to glorify God forever. We would not have Jesus Christ and we would not know the forgiveness of sin. We would not know the love of God in human form. All of that was dependent on the answer of a human woman.

And now God holds out to you an invitation to say yes, just as Our Lady did. Not to conceive Christ within the

womb, for those who are female, but rather, to be able to accept the invitation of God for what He wants to do in your heart, in your soul, just as Our Lady said yes and conceived Christ first in her heart before she could ever conceive Him in her womb. She had to believe and she had to accept. In the face of all the doubts, in the face of all the things that did not make sense—How could God be man? How could God, who created me, be created in me? How could God, who does not have a beginning, suddenly have a beginning? How could a Person who is divine suddenly become human? How could One who is a little human baby be the Infinite and Almighty God?—Mary said yes: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word."

And so today, as the Lord holds out for you the beautiful gift of divine son-ship which was already given to you at the moment you were baptized, He is asking, not that you keep it at an arm's distance but that you let it in, that you shape your life around the reality of who you already are. Jesus looked at Thomas in the face of all his doubts and He said, "Doubt no longer, but believe." That is exactly what He says to each one of us tonight: "Doubt no longer, but believe." You are a member of Jesus Christ. You share in the divine life. You have been incorporated into the very essence of God. You are called to Heaven. You are called to holiness in this life. That is your dignity.

That is why you can call out, inspired by the Holy Spirit "Father!" Think of what that means to call God "Father". In just a few moments, we will all pray that together in the beautiful words that Jesus gave to us: Our Father. When the children of a family sit around the home, sit around the table and talk about their father, it is because they all recognize that they are children of their father, the same father. We call God "Our Father" because we are all His children. Do not keep that out there somewhere—let it in.

The easiest way to allow it in is to go to your mother. She is your mother. From the Cross, Jesus gave you to her, and He gave her to you. Look up at the crucifix and look at Our Lady standing right beneath it. Hear Our Lord speak in your heart: "Behold your mother." Your mother. She is your mother and she wants to lead you to her Son. She wants to incorporate you into the eternity of God. She wants you to be able to join her in praising God for all eternity. She wants you to be able to look upon the beautiful countenance of her Son. She wants you to share in the same mystery that took place within her and that she was able to look upon from the time that He was a little baby until the day that He was taken from her in this world. Now she has gone forth to look upon Him for all eternity. She wants you to be part of that.

And it is not very far from you. All you need to do is look at why you are here tonight. You can ask yourself where most of your family and friends are on this evening. They are probably out doing something which is not very virtuous. Some may, in fact, be steeped in mortal sin right now: willful drunkenness and all kinds of

debauchery—in mortal sin. But you have chosen to come and be with God. You chose to reject the worldly ways which celebrate this evening, and you have come to the true celebration. Not what this world has [done in making] the beautiful word "celebration" equal with a party—that is not a celebration—but to be able to celebrate Christ and to be able to celebrate His mother on this glorious day. What a beautiful way to start the New Year. For those of you who have made your consecration to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I would strongly urge you on this day to renew that consecration. And if you have not consecrated yourself to Jesus through Mary, I strongly recommend that you do so as soon as possible.

Today, as we celebrate her divine maternity, we recognize the love of God in human form. God who is with us and will not abandon us, God who loves us so much that He took on our human nature. As Saint Paul says, "He took the form of a slave,"—the one who is Master of all. We can trust Him. We can rely on Him. We can count on Him and never doubt. We should banish all doubts from our minds and keep our hearts focused on Jesus. Forget trying to make sense of it because it is not going to happen. Just accept.

When the angel told Mary that the power of the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and she would conceive, and the Son within her womb would be God, she simply said yes. It is an infinite mystery. Mary did not understand. We do not understand. All we can do is say yes. Let God work in your heart. Let Him call you. Let what is happening in your heart tonight continue, not only this night and this year, but throughout your whole life. Allow your life to be one of prayer, prayer with Our Lady, prayer focused on the face in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, united with her, gazing on the face of the Lord. That is what she wants for you, she who is your mother.

Remember what she said to Blessed Juan Diego 470 years ago, those beautiful words: "Am I not here, who am your mother?" Jesus is here with us and Mary is here with us. We have nothing to fear, but rather, we simply need to be filled with grace and gratitude. Look to them and remain with them and trust. "Do not let your hearts be troubled," Jesus said. And as we celebrate this glorious feast of the Divine Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we recognize that we have no reason to be troubled about anything. God is with us. All things happen according to His plan, in His way.

When we look back 2,000 years ago and see the events that were taking place in and around the Holy Land—the Roman soldiers who had taken over, the way that the Jewish faith was not being lived by most of the people and even by most of the priests: it was a laughingstock, it was a mockery—in the midst of that God found a faithful virgin and she conceived and bore His Son. He found a faithful priest in Zechariah. He found Simeon and Anna, who were holy and faithful. We can look at all that 2,000 years ago and, from the objective birds eye view that we now have, we can see how God used all of that to bring about this greatest good of the Incarnation of His Son.

It is no different today. God has found you, holy and good. And He brings His Son to you, born of the Virgin Mary, born under the law to deliver from the law all those who were subjected to it so that we can enjoy the freedom of the children of God. That is the glory that He is calling you to. If we look around the world, we see the exact same kind of setup that we saw 2,000 years ago. God will use it all for His greater glory and to bring about an even greater event than what took place 2,000 years ago. All we need to do is trust and allow Our Lady to work. God worked the greatest miracle that humanity has ever known through Our Lady. And He continues to work through His mother in each one of us because she is our mother.

So we go to Our Lady, to our mother. We consecrate ourselves to her and we allow her to lead us in the path that her Son has laid out. We listen and we obey the words of our mother when she points to her Son and looks at us and says, "Do whatever He tells you." Whatever He tells you. It does not matter if it makes sense to you or not, just trust and do it. That is all that He is asking. He is God. He is not going to ask you to anything that will be bad for you. He is not going to ask you to do anything that will violate you. He wants only the very best for you. "Doubt no longer, but believe," and

"Do whatever He tells you." Learn from your mother, and when God calls you, say yes. Do not think that it has to be something extraordinary like what happened to Our Lady; chances are that an angel is not going to appear to you and ask you to do something extraordinary for God.

But God is calling you. God has called you from the moment of your Baptism. God is calling you now. You would not be here tonight if God did not call you here. Say yes. You said yes to Him already tonight to come here to be with Him. But now say yes with your life. Not just for a few hours, but for your whole life and for all eternity. When Our Lady said yes to the angel, she said yes to God and she said yes to everything that would follow from it. God is calling you in the depth of your heart, in the depth of your being. He is calling you by name. Our Lady simply says, "Do whatever He tells you." We learn from her to say *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*—Be it done unto me according to Thy word. That is all that is being asked. Say yes. Are we willing to do it, to allow God to be gracious to us and to bless us and to allow His face to shine upon us? That is what He is holding out to you right now. Say yes and allow the Lord to be born within your heart as He was in Our Lady's. And look upon the face of God and glorify Him with your whole being.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...OUR ROLES AND THE NEW YEAR



As we approach the new year let us examine our roles in this Association.

Our role as Administrators is to try to keep everything together in this Association; to be a guide for all who want to live this life, and a source of information on this lifestyle for all who are interested. In the spirit of this obligation we try hard to be here for everyone who has a question, or an

interest, in looking into this lifestyle for themselves. It is our duty to maintain contact with the hierarchy of the Church so as to be sure that all we do is canonically correct and totally acceptable, and that all that is being taught and discussed in this Association is in keeping with what the Church teaches.

All of us together need to breath for the Association. To inhale the life that St. Francis gave us and breath it across the world, for the love of the Lord and because he

asked us to do that. We all need to try to be friends to each other. Faithful to the call we received from the Lord to spread the word on the lifestyle that St. Francis gave the laity. To let the world know that this is a holy way of life and that we all benefit from living it. The world, our families and us, its members. We should in fact pray for everyone, and hold everyone in the Association up to God. To ask His assistance for all of us to live the life that He gave us. That we might all become just a little more like Saints, and fly to God.

We all need to strive to fearlessly maintain basic communications with each other as we can so that everyone is aware of who we are and what we are about. We should all strive to be contact people for the BSP within the Church and to serve to provide a fundamental awareness and a good message to the leaders of the Church who ask about the Association.

This lifestyle is by its nature and call holy. We should share that with others as we can. Our Rule has been given to us all by a great Saint. A man who walked among us and told us exactly how we had to live to become holy. A man who got this life from Christ, for us.

Finally, all of our roles are to become ever-stronger and more professional in how we reach out to others. To encourage and grow the Association and to spread it faithfully across the planet with the objective of giving again to this age what St. Francis gave the world, for the love of God and neighbor.

All of that having been said, the role we all share is to grow in the life of penance, to make it our own, to become the Rule. We all need to grow in knowledge of the way of penance, and to learn to love it. In loving it to lead it, as best we can, to make it our own and make it work in our lives so that we walk in the way of penance, and covert ourselves from being focused on the world and its call to being focused on the Lord and His call. For His is the call of every Christian and this Rule will guide us to do that in a very strong and vital manner. God has called us all to live this Rule or we would not be trying to do it.

We all need to pray for everyone in the Association, that we might truly become a family in Christ—a holy family, a family that is focused on its God and Father, its Brother and Lord, Jesus Christ, and living in the true Spirit of God's love. We all need to communicate with each other or others interested in the Rule. We do that primarily through prayer, for conversation is useful but difficult when we are scattered as we now are. We all will benefit

from seeing that to live the life is holy and good. Living this life is the essential element of being a brother or sister of penance by reason of the Rule that St. Francis gave us.

Wherever we are in formation, and especially if we are professed, our role is to make this life our own, and to become, in one way or the other, the Rule we say we want to live. In becoming the Rule we will live the Rule. The Rule will become our life, and our life will be lived for the Lord. In living it we become a light for Christ and an example to the world. In this way we will find ways to live this life invisibly for the love of God and good of our souls and the souls of all around us. To become a sacrifice in and of ourselves, a victim soul, whose purpose in life is to gain heaven and the beatific vision and to bring others to God with us.

As the new year dawns let us all take time to examine our life and role in the BSP. Let us all make a resolution to live the Rule more perfectly, more invisibly, and with the intention in mind that St. Francis had for us. To save our souls and those of others. To please God in thought word and deed, and to give to the world an example that a holy life is not a negative life.

Happy New Year! May your coming year be filled with the joy, peace, and grace of our God.

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP
Administrators, Minnesota



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery BSP

"Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against, and a sword will pierce through your own soul also, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed.'"
(Luke 2:33)



Fr. Gobbi gives us the following quote from our Blessed Mother on the birth of her Son Jesus Christ:

"As for myself, I am absorbed in a profound rapture; the face of the Father is revealed to me, and I contemplate the Divine

Mystery of His merciful love; the Word, who has taken human form in my virginal womb, becomes present in my motherly arms as a newborn babe; the Holy Spirit looks with pleasure on the fruit of His overshadowing. Beloved children, live with me in this profound

rapture throughout this Holy Night. It is Love which is born into the world consumed with hatred. It is Light which dawns upon the long season of deep darkness. It is the awaited reconciliation between a lost humanity and its Lord who loves and redeems it. It is Peace which comes down from heaven upon all men of goodwill. Enter with me into the mystery of this Holy Night. For the great trial has now arrived for all. Violence and hatred are bringing death to the world. A deep darkness enwraps this humanity, which no longer sees light. The Covenant is again broken by men who have openly rebelled against their God. And so, once

again, I invite you to let yourself be carried by me into the mystery of this Holy Night. And then, like Joseph, exert yourself earnestly to open up the souls and hearts of men to receive Jesus in His second coming. And do not allow yourself to be taken up with vain and useless preoccupations, but keep watchful with me in prayer in the expectation of His now closely approaching return in glory.”

This quote perfectly encapsulates the role of our Blessed Mother in Salvation History, as well as in each of our individual lives. There is such an intimate union between Jesus and Mary that a sword pierced her own soul also that “thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” Her motherly heart is still attempting to reach and warn her children two thousand years after the miraculous birth of our Lord and Savior.

Each of the following phrases as especially worthy of contemplative prayer.

I am absorbed in a profound rapture.

The face of the Father is revealed to me.

I contemplate the Divine Mystery of His merciful love.

The Word becomes present in my motherly arms as a newborn babe.

The Holy Spirit looks with pleasure on the fruit of His overshadowing.

Beloved children, live with me in this profound rapture throughout this night.

It is Love which is born into the world consumed with hatred.

It is the awaited reconciliation between a lost humanity and its Lord who loves and redeems it.

It is Peace which comes down from heaven upon all men of goodwill.

Enter with me into the mystery of this Holy Night, for the great trial has now arrived for all.

The Covenant is again broken by men who have openly rebelled against their God.

Exert yourself earnestly to open up the souls and hearts of men to receive Jesus in His second coming.

Keep watchful with me in prayer in the expectation of His now closely approaching return in glory.

Our holy father Francis realized the role the Blessed Virgin Mary has been given by the will of God. From the *Second Life of Francis* by Thomas of Celano:

“Of Francis devotion to our Lady, to whom in particular he entrusted his order:

“Toward the Mother of Jesus he was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of majesty our brother. He sang special ‘Praises’ to her, poured out prayers to her, offered her his affections, so many and so great that the tongue of man cannot recount them. But what delights us most, he made her the advocate of the Order and placed under her wings the sons he was about to leave that she might cherish them and protect them to the end —Hail, advocate of the poor!”

Francis also penned the following poem entitled: **Praises of the Blessed Virgin.**

I greet you, Lady, holy Queen,

Holy Mary, Mother of God, Virgin who became the Church,

Chosen by the most Holy Father of heaven;

Consecrated to holiness through His most Holy and Beloved Son

And the Holy Spirit the Comforter;

In you was and is the whole fullness of grace and everything that is good.

I greet you, His princely dwelling.

I greet you, the tent of His Covenant.

I greet you, His habitation.

I greet you, His garment.

I greet you, His handmaid.

I greet you, His Mother,

With all the holy virtues, which through the grace and light of the Holy Spirit

Descend unto the hearts of believers,

To make believers of unbelievers for God.

Paul Beery BSP - Morning Star Chapter - Minnesota



A MEDITATION by Janet Klasson BSP

From the Gospel Reading of the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time:

**"I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
(Isaiah 49:6)**



Recently in his Christmas address to the Roman Curia December 20, the Holy Father had some very strong words in reference to the future of modern society. He compared it to the decline of the Roman Empire and also added: "The very future of the world is at stake."

"Excita, Domine, potentiam tuam, et veni (Awaken your power, Lord, and come). Repeatedly during the season of Advent the Church's liturgy prays in these or similar words. They are invocations that were probably formulated as the Roman Empire was in decline. The disintegration of the key principles of law and of the fundamental moral attitudes underpinning them burst open the dams which until that time had protected peaceful coexistence among peoples. The sun was setting over an entire world. Frequent natural disasters further increased this sense of insecurity. There was no power in sight that could put a stop to this decline. All the more insistent, then, was the invocation of the power of God: the plea that he might come and protect his people from all these threats.

"Excita, Domine, potentiam tuam, et veni. Today too, we have many reasons to associate ourselves with this Advent prayer of the Church. For all its new hopes and possibilities, our world is at the same time troubled by the sense that moral consensus is collapsing, consensus without which juridical and political structures cannot function. Consequently the forces mobilized for the defence of such structures seem doomed to failure."

The days are dark indeed--what will it be like when the sun has fully set? Those whose hope is set in man-made structures will have unimaginable difficulty. But those whose hope is set in the eternal God who saves, will always have a star to guide them. Not only that, but as the Scripture passage above says, they will BE a light to the nations.

At all times and in all ages, Christians have been light in the world. But it is only when all the false lights have been extinguished that the true light can do its best work. That is why we must not fear the days to come. God's power is at its best in weakness, as St. Paul tells us. We must not fear our own weakness, and we must

not fear the darkness. Our Light is Christ himself shining in us and through us.

However, if we want to reflect fully the light of Christ, the lens of our lamp must be unclouded by sin or attachments. Think of these things as clutter piled in front of the window; the more there is, the less light gets through. Holy detachment and abandonment to the will of God in all things will keep us grounded and useful in the time to come. It is crucial. Our heavenly light can never be extinguished, so let us "seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." (Col. 3:1)

On a Catholic Classics website, I recently came across a book called Holy Abandonment by Rev. Dom Vitalis Lehodey, O.C.R., published by Tan Books. The entire book may be read here: <http://www.catholictradition.org/Classics/holy-abandonment.htm>. I would love to quote the entire chapter on detachment, but in the interest of brevity I will only excerpt the section that mentions mortification and penance. However, I recommend that you read the entire chapter if you can, or better yet the whole book.

"All who desire to reach holy abandonment must hold in high esteem Christian mortification, by whatever name it may be called, whether abnegation or renunciation, the spirit of sacrifice, or the love of the cross. They will have to practise it to the best of their power, and with untiring perseverance, in order to attain thereby to perfect abandonment and to maintain themselves constantly therein. Father Roothaan had good reason to say: 'It would be useless without mortification to endeavour to reach indifference, because it is by means of mortification alone, or chiefly, that we can make ourselves and prove ourselves indifferent.'"

The way of penance, the Rule of 1221, is a great gift to us personally and to the world generally. The more people that embrace the life of penance, the brighter the light will be that shines in the darkness. Prayer, penance, and mortification is spiritual medicine for the world, balm for the wounds of diseased humanity. Let us practice our rule to the best of our ability, with untiring perseverance. Then, when all the false lights have been extinguished, the light of Christ shining through us will draw souls like moths to a flame. In the darkness, the Light will triumph. Be not afraid!

Janet Klasson BSP - Divine Mercy Chapter - Canada

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com December 23, 2010

**"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them a light has shone."
(Isaiah 9:1)**

"My beloved, how my heart quickens when I think of the illumination that is coming to the world. Never before in human history has such a grace been granted to humankind. At the Incarnation, the Light of the World was veiled, but at the Illumination, each heart will see Truth come in the flesh. The scales will fall from their eyes and each heart will be invited to drink from the well of mercy. How I long for all my children to enter into this well with complete humility and abandonment. Pray, dear souls! The evil one will be ready to pounce on unsuspecting hearts. The battle is not over at the

Illumination. Continue on your mission of fasting and prayer."

Jesus, Light of the World, we wait in joyful hope for the grace of the Illumination, and offer anew in the Divine Will every prayer and sacrifice ever made on behalf of souls, especially those made by the Holy Family. May their love for souls bear unlimited fruit at the Illumination and may all souls find refuge in the Immaculate Heart. Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

Author: Janet Klasson

FROM THE 'SPARROW'

There is a very old religious story that concerns a woman who stopped going to church. One day Franciscan Friar, who was the pastor of the church she had abandoned, went to her house and asked to come in and sit with her by the fireplace.

For a long time, neither spoke. Then the Friar picked up some tongs, took a glowing coal from the fireplace, and set it on the hearth. As the two watched, the coal slowly lost its glow and died. A few minutes later, the old woman said, "I understand. I'll come back to church."

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Is there anyone who has been cut off from Jesus whom you might help, as the Friar helped the old woman? What might you do to help him or her?

"He drew a circle that shut me out--
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took him in."

Edwin Markham "Outwitted"

May you put the fire of Jesus back in someone's life!

Bob Hall, BSP



MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION

We have a new inquirer from Italy. Pray he stays with us! We would love to have the BSP promoted across Italy where St. Francis lived!

We will meet with Bishop Paul Sirba of the diocese of Duluth this month we hope, to inform him about the BSP. We have heard from him already in response to an opening letter to him earlier and He has examined the BSP Web page and message and is positive on our commitment. More later after we meet with him. As the

opportunity presents itself to you feel free to inform your bishop about the Association. If you need information to use ask us and we will send you some documents that are useful for this purpose. Contact us via minncc@aol.com or by postal mail to THE BSP, 65774 County Road 31, Northome, MN. 56661.

We have a new inquirer who is in prison for life in North Carolina. He is a Novice 3 already from lessons he has already done on his own with the approval of Father

Tony, one of our Visitors. He is one of two prisoners in the Federal system who are active in the BSP and can now remain in contact with us via email through a Federal communication system. He is seeking to reform his life using the Rule of 1221 and the BSP as his guides. Please keep these two men in your prayers. One is Bob Hall who writes as the Sparrow and we often include his articles in this newsletter and his causes on our prayer list on the forums.

This past month we received almost a dozen new inquirers into the BSP, including several from Escondido, California where we have a very strong developing Chapter thanks to Chris O'Donnell and several very

committed members. Let us keep each these people in prayer for most who come to us leave without entering formation. The demands of the life of penance of our Rule are very challenging.

Please keep the Chapters and the Chapter leaders in the BSP in your prayers. In the long run the Chapters are the future of the Association.

Let us always pray for each other and the future of our little Association.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!

Bruce and Shelley
Administrators



"God wills only our good; God loves us more than anybody else can or does love us. His will is that no one should lose his soul, that everyone should save and sanctify his soul: "Not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance (2 Peter 3:9)." "This is the will of God, your sanctification (1 Thes. 4:3)." God has made the attainment of our happiness, His glory. Since He is by His nature infinite goodness, and since as St. Leo says goodness is diffusive of itself, God has a supreme desire to make us sharers of His goods and of His happiness. If then He sends us suffering in this life, it is for our own good: "All things work together unto good (Rom. 8:28)." Even chastisements come to us, not to crush us, but to make us mend our ways and save our souls: "Let us believe that these scourges of the Lord have happened for our amendment and not for our destruction (Judith 8:27)."

(St. Alphonsus Liguori, *Uniformity with God's Will*)

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!



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