



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

RETREAT ISSUE 2011



Thirty-eight persons attended the retreat this year led by Fr. Randal Kasel (front row, third from left) who spoke on the theme of the retreat, "Imitating the Lord in Prayer and Penance." BSP members were joined by many beautiful souls who desired to grow into a deeper union with God. Fr. Kasel's talks were very edifying, a true feast for the heart. (More retreat photos are included elsewhere in the newsletter.)

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

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



8. When he saw that the number of friars was slowly increasing, Francis wrote a short, simple, rule of life for himself and his companions. This was based on an unshakeable foundation, the following of the Gospel, and to this he added a limited number of other prescriptions, such as seemed necessary for their life in common. He was anxious to have what he had written approved by the pope, and present himself with his companions before the Apostolic See. God looked with favor upon his desire and comforted the friars,

who were frightened at the thought of their inexperience, by showing Francis the following vision. It seemed to him that he was walking along a road beside which grew a tall tree and as he drew near he stopped to admire its height. All of a sudden, he felt himself lifted up into the air by God's power, so that he was able to grasp the top of the tree and bend it down to the ground without the slightest difficulty. Full of God as he was, Francis immediately realized that the vision was a prophecy of the way the pope would condescend to his will and he was overjoyed. He spoke to the friars encouragingly and then set out with them on the journey.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier: Seeking Our Beloved

In the readings today, we see the fruit of love and perseverance. In the first reading from the Song of Songs, we hear about the bride

who seeks her beloved. First, she seeks him lying on her bed, but is unable to find him. So then she gets up and says, "I'm going to walk around the city and see if I can find him." She is unable to find him anywhere. She comes upon the watchmen and asks them, "Have you seen him whom my heart loves?" They did not know where he was either. Finally, then, she simply turns around and there he is.

Now one could say, "Well, if she would have just sat at home she would have been just fine; he would have been there." That is not the case. She had to go looking. She had to put her heart into seeking the one whom she loved. It was not enough just to lie there and think, "He'll take care of it; he'll come to me." That is, unfortunately, what lots of people tend to think in the prayer life: "I don't really have to work at this; God will do the whole thing. I can just sit here and He'll take care of it." It does not work that way. It is true that maybe in the majority of our lives, at some point, God Himself has intervened to turn us around and get things on track. But then He requires that we seek Him. It is not enough just to sit back and say, "Well, He'll find me. He knows where I am." The question is not whether He knows where we are; the question is do we know where He is? We need to seek Him with our whole heart and soul and strength. We need to put everything we have into it, just like the bride in the Song of Songs.

That is what we see with Saint Mary Magdalene, which is why the Church has given to us that reading for today. She is the one who was there at the foot of the Cross, persevering with the Lord. She is the one who was willing, even before the Cross, to be counted with the Lord and willing to die with Him if that is what it was going to take. When the rest of the crowd was crying out for Barabbas, there she was crying out for the Lord. Now after the point of His death, she is the first one out of bed before the sun comes up and heading for the tomb to be where Jesus is. But she could not find Him because He was not there. And she saw Him. She went and found Peter and John, and they

came to the tomb. They looked in and saw the cloths laying around and they believed - and they left. But Mary Magdalene stayed at the tomb and she prayed - and her perseverance was rewarded. She sought Him whom her heart loved. Finally, she simply turned and there He was - even when she did not know Him, thinking He was the gardener. But finally, He called her name and she recognized Him.

So it will be for each one of us, the fruit of our perseverance, the fruit of our searching and seeking the Lord with our whole heart. How often, day after day after day, we go to prayer, sometimes month after month and year after year, and it is just dry. The Lord seems nowhere to be found. Then one day, suddenly, you simply turn and there He is, the One whom your heart has been seeking all this time. But that seeking was necessary because it purifies the heart and it prepares the heart for greater union with the Beloved.

And so it is not that the Lord has abandoned us, but rather, what He does is He allows our heart to long with even greater desire for union with Him. He tests us to find out how much we really want it. If He is right there with consolation everyday, that does not require any love on our part; it is very easy and it is kind of pleasant and fun. But when we have to seek Him and we have to make the determination: "What is most important in my life is union with Jesus Christ, and I will do whatever it requires to achieve that union" that is when He will reward us. Not just simply making that mental point today and saying, "Okay, I'll do whatever it takes," but carrying it out, persevering, being diligent in prayer, seeking Him, loving Him, and growing to the point where we truly can say, "He is Him whom my heart loves." When we are demonstrating that and our heart is truly prepared to be one with the One whom our heart loves then He will be there and united ourselves with Himself.

That is what Saint Mary Magdalene experienced. That is what every one of the saints has experienced throughout the years. And it is exactly what each one of us can experience if we are willing to make Him the Beloved of our hearts, persevere in prayer, and do whatever it takes to find Him.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...The Retreat Talks...A Summary



Fr. Randal Kasel, our retreat master this year, has a strong devotion to all of the Saints, but especially to St. Lawrence of Brindisi, who was a Capuchin that lived in 16th century Italy. What follows are key comments on the life of St. Lawrence as given to us by Fr. Kasel, and the key points of his four retreat talks.

St. Lawrence of Brindisi was an incredible servant of God and was remarkable from his birth for the spiritual favors bestowed on him. He was born in 1559, in Brindisi, which is in the southern part of the Italian 'boot'. By the time he was six years old he showed the ability to preach and teach about the things of God. When he was only 16 years old he professed in the Capuchin Order, and demonstrated himself as a powerful preacher of the Gospels, such that he was made chaplain of the Imperial army.

As the chaplain of the Imperial army he fought on the side of the Christian soldiers when they mounted a campaign against 80,000 Muslims who were invading Europe. They attacked the Muslim army with only 18,000 Christian soldiers! St. Lawrence led the charge on a horse at the head of the army carrying only a crucifix, which he held out in front of him as his weapon. He had no other weapons of any kind. He was miraculously protected throughout the ensuing battles, and the Christian army defeated the invading Muslims!

Due in part to this incredible victory he was elected as Vicar General of the Capuchins. For three years he went to Germany and he persuaded many Protestants to return to the Faith as the Protestant revolution was in full swing. He focused his talks on finding God within our own hearts, and that made his persuasions very effective.

St. Lawrence died in Lisbon on the day he was born. He was born on July 22, 1559 and he died on July 22, 1619 at the age of 60. He had a very close relationship to Mary for all of his life and often said "no blessing comes to us except through Mary." St. Lawrence of Brindisi is a wonderful Franciscan Saint to appeal to in our prayers.

Father Kasel spoke often of St. Francis, and other Saints, too. He called the retreatants to remember St. Francis and the things that happened to him, so we can reflect better on his message to us and our Rule.

St. Francis was the son of a rich merchant, and when he began to repent and reform his life he began to 'thirst' for Christ. The main turning point in the conversion of St. Francis was when he kissed a leper. He had always feared the lepers and found them repulsive, but after obeying a call to kiss a certain leper against his own will, he soon realized he had kissed not a leper but the Lord. This single incident began his conversion in earnest. He turned to Christ in his heart and asked the Lord what he wanted him to do. You will recall that when he did this he was instructed to rebuild the Church and so, misunderstanding the call, he rebuilt several churches in the area before he realized that the call was to rebuild the Catholic church from within. Once he understood what the Lord wanted he began the mission in earnest, and we know where that led. He established Three Orders; the First, or friars, the Second, for the ladies of God, and the Third Order for the laity. The BSP is promoting the Rule that he gave his Third Order. So, we earnestly ask for the prayers and intercession of St. Francis to become all we can be for God.

Our actions of penance must have the quality of what suffering we bring to Christ. Our Lady accepted all the suffering God sent her, patiently and completely. St. Francis and St. Clare did too Christ is the firstborn of all creation, by God's will, and everything is dependent on, and has meaning in, Jesus. God the Father loves our humanity because of His Son and has ordained that all things must be subject to His Son.

In the human heart a spot is reserved for God. God is utterly

near us in our hearts, and He is active always in searching us out! In our hearts we are continuously reminded of our need for God. Our hearts are a place without end, condition, or limit and in our hearts we need to prepare a place for God and the love of God. His love is poured out on us by the Holy Spirit. We need to go to this 'room' to pray, within ourselves. This is the 'room' that Jesus refers to in Scripture when he says we should go to 'our room' to pray. God awaits us there.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says that 'prayer comes from the heart' a thousand times more than from any place else, and that the heart is the place where God dwells...a place of encounter and covenant.

There are several types of movements in our heart and three levels. The three levels of our heart are our thoughts, our feelings, and our desires. Thoughts are surface level, transitory, but they bring a certain happiness. Feelings are from our inner attitudes; our DNA, and are dependent on how deep our thoughts are. The deeper the thoughts the deeper the feelings. Finally, our desires form based on our thoughts and feelings, and they affect our relationship with God more than anything else. What do we desire? That is the ultimate question, and key to our relationship with God. So, we need to guard our thoughts and feelings and keep them focused on God all the time so our desires become more and more centered on God. This opens the door to a face to face and wonderful relationship with God.

Thoughts, feelings, and desires provide consolation to us at three levels too. At the base level we stay focused on simple matters, some of which are quite superficial. Like the weather, or a good book, and we

feel good about that. As we move deeper into our hearts we deal with deeper and often complex human subjects, like friendships and human relationships or support from friends. Deeply human and serious matters that give us joy. Finally, as we mature spiritually, we go deeper into our hearts and lives and we concern ourselves more and more with carrying out what we perceive is God's will for us, and from this point on our consolations are only from God, and we concentrate on deepening our love of God and our faith, hope, and love.

Desolation moves in our thoughts, feelings, and desires by level too. At the base level desolation is simple: stormy days or too many mosquitoes, or the book is really dumb. At the second level desolations are deeper and more personal, like: conflict with friends or broken or breaking relationships. Finally, at level three desolations are interior experiences of heart and soul that threaten our faith, hope, and love. These are the deepest and most difficult of our desolations that can lead to depression or despair.

You must bring these things, consolation or desolation, to God to discern what is happening. The simple fact is we are made for love and God brings a solution so love will triumph. We need to trust in God. To find what God is communicating, Our Lord asks us to reflect on our experiences of thoughts, feelings, and desires to determine where they are coming



Fr. Randal Kasel during one of his talks

from. Key distinctions to keep in mind: consolations, if from God, are always level three and the experience of God Himself is always God Himself. It should not get confused with other consolations. Desolation at level three is often deprivation of love and it is a significant and difficult desolation.

All meaning comes from Jesus. We approach God in brokenness and we need to do that with humility in our heart. At its deepest level our hearts relate directly to our relationship with God, and it is good to remember that.

How do we come to the Lord in our heart? We relate to God, receive what He has to give, and respond in our choices. Mary practices this perfectly in the Annunciation. She acknowledged the angel and she relates her concern when she says "I have had no relations with man". She receives from the angel when he says "the Holy Spirit will come upon you..." and she responds "Let it be done to me..." Christ begins to form in her womb because of this flow of dialogue in the Spirit of God. So the three stages of communication in our hearts operate here in Mary. She relates her concerns to the angel, she receives what he has to say,, and she responds to the angel and accepts her mission in life, to give birth to the Son of God, who is to save His people. We need to use this approach in understanding and doing what God wants of us. We need to relate to God in love and be open in expressing our concerns. We need to receive what God gives us with faith and love, and respond to His call in openness and honesty, as Mary did in the Gospel. All of this will happen naturally for us if we are centered in God in our hearts.

God is the divine physician and he knocks where we are hurting. He wants to heal us. We need to be humble. Humility is truth, and is centered in us knowing we need God and cannot survive without Him. The first 'truth' is we are weak. In our weakness we need the Lord. The wounds of Christ give us the strength to go on and humility is the first thing that God wishes to teach us—that we can do nothing without Him. After that God shares his great goodness and power with each of us. He did all things out of love, and Jesus is the fullness of God's love. In Christ we have all of creation; from Him all things have come to be and in Him all things are kept in existence.

We need to find God everywhere because He is everywhere.

There are three kinds of spirits with which we must all contend: the Holy Spirit, evil spirits, and human spirits. All of these and any of these affect our thoughts, feelings, and desires as they exist in our hearts.

God can move or change our thoughts, feelings, or desires before our wills are engaged. This is important to keep in mind. We all have free will. Our growth in the spirit is in the motion of our wills for good or evil. God generally gives us peace in this process. The enemy brings disturbance.

Memory is very important to our peace of heart. We may have to ask the Lord to heal our memories to have peace. Imagination too can agitate our hearts and wills.

God asks us to consent to all He wants of us. Our cooperation is essential. Our weaknesses God will turn into strengths. We must embrace, with full consent, what God wants of us. We appeal to the heart of God to bring

blessings on us and the Church.

We need to have heart-to-heart conversations with God so we can have a heart-to-heart relationship with God. We need to unite our hearts to Christ. He wants this relationship with us. What we need to remember is that whatever we experience in our relationship with God it needs to be submitted to the authority of the Church.

The Father's Spirit only desires to give us consoling love, and the cross of Jesus, by which we can deepen our relationship with God. Hence, the imagery of the butterfly and the crown of thorns, that are symbols of the BSP, are most appropriate and good, and fit our transformation in Christ.

We rejoice in our weaknesses like St. Paul rejoiced in his weaknesses. We consent to our weaknesses in this way and we rely on God as we know we must. God's will is holy and makes us holy. The reign of God is at hand, in our human hearts.

There are two kingdoms operating in this world. The Kingdom of Heaven—with Christ, the angels and saints, Mary, and those who help to set up the Kingdom of God on earth—which is an infinitely powerful kingdom. The other kingdom is the kingdom of darkness. It is also real and led by the fallen angels and human souls that have served Satan. When Adam and Eve fell, sin entered the world. This kingdom is limited in power, and always will be.

The key to spiritual growth is the sacrament of confession. "Prepare the ground" for the Lord. We need to go to confession frequently, and well.

God wants to heal us of our ugliness. He has preceded us in sharing His Love through the death of His Son, so he wants to share in our weaknesses. The Lord wants to give to us; it is up to us to prepare to receive. To love God makes us human. The purpose we are made for is to know Him, love Him, and serve Him. Jesus gives us the graces we need to be better people. He doesn't destroy our humanity. He builds it. We receive it from Him and it all begins with realizing how God is working in our hearts.

We desire and will to be happy and holy and we receive this desire from God.

Mary is the beautiful and perfect model of receptivity to Christ. We all need to consider her the model, and follow her example.

Suffering wins for us the power of salvation. The best penances are those the Lord brings into our lives. Not the ones we impose on ourselves. Our Lord permits these sufferings, especially in family things, so we can embrace His sufferings and unite our sufferings to His in the redemptive sufferings of the Cross. So, we need to find Christ in our sufferings—the aches and pains of aging not excluded, and illnesses—all of which add redemptive suffering to our life.

Everything depends upon God and He can be found in every aspect of our life and He can bring good from all our actions. We need to trust in Him. We need to pray always. The Mass is the most powerful prayer on earth.

It was a very beautiful retreat.

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



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery BSP

"My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.'" (Isaiah 55:8-9)

I begin this retreat issue with wonderful news from the Vatican! The Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments wants Catholics to revert to the practice of receiving Holy Communion on the tongue while kneeling. Cardinal Antonio Canizares said: "Such a sign of adoration needs to be recovered. I think the entire church needs to receive Communion while kneeling. It is to simply know that we are before God Himself and that He came to us and that we are undeserving. If we trivialize Communion, we trivialize everything, and we cannot lose a moment as important as that of receiving Communion, of recognizing the Real Presence of Christ."

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! In my opinion there is nothing that has been as damaging to true devotion to Jesus and acknowledgment of His Real Presence than Communion in the hand. For those of us who grew up with complete respect for the Blessed Sacrament by kneeling down and reverently receiving Jesus on the tongue as befits the lowly creature, Communion in the hand has been an absolute nightmare! Some of course will receive Jesus with reverence no matter the circumstances, but there is nothing that has reduced reverence for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and belief in the Real Presence than the gross carelessness and casualness with which many treat GOD HIMSELF! It has gotten so bad that when a young boy I know saw an older couple receive Jesus on the tongue, he thought it looked strange, as something unbecoming. What a tragedy, that Communion on the tongue is done so seldom in some churches, much less while kneeling, and the proper catechesis is almost non-existent.

I know others do not view this issue as being of major importance, but I do. Our retreat centered on prayer of the heart, of how we can best communicate with God, our loving Father. A proper understanding of Fear of the Lord will not allow us to be "buddies" with Him. The chasm between creature and Creator is wider than the Grand Canyon. Of course, that distance is bridged by Jesus, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Our relationship with the Blessed Trinity is not a casual relationship. It is one of profound reverence and respect. In the third commandment we are told to "Honor your father and your mother." If even our earthly parents are to be shown honor and respect, how much more our Heavenly Father, who loved us so much He sent His only begotten Son to be our Savior!

The day I write this article is the feast of St. John Vianney. His reflections as found in the Liturgy of the Hours, are so outstanding and fit in so well with the theme of the retreat, that I would like to begin with them:

"My little children, reflect on these words: the Christian's treasure is not on earth but in heaven. Our thoughts, then, ought to be directed to where our treasure is. This is the glorious duty of man: to pray and to love. If you pray and love, that is where a man's happiness lies.

"Prayer is nothing else but union with God. When one has a heart that is pure and united with God, he is given a kind of serenity and sweetness that makes him

ecstatic, a light that surrounds him with marvelous brightness. In this intimate union, God and the soul are fused together like two bits of wax that no one can ever pull apart. This union of God with a tiny creature is a lovely thing. It is happiness beyond understanding.

"We had become unworthy to pray, but God in His goodness allowed us to speak with Him. Our prayer is incense that gives Him the greatest pleasure.

"My little children, your hearts are small, but prayer stretches them and makes them capable of loving God. Through prayer we receive a foretaste of heaven and something of paradise comes down upon us. Prayer never leaves us without sweetness. It is honey that flows into the soul and makes all things sweet. When we pray properly, sorrows disappear like snow before the sun.

"Some men immerse themselves as deeply in prayer as fish in water, because they give themselves totally to God. There is no division in their hearts. O, how I love these noble souls! St. Francis of Assisi and St. Colette used to see our Lord and talk to Him just as we talk to one another.

"How unlike them we are! How often we come to church with no idea of what to do or what to ask for. And yet, whenever we go to any human being, we know well enough why we go. And still worse, there are some who seem to speak to the good God like this: 'I will only say a couple of things to you, and then I will be rid of you.' I often think that when we come to adore the Lord, we would receive everything we ask for, if we would ask with living faith and with a pure heart."

There is a man after God's own Heart! Another is Fr. Kasel, our Retreat Master. He gave us a beautiful understanding of "Christian Anthropology of the Human Heart." There is a wonderful tradition going back to the Fathers of the desert on the importance of the disciple of Jesus having "purity of heart." St. John refers to praying with "a living faith and a pure heart." How is that attained?

The first principle is the awareness that "God is utterly near, and He actively pursues each of us." The only problem is that if God's ways are so different and above our way of thinking, we need help to understand them. Confer Eli teaching Samuel (I Sam 3), or other Old Testament examples. See how the scribes and Pharisees completely turned against Jesus because He didn't attend their schools to be taught by them. "Where does He get all this?" It is not worldly wisdom, but divine teaching that can only come from a divine source. That is why adherence to the Magisterium of the Church and the Vicar of Christ is so important. One can easily be led astray.

"Our weakness is healed by the weakness of Jesus." As Jesus went through His passion and death, He took upon Himself our human weakness. When we bring our pain and weakness to

Jesus on the Cross, the Holy Spirit will give only consoling love to those who seek to unite themselves with Him. As Jesus went through the agony in the garden, He showed us that God's will alone is holy. Discipleship depends upon trusting in God and His will for us.

"The Reign of God is at hand – now – in our own heart." There are two kingdoms at work in the world. We seek to live in the Kingdom of heaven with Jesus and Mary, the angels and Saints, in Communion with fellow believers on earth. This Kingdom is infinitely more powerful than the kingdom of Darkness run by Satan and those who choose to work with him. That's the problem: free will allows many to actually choose to work with Satan, stifling the early triumph of the Kingdom of heaven. But it also inspires many to embark on the greatest adventure life has to offer: to seek God in purity of heart!

In the middle of this spiritual warfare is the human heart. St. Augustine pegged this reality early on: "Our souls are restless

until they rest in Thee, O God." Only God can fulfill the desires of our heart. Souls are made for love, for they are made in the Image and Likeness of our God who is love. The search for love equals the search for God. If God is actively pursuing us, then it should be easy for a connection to be made. But the world, the flesh and the devil are constant obstacles on the path to this human/divine connection. The Voice of the world bombarding us from all sides is extremely persuasive.

Sometimes we are called to "go to your room." That room where we are called to pray to the Father in secret is that part of our heart where God dwells. That room is frequently forgotten in the midst of all the hustle and bustle of daily activity. Those of us privileged to attend the retreat had a lesson in how to have access to that room. Is there anything more important on earth? More on the Way next month.

Paul Beery BSP - Morning Star Chapter - Minnesota



Why penance? Why now? Excerpts from the Sunday morning retreat talk by Janet Klasson BSP

Let us begin with a prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the blessings of this time of retreat

from the world. We thank you for the inspiring words given through Fr. Kasel. Help us to apply them faithfully in our lives, that we might more perfectly imitate Jesus in prayer and penance. May your holy blessing be upon us as we strive to live your will each day. Jesus in Mary we trust in you. Amen.

What a blessing to be here this weekend! Fr. Kasel's talks have given us much to digest. He helped us learn how to imitate the Lord in prayer and penance. But why has God called souls to increased prayer and penance in this time in history? What is at stake? Fr. Kasel gave us some insight into these questions. I was struck as I listened to Fr. Kasel, at how many themes were similar to those I would be touching on. That, I have discovered, is the Holy Spirit "teaching in themes", themes such as our implacable weakness, the importance of humility, and of God's thirst for souls. I really have nothing of my own to add to what Fr. has already said. But I do have a some words to share with you this morning that may shed light on the "why". I wish to share with you excerpts from my Scriptural prayer journal as they apply to the subject of prayer and penance, and their critical importance to our times.

(Janet then gave a brief overview of her fait walk, and how she came to be keeping a Scriptural prayer journal. In the interest of brevity, it is not included here, but may be found on her website: www.pelianito.stblogs.com.)

That dear friends is a brief overview of my testimony given so that, when I share with you the words of my prayer journal, you will know how I came to receive them. However, you are not obliged to believe that the messages are from God. Whatever you believe about the messages, may God speak to your hearts

through them today. Generally, the meditations begin with a scripture passage followed by a message and then a prayer flowing from the passage. For the purposes of this talk, I have also added some brief comments.

My dear friends, I don't have to tell you that the times we are in are heavy with significance. There is a spiritual undercurrent that is hard to miss, except perhaps by the willfully blind. But, as Christians we are called to be people of hope, and hope is the underlying theme of all these messages.

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

*"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?"***

There is so much in this message that speaks to the penitent. One call that I have continually felt is to pray almost exclusively for souls. I once felt the Lord tell me, "Take care of my business

and I will take care of yours." At the time, we had a business that was floundering. I thought he was referring to that. However, I have come to realize that the business of God is souls! Pure and simple. The more I concentrate on prayers for souls, the more I can see the hand of providence looking after my "business". Furthermore, if I have prayed so much for souls, will he leave my loved ones behind? I don't think so, for Jesus told us himself that if we seek first the kingdom of God, all these things shall be given to us besides. People often write to me and tell me that they feel isolated in their faith walk, and that they are worried about family members that are far from God. I think we all can relate to that. But two things have come to me in relation to these issues. One is that we are isolated because God has sent us as agents behind enemy lines. But he has not sent us unarmed. Our prayers and penances are like St. Lawrence of Brindisi brandishing the cross at the head of the army. Our role is very important. (I will expand on this theme next month.) The other thought is that God has given your loved ones the gift of YOUR faith. You are sent into their lives to offer prayers and sacrifices for their souls. Jesus has placed you there for a reason. Thank you Jesus!

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. Blessed Mother please assist us. Amen.

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Joel 2:12-13 Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment.

*"My beloved, even now, at this late hour, if my children turn to me with fasting and weeping, throwing themselves on my mercy, contrite and sorrowful, it would mitigate to a great degree the chastisement due to sin. **What sin has purchased I would refund for the sake of those many repentant hearts. That is why, my child, I call you to fast and pray for souls. Have you done enough yet? Can you say that you have?** My child, much depends on the number of souls who turn to me with contrite hearts. Pray, pray, pray for conversions. There are too few praying! Too many will not be converted. Time is short. Give me every moment of your life to do with as I please. I will use it to purchase more souls. This is a great mystery, tied to the gift of free will. Give me all, my child. Hold nothing back. Your God implores you. Do not refuse, for much depends on those who will abandon all to the Lord of Life."*

"Have you done enough? Can you say that you have?" These words echo often in my thoughts and convict me. It seems my weakness is all I can offer to Jesus for souls; it is all I possess that is completely mine. But in the Divine Will all things are possible. And so I offer every moment to him in the Divine Will. Jesus I trust in YOU.

Jesus, Lord of Life, in the Divine Will, take our miserable offerings and use them as you wish, magnified in the love and merits of our Mother. We have so little to offer, but we give it to you. In your mercy receive it as you received the offering of the widow with her small coins. Jesus we trust in you. Save souls! Amen.

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2 Peter 2: 7 . . . If he rescued Lot, a righteous man oppressed by the licentious conduct of unprincipled people . . . then the Lord knows how to rescue the devout from trial and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.

*"My child, place all your trust in me. Implore me day and night for the return of justice and righteousness to the world. You yourself see daily the infidelity of men's hearts. How much more do I see, to whom nothing—not the smallest transgression—is hidden! **My child, there is an incalculable amount of reparation to be made for the sins of this godless age. Fast, pray, and do not discount even the smallest sacrifice, but offer it in the Divine Will, linked to the cross, wrapped in the love of my Mother. The value of this offering is likewise incalculable.** Do not despair. I have made the impossible possible. For man reparation is impossible, but in the Divine Will all things are possible. My child, do not neglect this, for divine justice requires it."*

"There is an incalculable amount of reparation to be made for the sins of this godless age." Is it any wonder then, that the Lord has resurrected the penitential lifestyle in this age. We should often prostrate ourselves in spirit before the tabernacles of the world.

Blessed Trinity of love, we enter into the Divine Will to offer you our every prayer and sacrifice, linked to the cross and wrapped in the love of our Mother, and we prostrate ourselves in spirit before all the tabernacles of the world in the name of everyone, from Adam to the last man, for the conversion of sinners and in reparation to the Blessed Trinity of love. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful.

*"My child, do you see the link between the sacrament of reconciliation and the power of one's prayers? Through the sacrament you are made righteous, and as it says: 'The fervent prayers of a righteous person are very powerful.' My beloved, are you wondering why your prayers lack power? How clean is your heart? Have you accepted the grace of absolution with true sorrow for your sins? Are your tears of penitence sincere? **One who draws often from the wellspring of mercy in this way has every right to pray fervently, especially for the conversion of sinners. This is a prayer most pleasing to me, and those who are devoted to this prayer, I will bless in many ways.** Keep this in mind and do not falter. Child I am near!"*

It is very cunning of the serpent to cause the sacrament of reconciliation to fall into dis-use. How many graces are lost because of the spread of this grave error? How many prayers lose power because the gifts are obscured behind a pile of refuse. How important it is to remain in a state of grace! St. Faustina said in her diary that if one person refuses a grace, it immediately goes to someone else. With that thought in mind let us remain in a state of grace and accept all the graces being rejected by others, so that God's plan for humanity may be accomplished.

Jesus, my Lord and Savior, we thank you for the wellspring of

mercy found in the sacrament of reconciliation. We pray for the true conversion of all sinners and that more and more souls would access this holy sacrament. Jesus we trust in you to grant the grace of conversion to all, especially those most in need of your mercy. We accept every gift and grace it pleases you to give us and all those being rejected by others, for your glory and for the fulfillment of the Divine Will on earth. Amen.

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Ecclesiastes 9:8 At all times let your garments be white, and spare not the perfume for your head.

*"Children, now is the time to remain in a state of grace and to wear the perfume of constant prayer. One who is in a state of grace and who desires to remain so gives off the perfume of prayer in all he does. His actions are sanctified by the state of his soul. Never before has this been more important, my children. Lions prowl everywhere, waiting for the least opportunity to attack. By remaining in a state of grace you become invisible to the prowling lions. The stench of sin is what gives you away. **Have I given you the sacrament to humiliate you, or to save you? Let humility lead to salvation.** Let grace be your shield against the enemy. I have not left you unprotected, my children. Repent and confess. Your eternity depends on it and the urgency of the times demands it. Delay at your peril."*

More and more the theme of humility has been coming to me as an antidote to the disease of the age. This is where it is good to read the gospels, to study the humility of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Jesus, help us to be humble so that we will not be caught in sin and be an open target for the enemy. Help us to remain in a state of grace. Keep our garments white and the perfume of our prayers sweet. Holy family, humble and pure, lead us on the path of humility and purity for the glory of God. Amen.

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Habakkuk 3:9-10 Bared and ready is your bow, filled with arrows is your quiver. Into streams you split the earth; at sight of you the mountains tremble. A torrent of rain descends; the ocean gives forth its roar.

*"My child, pray for mercy for those who will perish without having prepared their souls. There is much that will befall the earth and there are many who will be lost for eternity if they do not accept my mercy in their final moments. **Do not let any be lost because of your failure to pray. Yes, I know this is a heavy burden, but I would not ask you to pray if it did no good. Enter into my love for souls and it will be no burden to pray; you will desire to suffer anything rather than lose one soul.** This is what it means to embrace the cross and it is a great honor and a great mystery that I allow my children to participate in my plan of salvation in this way. Suffice it to say that God's will desires that his children participate in this way. So pray, fast, and offer sacrifices—do all you can, for the time is very short for very many."*

Again, we have an exhortation to do more, to pray more, to offer more sacrifices. All for the love of souls. I felt the Lord tell me in another message: "Do not begrudge anything you are asked to forgo for the sake of souls. There is nothing too small to be used if it is offered in love. Child, give me all you can. The need is great." This is the "little way" of St. Therese. What can we do? In all things--love!

Jesus we trust in you. In the Divine Will we accept the unimaginable invitation to participate in your work of salvation through the cross. Jesus we are weak, but in you we can do all things. Help us to love as you love. Take our every waking moment, every breath and beat of our hearts, for we love you and we come to live in your will. Amen.

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Esther C:17-18 But now we have sinned in your sight, and you have delivered us into the hands of our enemies, because we worshiped their gods. You are just, O Lord.

"My beloved, do you see how this transgression leads to great suffering and death? You shall worship the Lord your God and serve him alone. My child, this commandment is being broken as never before. Therefore the punishment due will be unprecedented. The law of justice demands it. But, my child, the day of mercy precedes the day of justice, and even though the day draws to a close, there is still time to call upon the Divine Mercy. Mercy and grace are being poured out as never before, for where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more. Let my children who love me accept the graces I offer for the sake of the world I came to save. There is no higher calling than to give your life for those in most need. Child, pray, fast, and pray some more. The time is very short. Very short."

I once felt the Lord tell me this: "There are many ways to be a martyr, child, one of which is to lay down your life **one desire at a time.**" As the angel at Fatima said, "Penance! Penance! Penance!" Our Lady has been calling people to penance very clearly since Fatima. If the world was in need then, how much more now?

Jesus, help us to lay down our lives one desire at a time. We offer all that we have and all that we are, through the perfect acts of the Holy Family for the sake of the souls you love so much. Jesus we trust in you. Amen.

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Colossians 3:2 Think of what is above, not of what is on earth.

"Beloved, do not be distracted from your prayers, but in the Spirit, make straight the way of the Lord. There is nothing on this earth that is worth even one minute spent in sincere prayer. Ponder this my child. Your daily duty is important, yes, but do not let the cares of this world come between you and the object and goal of your life—namely Jesus. Detach yourself from all that is earthly. Make prudent use of these things without being consumed by them. Be ready to let everything go if Christ asks it of you. How can you cling to Christ when you will not let go of what is earthly? Ponder these things, my child. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what it is you are clinging to and ask for the grace of detachment. My child, cling to me, and your joy will be complete."

Jesus we love you. Holy Spirit, show us what it is that we cling to and grant us the grace to let it all go for love of Jesus. Father, Son, and Spirit, we love you. Have mercy on us and on the whole world. Amen.

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John 12:3 Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled

with the fragrance of the oil.

*"Oh my child! Do not spare anything, but at great personal cost make reparation to my Sacred Heart for the sins of this age! The debt is steep indeed, but see the love with which Mary offered her sacrifice. **Not only was she willing to give me her most valuable possession, but she anointed me with great love.** The value of her gift was not in its cost, but in the love with which it was offered. Child, count as nothing all that does not lead to a deeper union with me*. I want all of you. I want the oil of your love poured out so that the aroma fills the entire heavenly court. Hold nothing back, for then the fragrance would be less sweet. Oh my child, let your love heal the many wounds I bear on account of sin. Child if you only knew, you would die a thousand deaths for one look of love from me. Do not make me wait, but give me your love. I am near."*

How often do we hold back from Jesus, not just our prized possessions, but even meaningless trinkets. How important it is to meditate on the wounds of Jesus and on the infinite love he has for us. If we do that, it will assist us in letting go of that which we cling to and to do it with love and joy.

Jesus, Beloved One of our hearts, we give you our poor offerings of love wrapped in the perfect love of our Mother. May the perfume of her love fill heaven anew with her sacred fragrance so that your many, many wounds might be tenderly cared for and healed. O Jesus, in the Divine Will I offer you all the sorrow for sin that can be offered. Please help us to count as nothing all that does not lead to a deeper union with you. We love you Jesus! Amen.

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Ezekiel 4:16 Then he said to me: Son of man, I am breaking the staff of bread in Jerusalem. They shall eat bread which they have weighed out anxiously, and they shall drink water which they have measured out fearfully.

"My child, I have been telling you in many ways that there is much to come, hardship, tears, woe. You will know weariness you have never known before. Strengthen yourself with prayer and fasting, for no human means will provide the strength you need. Enter into the wound at my side, the very source of mercy. Bring with you all those I have given you to pray for—leave no one out, for I desire all to be saved. Little one, the tide has turned and there is no going back. What has begun cannot now be stopped except by Divine intervention. Your Father's mercy is not exhausted. Pray, fast, offer sacrifices, and give alms so that your Father's just anger will be appeased. Child, the patience of God is everlasting, but because of the poor and helpless who are victimized daily, the correction must come. This too is mercy. Child—pray!"

"This too is mercy." The Lord is telling us that it is a merciful act that he bring about an end to that which has caused so much suffering, namely sin. As I once felt him telling me: *"Good parents know that it is not loving to always protect children from the consequences of their actions. That is where we are today my children. The world that has rejected me again must reap what it has sown. This is a great mercy, and I thank my faithful remnant for their prayers and sacrifices that have mitigated the punishment due to sin."* So, dear friends, let us continue in prayer and sacrifice. His faithful remnant has a very important role to play. Let us not discount even the smallest act as the Lord said to me: *"You can never do enough, but you can always do more."*

Heavenly Father, in the Divine Will grant me the grace I need to fast well in reparation for the countless sins of the age. For the sake of his sorrowful passion may those whose lives are demanded of them be saved from final damnation. Jesus and Mary be with us. Holy Angels guide us. Jesus we trust in YOU. Amen.

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Habakkuk 2:14 But the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the LORD'S glory as water covers the sea.

*"My child, all around you see discord and violence. The evil one has many servants to do his bidding, and he has duped a good many more. But you, my child, must not be afraid. The powers at work in the world today will not triumph. The victory is mine as it was on Calvary. The day will come—and soon—when there will be no doubt about my glory. That day will be terrifying, even to those of faith. I tell you, hold firm. Be steadfast. **Repeat unendingly the prayer you have been given for just this time: 'Jesus I trust in you.' I will be listening for this prayer and will carry those souls in the wound of my pierced heart.** Child I tell you these things so that you may have hope. Place your trust in me and be at peace."*

I have come to understand that the Divine Mercy prayer—but especially the image—acts as the lamb's blood did on the lintels and doorposts of the Israelites before the Passover—a sign of protection. We cannot overestimate the power of this prayer and image now and in the time to come. God of mercy, may your name be praised forever for this unimaginable gift! Jesus we trust in you!

Lord Jesus we trust in you. Lord Jesus we trust in you. Lord Jesus we trust in you. Have mercy! Amen.

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2 Corinthians 5:2 For in this tent we groan, longing to be further clothed with our heavenly habitation.

"Beloved, my love is deeply wounded by the great and many sins of the age. My Love is challenged and tested in every place on earth. What is Love—perfect Love—to do when it is challenged and tested? Perfect Love, my child, can only love. Then what response to sin can Love make? Love must act to restore love in the world. What the thief has stolen, the Landlord will restore a thousand, thousand times over. The battle intensifies, my children, but Love will triumph more gloriously than can be imagined by the mortal mind. The Era of Peace will also be known as the Era of Love. How my heart has longed for this day! Do you see how human history since The Fall has been leading to this day? The earth itself is groaning and heaving as a woman in labor. The birth pains are upon her and there is no turning back. Pray ever more for souls, my children. The more that convert, the easier will be the delivery into the new era."

Revelations 12:2 She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth.

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O my Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those most in need of your mercy. Jesus we trust in your merciful, perfect Love. Save souls! Amen.

My dear friends, the messages I have shared with you today are meant to be pondered. God has given us so much! Grace upon grace has been poured out over this generation, because as Scripture says, "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the

more." Let us open our hearts to his grace. Thank you for all you are doing and will do in his name. All glory and praise to our God! Jesus we trust in you! Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter



"If there be a true way that leads to the Everlasting Kingdom, it is most certainly that of suffering, patiently endured." -- St. Colette



FROM THE 'SPARROW'...Trust in God

The peace of Jesus!

This lady shared her "sparrow like" story:

"I was 19 years old and was about halfway through beauty school. I was a little put out when my supervisor told me that my next customer was a lady in a wheelchair and almost completely disabled. I knew this customer would require extra time, and I was already feeling swamped and drained that day.

"Once the woman's hair was washed and her caregiver left, we had a chance to talk. She was probably in her fifties at the time, and she told me that the previous year she had lost her husband and her only child, a son. The only family members she had left were a couple of cousins.

"She hesitated a moment and, with a beautiful smile on her face, said, "But you know, God so wonderful that He gave me naturally curly hair so I wouldn't have to worry about taking care of it. What a blessing!"

"Talk about putting life into perspective.

"I still think of that woman every day. No matter what circumstances I face, I still hear her smiling voice saying, "God is so wonderful." She never knew what an impact that simple statement had on me, but I thank God for sending her into my life just when I needed her most."

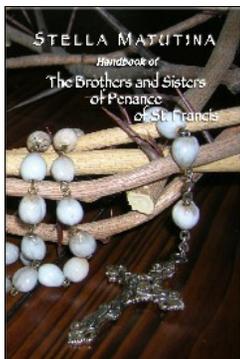
I, too, hope, my little sparrows that you also will look for something in your life and for that reason say, "God is so wonderful!" Share that with someone and put their lives in perspective as well.

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter



MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

DON'T FORGET TO ORDER YOUR HANDBOOK!



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).

Bruce and Paul also have copies available.

May the Rule of 1221 lead many souls on the path to holiness.

Bruce and Shelley Fahey, Administrators

Photos from the retreat...



Bishop Piché



James Giebel, Fr. Kasel, and Deacon Jim Thornton at adoration



And the earthly food was great too!





Those professed to the BSP renew their profession: (l to r) Rebecca Maness, Paul Beery, Janet Klasson, Dolores Bichsel, and Bruce Fahey.

"Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me."

(John 15:4)

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)

