



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

## BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

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

9. When they had arrived at the papal court, Francis was brought before the pope. The Vicar of Christ was in the Lateran palace at the time; and when Francis was announced, he was walking in a hall known as the Mirror Hall, lost in deep thought. He knew nothing about the saint, and so he sent him away indignantly. Francis took his leave with all humility, and the following night God showed the pope a vision in which he saw a palm-tree sprouting between his feet and growing until it was a fine tree. As he wondered what the vision meant, the divine light made it clear to him that the palm-tree was the beggar he had turned away the previous day. The next morning he gave his servants orders to search the city for Francis; and when they found him in St. Anthony's hospice, he told them to bring him before him without delay. When he appeared before the Supreme Pontiff, Francis told him of his plans, imploring him humbly and insistently to approve the rule for him. The pope, Innocent III, was famous for his learning; and when he saw Francis' wonderful purity of heart, together with his determination, and the fiery eagerness of his will, he felt inclined to give his approval. However, the whole idea



seemed so new to some of the cardinals, who thought that the rule was too difficult for any human being, that he hesitated to do what Francis asked. One of the cardinals was His Eminence John of St. Paul, Bishop of Santa Sabina, a man who loved holiness and was dedicated to

Christ's poor. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he addressed the pope and his confreres saying, "We must be careful. If we refuse this beggarman's request because it is new or too difficult, we may be sinning against Christ's Gospel, because he is only asking us to approve a form of Gospel life. Anyone who says that a vow to live according to the perfection of the Gospel contains something new or unreasonable or too difficult to be observed, is guilty of blasphemy against Christ, the Author of the Gospel." At that, the successor of St Peter turned to St. Francis and told him, "My son pray to Christ that he may show us his will through you. When we are sure of that, we can grant your request without fear."

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



### VISITOR'S MESSAGE Homily by Fr. Robert Altier: Be Transformed

Saint Paul, in the second reading today, says to the people of Rome that they are not to conform themselves to the present age, but they are to be transformed through a renewal of their mind so that they will know what is the Will of God, whatever is good and pleasing and perfect. Now if you think about the people to whom he was writing and telling them not to be conformed to the present age, and that was the people of Rome 2,000 years ago, what do you think he would say to us, the people of America today? In many ways our society is very similar to the society of ancient Rome. They had abortion, euthanasia, contraception, and a

variety of other things, the debauchery and the selfishness and the materialism and all the other things that were there. In many ways it was not a whole lot different from our society - with one exception. That is, we have gone way beyond what the people of Rome would ever have imagined. Things were not good in ancient Rome; things are worse for us.

And so as Saint Paul could tell the people 2,000 years ago to be transformed by a renewal of their minds, to make sure that they are not conforming themselves to the present age, he would be even more emphatic with us. It is something we need to take very seriously. It is something we have heard over and over again, and most



of us pay very little attention to it. We like the present age, unfortunately. We like the conveniences, many of which are perfectly fine. But then we get duped into this idea of thinking that if the conveniences are okay so is most everything else. Or we fall into the trap of thinking, "As long as I'm not in favor of abortion or euthanasia or some other completely hideous thing, then I'm doing okay," thinking that it is okay to accept things that are evil just not *as evil* as some other things because our society has said that it is all okay.

This is exactly what the people of Planned Parenthood know is going to happen. They are the ones who go into the schools and teach the kids "Just say no to sex". They know fully well that is not going to happen. They have an agenda. So they present an extreme: some poor person who has all kinds of diseases that they have picked up and is dying from AIDS or some other sexually transmitted disease. Then they portray as an extreme on the other side someone whom they would portray as having no fun at all, someone who, living their faith, says, "No, that's not right and I won't do it." They portray this person as someone who is shunned and does not have friends and sits home alone and is lonely. The middle ground? Contraceptive sex. That is what Planned Parenthood is interested in teaching our children. But you see how they do it. They portray two extremes - both false - knowing that the average person is going to aim for the middle ground.

If all we do in our society is reject the extreme and we strive for the middle, we are still way far away from where the Gospel is. Jesus makes very clear at the end of today's Gospel that He is going to judge each one of us according to our conduct, not the way that many Christian people proclaim that Jesus is going to judge us according to our faith. Nowhere in the Scripture does it ever say that, but that is okay apparently. He says very clearly and explicitly that He is going to judge each one of us according to our conduct, according to the deeds in our body.

And so, we need to ask ourselves, "What are we living? How much are we giving into the ways of the world?" Thanks be to God, we are rejecting the extreme, but are we choosing what the world considers the middle ground? Is the Gospel of Jesus Christ considered an extreme on one end that we want to stay away from while at the same time we want to stay away from the extremity of sin on the other hand and so, therefore, we cut a compromise?" Just like politicians in America: "Let's find a compromise." And the compromise is always to compromise the truth so that we can find the middle ground with people who do not want to live the truth. There is no middle ground when it comes to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We either live the truth or we do not.

We have a choice to make. Saint Paul tells us not to conform ourselves to the present age, and then tells us to be transformed by a renewal of our minds for the purpose of knowing what is the Will of God. And so the transference of our minds must be according to the Gospel, must be according to the ways of prayer. We must be transformed into the very likeness of the Person of Jesus Christ. How else are we ever going to know what is His Will - what is good and pleasing and perfect - unless

we are united with Him? That is the only way. And we need to make sure when we are looking at Him that we look at the fullness of Who He is.

In the first reading today, Jeremiah, in one of my favorite lines of all of Scripture, says, "You duped me, Lord, and I allowed myself to be duped." Probably all of us could say that, except that it was not the Lord who has duped any of us. We allowed ourselves to be duped by picking and choosing what we wanted to listen to. Just think, for instance, of what Our Lord said to His apostles. If you pick and choose what you want to hear from the Lord's mouth about His apostles, He told Peter, as we heard a week ago, that He is going to build His Church on Peter; He is going to give Peter the keys to the kingdom of Heaven. He told His disciples that they will sit upon twelve thrones in the kingdom of Heaven and they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Now that sounds pretty good. When Peter asked, "What are you going to give us because we have left everything?" He says, "I am going to give you a hundredfold of everything that you have given up."

Now we can look at all of that and say, "But the disciples had to suffer." They were all martyred except for Saint John, and they tried twice to martyr him but failed. That does not sound quite like what the Lord promised them, until you stop and look a little further and see that He told them He would give them a hundredfold *and persecution besides*. He said to them, "The world will hate you." He told us in the Gospel reading this morning that anyone who wishes to be His follower must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow in His footsteps. He told us that we would suffer in this world, but to take heart because He has overcome the world. So there is a balance that we need to find in there. If we only listen to the words of Jesus that we want to hear, then we are going to say, "You duped me, Lord, and I allowed myself to be duped." But, actually, all we can really say is the latter half of it: *I allowed myself to be duped*, because the Lord was straightforward with us just as He was with Jeremiah. If you go back and read the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah makes very clear that the Lord told Him exactly what was going to happen to him. But Jeremiah listened attentively at first only to the good stuff, to the stuff he wanted to hear.

That happens pretty much to all of us until the other part happens. Then we scratch our heads and we complain and wonder why God has abandoned us: "Why does He hate me so much that He is allowing these horrible things to happen in my life? What have I done wrong that God is allowing all of this suffering to take place?" That is not Catholic thought. It is not the thought of Jesus. It is not the way the Gospel or the New Testament presents things. But it is the way we have been duped. We need a transference of our minds. They need to be transformed into the mind of Jesus Christ. And we need to have our wills transformed so that we will choose the Will of Jesus Christ.

Now we could ask ourselves, each one of us, if we have experienced what Jeremiah experienced, as we look at the struggles, as we find ourselves rejected by the worldly types because they do not want to hear what we have to say and they do not want to live the way that we live, so

we find ourselves on the outside and we say, "I will speak His word no more. I'll just be silent. I'll just try to kind of be quietly on the edge of things. I'm not going to give into the way they are doing things but I'm not really going to stand up either." We have all probably experienced something similar to that, and we know what happens: We usually get sucked right back in. But Jeremiah, on the other hand, wanting to do the Will of God but trying to fight against Him at the same time, says that the Word of God burns within him like a fire imprisoned within his bones. And even though he desires not to speak any more because it brings him derision and ridicule all the day, he cannot hold it in. Now if you can say the same thing, then you are on the right track. If you can look back at some point and say, "I wasn't sure that I wanted to do it God's way anymore because I was being rejected and ridiculed, but I couldn't take it. It was burning within me and I had to speak out. I had to live the way that I knew Christ wanted me to live. I knew that I had to dress the way He wanted me to dress and act the way he wanted me to act and speak the way He wanted me to speak." If that is what we can say, then we are on the right track.

If we have never experienced being shunned and ridiculed because of our faith that means we have conformed ourselves to this age. We have not been transformed by a renewal of our mind. If, on the other hand, we can say that we have decided at some point along the line that maybe doing it God's way cost a little too much and we wanted to pull back and so we pulled back to the point where we were not being ridiculed anymore, we were not being shunned or rejected, then what we have done is to shun and reject the Word of God. We have given in, once again, to the ways of the world. As I have mentioned many times, if the worldly types like you and you fit in

well, then there is trouble, then we are not living according to the Gospel, we are not living according to a transformed mind and a transformed will so that we know what is the Will of God and do it. If the word of Jesus Christ is not burning within us, then we are not being transformed as the Lord desires for us to be.

Saint Paul's call to the people of Rome - and I think we could easily say his call to the people of America - is very clear and unequivocal: *Do not conform yourselves to the present age, but be transformed by a renewal of your mind so that you will know what is the Will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.* Jesus, when He was asked about what is good, said, "Only one is good, and that is God." To do the Will of God is the only thing that is going to be truly pleasing to the Lord. And to do the Will of God - we must be very clear so that none of us can say we were duped - is going to look and feel just like the Cross, because it will be. Peter did not like to hear that from Jesus at first; and then he was transformed, even to the point that he himself was crucified.

Each one of us needs to be transformed as well. We need to set our focus on Jesus Christ Crucified. We need to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. That is what it is to be transformed according to the mind of Jesus Christ. Now we need to ask, "Am I willing to do it?" Not one of us can sit here and say, "I've been duped. I didn't know that this is what God wanted of me." It is very, very clear. So we have two choices: the mind of the world - which is the mind of Satan - or the mind of God. And we have a very clear call to each one of us as Christian persons: *Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by a renewal of your mind so that you will know what is the Will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.*

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



## ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...On Prayer



Most of what follows came from the writings of St. Theresa of Avila. She is a doctor of the Church, on prayer, and lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She wrote volumes on prayer because the Lord inspired or told her to write and she experienced what she wrote as a Carmelite nun, who reformed the Carmelite Order

from within. You can find this and much more in Volume 2 of the Collected Works of St. Theresa of Avila, and her writings on the "Interior Castle". The authors are: Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. and Kieran Kavanaugh O.C.D., from the Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington D.C., 1980. The writings of St. John of the Cross, a dear friend of hers, parallel her writings and complement them. It is John who points out that through contemplation and the dark night of the soul, which is the movement of a soul through contemplation to the spiritual marriage, God advances us

spiritually, if we pray, without showing us how he does it. Hence it is called a 'night', because the person has no idea what God is doing until it is done! Through all of this growth there will be many trials and you can advance God's work in you by living the Gospel generously and practicing charity and penance, especially self-denial, routinely. Hence, the Rule of the BSP is a wonderful help in growing in prayer.

St. Theresa defines prayer most eloquently in her writings on the INTERIOR CASTLE. She writes that the INTERIOR CASTLE has seven dwellings, or levels, representing the seven levels, or stages, of prayer. She wrote using this model in light of the Scripture wherein the Lord says: "*In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you?*" (John 14:2) The Lord told her to use this model.

The foundations of prayer, St. Theresa emphasizes repeatedly, are love of God and neighbor, detachment

(from the world, the flesh, and the devil) and humility, and abandonment to the Will of God. Always keep this in mind, and work on it, as you pray more and more, especially through contemplation, but not only that. All prayer is good. Learn to pray all the time and for everything that you do, great and small.

St. Theresa points out that there are two kinds of prayer, discursive and passive. Discursive prayer is the prayer we human beings can and should initiate on our own. All passive prayer comes from God and is initiated as He gives it to us hence it is called 'mystical' prayer. There are three kinds of discursive prayer and there are four kinds of passive or mystical prayer. Mystical prayer only comes through contemplation, and so we make it possible by praying contemplatively. If we do not pray contemplatively we will not experience it generally, although God does give mystical prayer to some people when they receive communion or in adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

### **DISCURSIVE PRAYER...THREE LEVELS**

First level of prayer and first level of discursive prayer ... Vocal prayer.

Needs no explanation. It is how we learn to pray and shows how important it is to teach our children to pray. First dwelling in St. Theresa's INTERIOR CASTLE.

Second level of prayer and second level of discursive prayer...Mental prayer.

We pray it in our minds, without speaking. Wonderful prayer as we can do it anywhere and anytime. With people around, or when working, fishing, etc. Second dwelling in St. Theresa's INTERIOR CASTLE.

Third level of prayer and third level of discursive prayer... Meditation.

A form of mental prayer wherein we ponder everything, and anything, especially holy things like events in Scripture, Church history and doctrine, how to live a holy life, etc, etc. in our minds. This prayer is the most advanced form of discursive prayer. Third dwelling in St. Theresa's INTERIOR CASTLE.

### **PASSIVE PRAYER...FOUR LEVELS, ALL MYSTICAL**

Fourth level of prayer and first level of mystical prayer... The Prayer of Quiet

When you begin to pray contemplatively you will find yourself greatly distracted and ill at rest due to your rambling thoughts and imagination, which St. Theresa called a 'wild horse'. The prayer of Quiet occurs when suddenly your contemplation becomes quiet, and your mind at rest during your contemplation. It is the most common form of mystical prayer as once given it is usually

given all the time, even during advanced stages of mystical prayer. Fourth dwelling in St. Theresa's INTERIOR CASTLE.

Fifth level of prayer and second level of mystical prayer... the Prayer of Union

This is an actual union with God during contemplation. It usually occurs years after you begin contemplation, assuming you persist, but since it is originated by God He can do it whenever He chooses. In this prayer, which occurs during contemplation and usually when you are experiencing deep Prayer of Quiet, God takes possession of your bodily senses and fills you with a deep and sweet possession. You will not mistake it when it happens. You will not forget it either, but there is nothing you can do to make it happen yourself. Fifth dwelling in St. Theresa's INTERIOR CASTLE.

Sixth level of prayer and third level of mystical prayer...The Prayer of Ecstasy

This often occurs during the Prayer of Union, but not always. Sometimes God will take your soul on a flight. Sometimes you might levitate (you won't know it probably as you will be 'lost' in union with God). God might rapture your soul, and even lift you off the planet. Sometimes you will burn sweetly. It is deeper than the Prayer of Union, and is the sixth dwelling in St. Theresa's INTERIOR CASTLE. The events and nature of this level is that it constitutes spiritual betrothal, St. Theresa says, as the two, the soul and God, are not yet one but they are together. It can last for years but specific occurrences of ecstasy or rapture last only a few minutes usually. Visions and dreams of a spiritual nature usually are given during this betrothal period, but obviously God can give them at any time.

Seventh level of prayer and fourth and final level of mystical prayer...The Spiritual Marriage

This is what it is all about, here, or hereafter. In the Spiritual Marriage you become and remain one with the Lord. The spiritual marriage is consummated, in St. Theresa's words, when you see Jesus Christ in his resurrected body. One of the signs of it that precedes the vision of the resurrected Lord is an intellectual vision of the Trinity, that remains present in your life once received. St. Theresa calls this the beatific vision of this life.

One thing you can know about this level is that once you arrive here, which is via the 'dark night' of the soul already mentioned, all of the consolations of the prayer of union and ecstasy, usually end. Two things remain, usually. The prayer of Quiet, and the intellectual vision of the Trinity. This is the Seventh dwelling of St. Theresa's INTERIOR CASTLE, and should be the goal of any serious Christian.

Let's be faithful to our need to pray. The benefits are wonderful!

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

**“God must be pursued,  
and the more you chase Him the more you catch Him.”**

*Maimonedes, preeminent medieval Jewish philosopher and one of the greatest Torah scholars and physicians of the Middle Ages*



## NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery BSP

**“Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes the sun to rise on the just and the unjust, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous... Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** (Matthew 5:43)

In church today I saw a young boy wearing a baseball jersey with a local baseball player's name and number. Such jerseys are very common, and there's nothing wrong with that. But it got me to thinking. Is it appropriate to wear such a sports jersey in church? Is that giving honor to God or to a sports team? Would someone have worn such an item to church fifty years ago? I don't think so. This is not just a matter of reverence, but of the fundamental truths of our faith. Who are our heroes? Aren't they supposed to be different from the celebrities of the secular society in which we live?

As Fr. Kasel was leaving the Franciscan Retreat Center at Prior Lake after the BSP retreat this past July, we walked with him through the chapel. A small gesture he made had a lot of significance for me. He could have gone either to the right or the left side of the altar. He deliberately paused a moment, then chose to go to the left so he could touch the statues of several Saints on the way. That was an indication of how he lives in company with the Saints! It was obvious to me as I have known him for a time. But it should have become apparent to others as he opened each retreat conference describing part of the extraordinary life of one of his favorites, St. Lawrence of Brindisi, a Capuchin Franciscan. **The Saints are our heroes!** With the tenth anniversary of 9/11 fast approaching, I found the following incident in the life of St. Lawrence as related by Fr. Kasel to be rather fascinating, and relevant for comment today:

At the request of Emperor Rudolf II, who knew the reputation of the Capuchin, Pope Clement VIII sent St. Lawrence to Germany to help raise a crusade against the Turks. At that time, Mohamed III, the sultan of Constantinople, was advancing beyond the Danube with the aim of invading Hungary and Austria, thus opening the way to enter Italy. He bragged he would transform the altar of St. Peter's Basilica into a manger to feed the Turkish horses.

It was on the occasion of the foundation of the convent of Prague (1601) that St. Lawrence was named chaplain of the Imperial army. The victory of Lepanto (1571) had only temporarily checked the Moslem invasion, and several battles were still necessary to secure the final triumph of the Christian armies. Mohammed III had, since his accession (1595), conquered a large part of Hungary. The emperor, determined to prevent further advance, sent Lawrence of Brindisi as deputy to the German princes to obtain their cooperation. The Capuchin was successful, and they responded to his appeal.

Archduke Matthias was chosen as the general of the Christian army. At his request, the Pope ordered Lawrence to join the army as its chaplain and adviser. He obeyed without hesitation. When he arrived at camp in October 1601, he found the army lined up in battle formation before him. The holy religious, a cross in his hand, addressed the soldiers and assured them a certain victory. Then, he prepared them for the combat by means of prayer and penance.

The attack on Albe-Royal (now Stulweissenburg) was then contemplated. To pit 18,000 men against 80,000 Turks was a daring undertaking and the generals, hesitating to attempt it, appealed to Lawrence for advice. Holding himself responsible for victory, he advised attack, and communicated to the entire army in a glowing speech the ardour and confidence with which he was himself animated. His ardent faith wiped away the fear of the commanders. As his feebleness prevented him from marching, he mounted on horseback and, crucifix in hand, took the lead of the army, which he drew irresistibly after him. Three other Capuchins were also in the ranks of the army. Although the most exposed to danger, Lawrence was not wounded, which was universally regarded as due to miraculous protection. The city was finally taken, and the Turks lost 30,000 men. As however they still exceeded in numbers the Christian army, they formed their lines anew, and a few days later another battle was fought. It was always the chaplain who was at the head of the army. "Forward!" he cried, showing them the crucifix, "Victory is ours." The Turks were again defeated. It is difficult to express the admiration Fr. Lawrence inspired among the commanders and soldiers. The honour of this double victory was attributed by the general and the entire army to Lawrence. Once again Europe had been saved from the barbarian Muslims.

It's difficult to comprehend the difference in attitude between 1601 and 2011! Can anyone imagine such a thing happening today: a Catholic Franciscan priest leading an army against the barbarian Muslims? It's true St. Lawrence was leading a Christian army organized by the Pope, but today the enemy is still the same – Islamic Jihadists – whose goal remains world domination with the complete subjugation of all to a false prophet of a man-made religion which has persecuted Christians since the time of Mohammed's death in 632 A.D.

Today we have a very different response. Imagine the Pope calling for a Crusade today! We are rather at the opposite end of the spectrum. I heard a British Franciscan historian answer a question about pacifism by stating that there have always been individuals in the

Church who have advocated a certain type of pacifism in their own lives. But the Church has always officially held to the Just War theory.

Well, that's a pretty complicated process in 2011 with all the weapons of mass destruction available to the bad guys as well as the good guys. Will even a just war end up causing greater destruction than not going to war? And what about the danger of being blackmailed or threatened by terrorists with a nuclear weapon they claim to possess? We know beyond doubt they will be happy to use it! We are called upon as followers of Jesus to fight evil, but what's the best way to do that today? One thing I know. Christians all around the world are now virtually defenseless against the onslaught of "barbarian Muslims." Millions of Catholics have already paid the ultimate price with their lives the past thirty years or so (most notably in the Sudan), and there is no end in sight. Not even we in the West are safe, as proven by 9/11. And subsequent events have shown that the danger will only increase as the removal of somewhat "secular" rulers (who at least protected Catholics to some degree) in countries such as Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Tunisia and other Islamic nations takes place. Now the threat of Islamic Jihadists taking over those nations and imposing their truly barbaric Sharia law is very real. Are they extremists, or are the proponents of Sharia law only being true to what the Koran dictates?

I'd like to perhaps connect some dots here. Those of us fortunate enough to attend the BSP retreat heard Fr. Kasel tell of his love for the Saints, from St. Francis to Padre Pio. He lives not only in the Presence of God, but in the presence of the Saints, who are our heroes. Here is the bottom line of today's adventures with Islam: **Millions of new heroes are being added to the rolls of the Saints!**

One cannot discount the reality that God's will is somehow involved in at least permitting the martyrdom of millions in a modern-day holocaust. We just don't hear about it from the secular media. This bloodbath is especially difficult for me to accept since my natural inclination would be to **join St. Lawrence in his crusade opposing those who fight against God and His Chosen People!** After all, in his day the stakes were extremely high: the very survival of Western Christian Civilization.

All throughout the Old Testament God permitted His Chosen People to be punished when they went astray, in an attempt to bring them back to their senses. He wanted them, as He wants us, **to be totally dependent upon Him**, and not upon any earthly ruler. The Philistines even took the revered Ark of the Covenant, a calamity worse than the Turks transforming St. Peter's Basilica into a manger for Mohammed's horses. We have no idea what calamities lie in store for us in response to man's infidelity to God in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. After two world wars against God-less European totalitarian ideologies, we are confronted once again with a nearly 1400 year-old conflict with Islam, which has for the most part proven itself to be immune to conversion or reform that entire time.

9/11 is a reminder for us to love and serve God faithfully, to be totally dependent upon Him, and to contemplate the possibility of a different kind of "new world order." Christian Civilization today is threatened by an alliance between Secular Socialism and Islam, strange bedfellows in that they have **nothing in common** except their mutual hatred of Christianity (and "the Great Satan," America). Will God permit a much more Godly alliance between Islam and Christianity against militant, Christophobic Secular Socialists? That would make a lot more sense. Both already work together in the UN on the great moral issues of the day: to prevent the acceptance and promotion of abortion and homosexuality, the two Great Sacraments of the Environmental New Age Church celebrating the Culture of Death.

Bishop Sheen used to talk of Fatima, Mohammed's daughter, and Muslim devotion to Mary. Our Blessed Mother has appeared in a number of Islamic nations recently, and I have heard of increasing numbers of conversions of Muslims to Christianity. Is it possible that by Christians following the precept of Jesus to love their enemies and do good to those who persecute them, Muslims may actually realize they have a Father in heaven who loves them. They have a Mother who as an instrument of the Holy Spirit seeks their salvation. They see the incredible witness of Christians freely laying down their lives in imitation of Jesus to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." We pray that they come to believe in the One True God, the Blessed Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to be praised by all His Creation!

Paul Beery BSP - Morning Star Chapter - Minnesota



## **The gift of your faith... A MEDITATION by Janet Klasson BSP**

From the Second Reading on the Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interest of others."** (Philippians 2:3-4)

As I mentioned in my retreat talk which was printed in the August issue of the newsletter, there are two things I often hear from people. The first is that they feel isolated in their faith walk, that in their family, workplace, peer group, or sometimes even their parish there are few people with whom they can openly share their faith. The second thing I hear a lot is that so many people are worried about family members who are far from God. They try everything to bring them to faith, but their words fall on deaf ears. They fear for the souls of these loved ones if they do not repent.

In fact, these two issues are closely related and the good news is that God, in his infinite wisdom and mercy, has got it all under control. Yes, dear child of the Father, God has a plan to bring those souls he loves more than you do, back to him. The enemy thinks he has won those souls, but God has a secret weapon. He has strategically placed his agents behind enemy lines. Those agents are none other than his faithful remnant--you and me.

Why do we feel isolated? Because we should! God has strategically placed us in the territory assigned to us. Think of a map with pins in it. The pins are spread out so that the most area may be covered with the resources available. Is it any wonder we feel like we are in the desert? Dear soldiers of Christ, not everyone can live near the well. Someone has to go out into the desert to show people how to get to the streams of living water.

God has not given up on our loved ones! God has given our loved ones the gift of OUR faith. And if he has called us to increased prayer and penance, he has given us

invincible weapons with which to defeat the enemy. If we have also consecrated ourselves to his Mother, we are behind the velvet-lined shield that no enemy can penetrate. In addition, we are strengthened with the Bread of Life--Jesus himself! Our only weakness then is our sin, and the more we go to confession the more we will plug the holes in our armor caused by sin. This mission--the salvation of souls--is fraught with danger. But we must never be discouraged in our mission, for in Christ, we are assured that we have the victory.

What does victory in the Lord look like? How do we know that we are winning the battle? Well, we can safely assume that the sign of victory is not great glory in this life. It is the way of the cross that leads to victory, dying daily to self, surrendering each moment to the will of God. That is what victory in Christ looks like. That is how we will know we are winning souls for Christ. When we surrender in each moment to the will of God, we can be certain that he is using our every moment to further the kingdom, no matter what our senses tell us.

It is easy to be grateful for the gift of faith in our lives for our own sake, but do we remember to thank God for the gift that our faith is to others? Do we remember to pray a prayer of surrender to Jesus each day so that he might enlarge his territory and win more souls? You and I are pitiful little warriors, it is true, but in Christ, the mercy of God flows through us into the world, causing living water to flow over stony hearts making them soft and receptive to the love that is waiting for them in the heart of their Father. Onward Christian soldiers!

**From [www.pelianito.stblogs.com](http://www.pelianito.stblogs.com)**

**Hear, O LORD, for you are a God of mercy; and have mercy on us, who have sinned against you.**

(Baruch 3:2 )

*"My child, if only my children would turn from sin and believe the Good News! If they would but ask for mercy, it would be showered upon them in abundance. But they have hardened their hearts. They do not cry to me but laugh in derision. I am being crucified anew in this generation. But I would joyfully endure it if I knew they would eventually turn to me. It is because I see that so many will remain obstinate that I grieve. There are many, so many who have no one to pray for them. It is up to my little servants to stand in the breach and intercede for those poor lost souls. Expand your prayers, little ones, in the Divine Will. All things are possible for God. He only seeks willing souls, abandoned to his purpose, who will act on his behalf on earth, for the sake of the souls he loves so much."*

Jesus, here I am. Use my every breath to your purpose. In your mercy, take the souls who are farthest from you, who have no one to pray for them and place them in your Mother's arms where they will be swaddled in her merits. Jesus, Lord have mercy on us all. Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter



**"If, after being admonished once or twice, a person does not amend, do not argue with him but commit the whole matter to God that His will and honor may be furthered in all His servants, for God knows well how to turn evil to good. Try to bear patiently with the defects and infirmities of others, whatever they may be, because you also have many a fault which others must endure. "**

*---Imitation of Christ, Sixteenth Chapter*



## FROM THE 'SPARROW'...Trust in God

The peace of Jesus. As a Franciscan and a Theresian (St. Therese the Little Flower)

I especially enjoy the Scriptures that deal with God and children...

*"Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise?'" [Matthew 21:16]*

Have you ever tried to quiet a noisy child? The louder you whisper "Shhh!" the louder the child cries (or chatters or whatever noise it is they are making) until your shushing is more disrupting than the child's noises.

When children have it in their minds to express themselves, they will. That is what happened to Jesus in

the temple. After the noisy turning over of the money changers tables, and amid the thankful murmurs of the people He healed, and the shushing of the scribes...the voices of the children must have sounded especially sweet to Jesus' ears.

The world wants the praises if God's children to CEASE. Yet despite laws, judgments, and subtle discouragement, PRAISE GOES ON!! When children and adults realize what God has done for them--bringing joy, healing, or comfort in sorrow; bringing the certainty of eternal life in heaven with Jesus--THEY CANNOT BE SHUSHED!!!

Come, my little sparrow friends, and let us join our small voices in the chorus of praise to the Lord. We can sing today, tomorrow, and all the way to heaven, where God has prepared a place of love for His little ones. Alleluia!

Bob Hall BSP. Little Flower Chapter



## MEDITATION ON THE PASSION by Dawn Usak, BSP

### First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death

**We adore you oh Christ and we praise you.**

**Because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.**

Oh my Jesus, how silently you stand as Pilate pronounces this unjust sentence upon you. You who has just to breathe and all of heaven would wage war on your accusers. Yet you quietly wait in all your humanity. Dear Jesus, do my sins ring out in the accusations against you? Is my soul silent as the universe cries out its grief?

Our Father..., Hail Mary..., Glory Be..., Amen.

*(Stations of the Cross. Painted by Sister Mary Leo Hergarten, SSND (1900-1959). Born in Milwaukee, Sr. Mary Leo studied art in Munich, Germany (1930-1934) and later headed the art department at Mount Mary College in Wisconsin. Suffering poor health, witnessing her mother's chronic illness and saddened by the premature deaths of siblings, Sister found her comfort in the Passion of Jesus. This set of Stations, painted in 1953, was first erected in the old St. Francis Hospital in Shakopee, Minn. When the Sisters of St. Francis made major modifications to the Chapel they gave the set to Fr. Robert Bayer, who mounted them at the Franciscan Retreat Centre, Prior Lake MN.)*



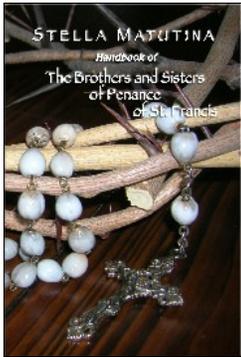
**"Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."**

(Romans 12:2)



## MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

### HANDBOOK OF THE ASSOCIATION...



The BSP Handbook, titled ***Stella Matutina: Handbook of The Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis*** is now available for order. 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

## 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)**

