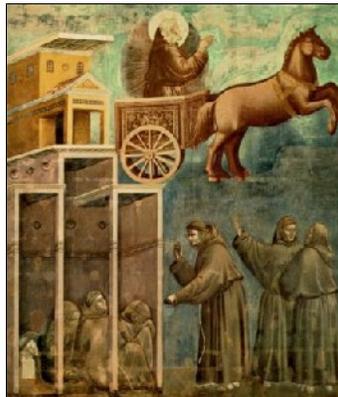


...IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT, FOR CHRIST!

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter IV—The Progress of the Order under Francis' Guidance and the Confirmation of the Rule

4. While they were still living in the hut already mentioned, St. Francis went into Assisi one Saturday because he was to preach as usual in the cathedral the following morning. There he spent the night praying in a shelter in the garden belonging to the canons of the cathedral, as was his custom. In person he was separated from the friars, but then about midnight, as some of them were praying and others slept, a fiery chariot of extraordinary brilliance came in the door of the hut and turned here and there three times about the room. It was surmounted by a globe of light which looked like the sun and lit up the darkness. Those who were awake were dumbfounded, while the others woke up terrified; they could feel the light penetrating their hearts just as it lit up the room, and their consciences were laid bare to one another by force of its brightness. As they read one another's hearts, they all realized simultaneously that their father who was absent from them in person was present with them in spirit under the appearance of this vision. They were sure God had shown him to them in this glorious chariot of fire, radiant with the splendor of heaven and inflamed with



burning ardor, so that they might follow him as loyal disciples. Like a second Elias, God had made him a “chariot and charioteer” (cf. 4 Kings 2: 12) for all spiritual people. Certainly, it seems that God opened the eyes of these ordinary men at the request of St. Francis, so that they might contemplate his divine power, just as he had once opened the eyes of the servant of the prophet Eliseus, so that he could see “the whole mountainside beset with flaming horses and chariots there about Eliseus” (cf. 4 Kings 6:17).

When Francis rejoined his companions, he began to probe the depths of their consciences, exhorting them to take courage from the wonderful vision they had seen. He made a number of predictions about the future growth of the Order and, as he continued to reveal secrets beyond the grasp of human understanding, the friars realized that the Spirit of God dwelt in his servant Francis so abundantly that they need have no hesitation in following his life and teaching.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE Homily by Fr. Robert Altier... The Baptism of Our Lord

Today, as we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord, the question that always comes up in people's minds is “Why would Jesus be baptized? John, after all, came to preach a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus is God, therefore, He had no sin and He had no reason to repent, so what would be the

reason for Jesus to be baptized?” The saints tell us that one of the reasons He was baptized was not because He needed to be made holy by Baptism, but rather He needed to make holy the waters of Baptism. As the old saying goes, “No one can give what he doesn't have,” and so Jesus came into this world to take away our sins and to give to us the Holy Spirit. In all three of the readings

today, we hear about the Holy Spirit. In the Prophet Isaiah, God (speaking about His Suffering Servant from the forty-second chapter) says about the servant that upon him rests the spirit: "Here is my servant whom I uphold, upon whom my spirit rests." In the second reading, the angels went to Peter to call him to go to the house of Cornelius (who was a pagan but yet he believed in God) and to baptize them. As Peter's sermon began, he said, "I take it you know what has been told throughout the region beginning in Galilee with the baptism John preached and how Jesus was filled with power and the Holy Spirit." Then, of course, in the Gospel reading, we hear what happened at Our Lord's Baptism and how the heavens were torn open and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and rested upon Him and the voice of the Father was heard: You are My beloved Son; upon You My favor rests. And so we have a revelation of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – the voice of the Father and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Son of God.

Part of the purpose of Our Lord's Baptism then, as we see in the first reading, is that He is going to be made by God as a covenant of the people. And if He is going to be a covenant then we have to somehow be incorporated into Him because one must be incorporated into the covenant in order to share in it. For the people of old, for instance, it was in circumcision that they were incorporated into the covenant of Abraham. There are numerous covenants, six of them in the Old Testament and one in the New – universal covenants, that is. In the New Covenant, the important thing for us to understand is that Jesus Himself is the covenant. We see it in the first reading today and if you look in Isaiah 49 you are going to see the exact same thing, that the Servant is a covenant to the people. And so it is different, in this case, from any other covenant.



As I pointed out many times before, God made a covenant with Adam; He made a covenant with Noah; He made a covenant with Abraham; He made a covenant with Moses; He made a covenant with David. Jesus is the covenant. He did not make a covenant with Jesus – Jesus is the covenant. This is also made very clear if you read Saint Luke's Gospel at the very beginning, as Our Lady goes to visit Elizabeth and she is carrying Jesus in her womb. The thing that Saint Luke is trying to make very clear to us is that Our Lady is the Ark of the Covenant. The old Ark of the Covenant carried within it the tablets of the covenant with Moses, but Our Lady carried within herself the New and Eternal Covenant. You see the same thing if you look in the Book of Revelation at the very end of Chapter 11 and the beginning of Chapter 12 when the heavens are opened and the Ark of the Covenant is seen. What does it look like? A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars, as she wails aloud in pain to give birth. It is Our Lady who is the Ark of the Covenant and Jesus Himself is the covenant. Now, as I mentioned, with each covenant one must be incorporated into the covenant, and it is no different with the New Covenant. We must be incorporated

into the covenant, and that covenant is Jesus. So Our Lord, in being baptized, showed Himself to be the Servant upon whom the Spirit rests. He showed Himself to be the covenant and gave to us the means by which we would be incorporated into the covenant because it was at His Baptism that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and the voice of the Father was heard. In Baptism, now for us, it is more than just the baptism of John, which was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin – which we certainly need – but it is more than that. Jesus commanded as His very last commandment before He ascended into Heaven to go out and teach all nations and to baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is in this that we are baptized and we become members of the covenant. We share in the covenant Who is Jesus Christ.

That is why so many times in this very pulpit I have said that in Baptism we become members of Christ, sharers of the divine life – all the virtues that are given, all the gifts that are given. The Holy Spirit has descended upon each one of us at our baptism and even though the voice of the Father was not heard nor was the Holy Spirit seen in the form of a dove, nonetheless, the same reality is true that at the moment we are baptized and all sin is removed from our soul, our heavenly Father looks upon each one of us and says of us, "You are My son, you are My daughter, on you My favor rests." It is not quite in the same manner as He would have said that regarding His Son Jesus, yet at the same time, because we are members of Jesus Christ at the moment that we are baptized, it is spoken of us in that same manner that we have been given the dignity to share in the divine life. Therefore, we are made members of the covenant at the moment we are baptized.

So in being baptized, Jesus then is showing to us the means by which each one of us will be incorporated into the covenant and He is demonstrated clearly as the covenant, which the people would not have understood. Even Saint John the Baptist gave witness to that, he said, "I myself did not recognize Him," and then went on to testify that God had revealed to him that the One upon Whom he would see the Spirit descend like a dove is the One Who would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. It was essential, not only for John the Baptist to know the One Whom he was preaching, but for each one of us to be able to know the truth not only of what happened on the day Our Lord was baptized but the truth for each one of us of what happens on the day we are baptized.

We are able to look back at the Old Testament and see what God prophesied regarding the New Covenant. He did promise numerous times that there would be a New Covenant. Perhaps one of the clearest and most famous passages in the Old Testament and one that is very easily placed in memory because of the manner in which God revealed it is Jeremiah 31:31. All you need to do is remember the Trinity: Three Persons in one God – Jeremiah 31:31. It foretells the New Covenant, that God is going to make a new covenant and that the Gentiles and the Jews would be sharers in the covenant. It was no

secret that there would be a new covenant; the only question was "How and Whom?" It would not make any sense to a Jewish mind that a person would be a covenant. God made covenants with His people; He did not make a single person a covenant to the people. And so even though they could see what Isaiah was saying, it did not make a whole lot of sense to them.

Until we see what happened at the Baptism of Our Lord, and until we reflect at what happened at our own baptism, it would not make a whole lot of sense to us either, except that for us to be incorporated into the covenant does not simply make us the people of God the way the Old Covenant did with the people of Israel – we are made members of the only Son of God, literally made into children of God because we are incorporated into His Son. Not just incorporated into a generic people that are called by the Name of God, but we literally become members of the Son of God. We share in the divine life; we share in the divine nature. The Holy Spirit is given to us along with the theological virtues, the cardinal virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit; all of that is poured into our hearts. We become members of the Church; we become Christian people; we become members of Jesus Christ; we become priest, prophet, and king. All these things happen at the very moment that we are baptized because we are baptized into Jesus, not just into a generic people of God. That is what it means that He is the covenant. The only way we are going to be able to share in eternal life is if we share in the Person Who is eternal life, and that is Jesus Christ.

And so the dignity that God has given to us is understood only when we recognize that we are members of Jesus Christ, and that He is the covenant and we are incorporated into Him as sharers in the covenant. This is something we need to reflect on, and reflect on it often. Think about your dignity. It was not enough for God that He made you in His image and likeness; it was not enough for Him simply to call you one of His own; it was not enough for Him simply to offer you eternal life; it was not enough for Him to simply forgive your sins; it was not even enough for Him to offer you the Holy Spirit – but He made you a member of His own Son, Who is the Second Person of the Trinity and the Son of Mary. You are a member of Jesus Christ. Think about your dignity. God became man born of Mary, as we celebrated just a few weeks ago, and our dignity at that moment rose infinitely from being the pinnacle of God's creation and the crown jewel in His crown of creation to suddenly having a dignity that was absolutely inconceivable to humanity that we would be incorporated into God, that we would share the divine life and the divine nature, that God would become man so that man could become more like God. And so in the birth of Jesus, in the Incarnation at the conception of Jesus, the dignity of our humanity was raised up to a divine level. But that was not even enough for God. He will



never be outdone in generosity, so He has given to each one of us an infinite gift, not only to be able to look upon the face of Jesus and say, "What an unbelievable and unimaginable thing that God would become man!" – no, that was not enough for God that He would share in your nature – God was going to allow you to share in His nature. That is something that is even more incomprehensible to us than God sharing in our nature, but it is the truth; it is the reality of who you are.

So I highly recommend to you that you come often before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and that you reflect upon this mystery, not only the mystery of Jesus Christ, God made man, but the mystery of yourself, man made god, on the mystery that you celebrate every time you receive Holy Communion. Every covenant has a sign, and the Eucharist is the sign of the covenant into which we are incorporated at our own baptism. Jesus is the covenant and He is the sign of the covenant. We celebrate that regularly. The privilege and the dignity which is ours is something upon which we must meditate profoundly and deeply.

We need to be very careful that we do not simply take this truth for granted. "Familiarity breeds contempt," the old saying goes, and if it becomes so commonplace for us that we just come forward and receive Jesus in Communion without giving it a second thought, what difference does it make to us? What does it reflect within us? What does it do to us and for us? But if we

understand that that is the sign of the covenant, that it is our union with Christ, that we were incorporated into that union at Baptism – incorporate means "in the body"; we were made members of the Mystical Body of Christ – then we receive the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ so that we are able to celebrate and renew the covenant which is ours in Baptism. That is what is happening inside of you every single time you receive Holy Communion. You are renewing your commitment that you made in Baptism to reject Satan and to choose God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit and His Church, to profess your faith in Christ and in everything that He is and in everything that He taught.

This is why we must unite ourselves also with Him in prayer to reflect upon the reality of His humility in becoming one of us and to reflect upon the reality of our exaltation in becoming one with Him. That is the reason of His Baptism: so that He could be shown as the covenant to the people, so that we would understand our dignity in recognizing the covenant into which we are incorporated, and that we would understand more fully what it is that we do every time we celebrate and renew that covenant in Holy Communion. Think about that. Not only on the day that you were baptized, but every time that you receive Holy Communion in the state of grace, the Holy Spirit fills you and the voice of the Father resounds in your heart as He looks upon His Son truly present within you and says to you, "You are My son, on you My favor rests."

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... Conversion

Dear Friends,

As we approach yet another year we do well to take the time to consider our own conversion. A few years ago, when we went on a vacation to Medjugorje, we were present in a meeting of pilgrims in a mission there. The nun who was speaking called us all to repent, and return to the Lord.

The message seemed strange considering we had just traveled half way around the world to be present to the messages of conversion that are flowing constantly out of Medjugorje to everyone in the world. Yet, it was a realistic call that we do well to ponder in our own lives from time to time. The coming of a new year is a good time.

To do this we need to take the time to sit down and think about how we are living our lives for Christ. Since we are in the BSP already we have taken a major step towards God in our efforts to understand and live a Rule of life given to us by Saint Francis. This Rule is the means to the end, not the end in itself. Since it is the means to the end we need to examine it well. How are we doing at living it. How can we improve in living it better this next year. That is an excellent start to our meditation on our conversion.

The things in heaven are heavenly, and not easy to understand while we live in this world. We have all been

told and it is written: "What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love him..." (1 Cor 2:9) We honestly don't know what is coming but what is coming is a total involvement and penetration into the mystery of the divinity that will be wonderful and eternal. Heaven is beyond our mind's eye and so now we struggle, all of us, to even understand what we have to do to enter heaven. This is the conversion we must seek. How do we prepare, day to day and in every way, to enter into the presence of God forever? Yet, what we need to do has been given us.

The Gospel is the key to personal conversion. We need to read it, meditate on it, and to seek to live it generously. The Rule that St. Francis gave us is the way we can do that. So, we need to examine that Rule and all it calls us to and see how we are doing in living it.

How are we doing in our prayer life? In denying ourselves the legitimate pleasures of our life in our call to practice abstinence and fast on a regular basis? How are we doing in living the corporal and spiritual works of mercy that the Church has defined for us as a reasonable response to living a Christian life? How are we doing on living simpler lives. How can we do better.

As the new year dawns take some time and examine your life. Find some areas you can do better in and make a plan to do that. And have a Happy, and Holy, New Year.

May God bless and lead us all.

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



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery BSP

"Sovereign Lord, as You have promised, You now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people; a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32)

Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, convert from Anglicanism in 1851, gave a series of lectures on how the entire Western world was living through the consequences of the Reformation and Enlightenment. These lectures were gathered into a book called *"The Fourfold Sovereignty of God"* published in 1871. This time of year we pray for peace, and wonder why there is no peace. Cardinal Manning gives the best explanation I have ever seen. I will give him the lectern, and without comment let him have at it

God is deprived of supernatural grace, so too a civil society that separates itself from the Church in like manner is deprived of its supernatural perfection. It no longer has the support and guidance, the light and sanctification which the Kingdom of God bestowed upon it. Just as men are born through the sin of Adam into a state of privation, so the kingdom or people which has separated itself from the Church is thereby deprived of the truth and grace of Christianity. Generation after generation are born into that state of public privation of the light and

"Just as an individual who separates himself from

grace of faith.

"Secondly, if Christianity be the elevation of a people, to fall from it is a degradation, a retrograde movement, a going backwards from the state of Christian civilization into the state of nature before Christianity entered into the civil life of man.

"Thirdly, to fall from Christianity is a dissolution because the bonds of civil society are loosened. As man, who came out of the dust when his living spirit departs returns to dust again, so most assuredly every state or kingdom which rejects the sovereignty of God, in due time will dissolve and turn again into its original confusion. It may happen by revolution, internal disorder, loss of coherence, the impossibility of maintaining its social state, foreign aggression, warfare, or conquest, it matters not. The Word of God stands plain, and sooner or later shall be fulfilled: 'The nation and the kingdom that will not serve Thee, shall perish.' This is true not only by judicial sentence, but by the intrinsic law of its own being, which works out its own dissolution.

"If such be the effect of this revolt upon civil society of the world, what is its effect upon men one by one? When families and households have lost their domestic Christianity, which illuminated and sanctified parents and children, brothers and sisters, the result can be easily foreseen. If submission to the sovereignty of God by faith be the perfection and the dignity of the intellect, then the loss of that submission is its abasement. If submission unto the will of the sovereignty of God, to the laws of faith and charity be the perfection of the human heart, then any man or woman who refuses to submit to that sovereignty is degraded. If to be a disciple of Jesus Christ be the highest and most perfect state to which we can attain, they who fall from that state of discipleship fall from their dignity and welfare. And when that is the condition of households, God help such a people: there is no help left in themselves.

"Such then, being the first consequences upon states, families and men, what must be the future of the world? First of all, the moral powers of the civil society of the world will become weaker and weaker. The moral authority, the moral sanctions, the moral influence, the power of prevailing over subjects to live in civil obedience, become less and less potent and persuasive in proportion as the State departs from its public profession and practice of Christianity.

"As the government becomes weak, its power of coercing is paralyzed, its power of conciliation is lost. The same befalls the authority of parents over their children; the moral self-control in which men ought to be trained up becomes impossible. Philosophers describe a man who has

lost self-control, that is, the government over himself, as an intemperate man. And when men have lost the government over their passions, lust, anger, avarice and the like, what will be the state of society?

"Next, while the moral power diminishes, the material power must be perpetually increased—laws of coercion, penalties, police, standing armies. When men can no longer be governed by the free assent of reason convinced of duty, and by the spontaneous obedience of the will submitted to the law, what remains to government but brute force?

"St. Paul, describing this state of men, says that they shall be 'faithless.' The word in the original Greek means men with whom you can make no treaties; men in whose fidelity you cannot trust; with whom you can make neither convention nor truce, whom no international law, no respect of mutual rights can bind. And are not these last days now upon us?

"What treaty or law or obligation binding nations to respect the rights of weaker neighbors is respected now?(Remember this was written more than forty years before World War I – rather prophetic words!) Compacts and conventions perish. The fruit of this is manifest—perpetual danger of external war, and the most horrible conflicts which this world has ever seen.

"And these external conflicts become internal too. A spirit of strife is poured out upon men; class is set against class, interest against interest, household against household, man against man, men against their rulers, against law, against authority. In the shock and disorder of contentions, society is dissolved. When the masses learn to know their power, the day is come to use it. From all this results one of two things: either the tyranny of the multitude, blind to everything but the freaks and gusts of its own will, or the iron despotism of a military dictator.

"Woe to the world when the Legislator, who, on the mountain promulgated the eight beatitudes is no longer acknowledged as the Lawgiver and Sovereign of mankind! There remains nothing for the nations but the raging sea of popular lawlessness, or the iron rule of despots. The world's disorders, its revolutions, the rising of people against people and kingdom against kingdom, the dissensions among brethren, the treason against laws, the conspiracies which undermine the social order, the visible changing unto death and into dust which is upon the whole political order of men who have renounced Christianity—all this manifests by an unconscious acknowledgment the Sovereignty of God.

"All these things are fulfilling the will of God. All things are for the sake of His elect, and He is accomplishing in the world His sovereignty in a way so unerring and so luminous that they who believe can see it, and they who will not believe, in their blindness seem to be reduced to a railing instead of reasoning against it. There has been a line of faithful servants of God in all ages, an unbroken chain, link within link; from just Abel down to the present day. This line of faithful servants became a chosen people, chosen and preserved by the grace of God, before and after the Incarnation; organized and knit together into one kingdom of faith.

"God willed all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He willed that all men be called to the unity of the Church. His Apostles were sent to make disciples of all nations. Who will believe, he may freely enter into it; whoso will not believe, he closes the door against himself. The gates of the heavenly city stand open day and night; God never shuts them. They who have never heard of the Kingdom of God will not have to give an account of it. They will be judged by what little they knew, and by that which they could not have known. Those who might have

known it will be judged according to the way in which they received or rejected the light that was offered to them. All things are ordered for this work of salvation.

"God knows from all eternity who will be saved, and how many they will be. He does not diminish the number by refusing salvation to the willing, and He will not multiply the number by forcing the free will of those who will not believe. It is a mystery of sovereign grace and human freedom. All things are working for the accomplishment of the mystery of salvation, even the sins and wickedness and persecutions of the world; all tend to the salvation of those who believe."

What a masterful analysis of what will happen to individuals and nations that reject their Christian heritage! It is our privilege, duty and honor to be among the "Faithful Remnant" Cardinal Manning describes. In this New Year let us pray for the grace of perseverance to be true to this high calling, and praise and bless the Lord for entrusting such a wonderful gift to the care of His lowly servants.

Paul Beery BSP - Morning Star Chapter - Minnesota



Saints and Angels **A MEDITATION by Janet Klasson BSP**

From the Second Reading of Epiphany Sunday

The Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. (Ephesians 3:6)

Last year, a website came to my attention whose mission it is to match people with a patron saint for the year. The website is <http://yourpatronsaint.blogspot.com/>. The claim on the website is that when you request a patron saint through them, your patron saint actually chooses you. The concept is based on this excerpt from the Diary of St. Faustina:

"There is a custom among us of drawing by lot, on New Year's Day, special Patrons for ourselves for the whole year. In the morning, during meditation, there arose within me a secret desire that the Eucharistic Jesus be my special Patron for this year also, as in the past. But, hiding this desire from my Beloved, I spoke to Him about everything else but that. When we came to refectory for breakfast, we blessed ourselves and began drawing our patrons. When I approached the holy cards on which the names of the patrons were written, without hesitation I took one, but I didn't read the name immediately as I wanted to mortify myself for a few minutes. Suddenly, I heard a voice in my soul: 'I am your patron.

Read.' I looked at once at the inscription and read, 'Patron for the Year 1935 - the Most Blessed Eucharist.' My heart leapt with joy, and I slipped quietly away from the sisters and went for a short visit before the Blessed Sacrament, where I poured out my heart. But Jesus sweetly admonished me that I should be at that moment together with the sisters. I went immediately in obedience to the rule."

Last year my patron saint for the year was a saint I had never heard of before—St. Emmeram. As it turned out I had a special connection with the saint. His feast day, September 22, happened to be the anniversary date of my son's death. I felt it was a confirmation and that he had indeed chosen me. I did a little study of the saint and found he died as a martyr in around the year 652. What a blessing to have a martyr for a patron saint for the year!

This year I have requested a new patron saint, and have been chosen by Saint Honoratus, another little-known saint. (I am not letting go of St. Emmeram however!)

Perhaps it would be tempting to think that there is more merit in being chosen by a more well-known saint. However, I think that these little-known saints must be just waiting to be invoked, and would be most willing to be of assistance. Who calls on St. Emmeram and St. Honoratus these days? Only me I suspect.

We are richly blessed in the Catholic Church in that our tradition encourages veneration of the saints and angels. They are our holy helpers and friends. They are guardians of a rich treasury of merits that they most willingly share with us if we but ask. They are our staunchest allies and our truest friends, especially in these dangerous times.

We have all no doubt heard the words of St. Thérèse of Lisieux: "I want to spend my heaven in doing good on earth." There are also the words of St. Dominic on his deathbed: "Do not weep, for I shall be more useful to you after my death and I shall help you then more effectively than during my life." Praised be Jesus for these words of comfort and for allowing his saints to participate in this way in his plan for humanity. And of course, let us not forget to invoke daily the patronage of Father Francis and St. Clare who love us so much and want to help us persevere in the way of penance.

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God.

"My beloved child, do you understand the great honor I bestow on you in calling you my child? I have taken away the shame earned for you through the sin of Adam and Eve. Now, even though you live on the earth, heaven is your home. Keep this thought firmly in your mind as the days darken. The holy ones who have completed their mission on earth stand ready to assist those still on the journey. There is much to come, but all the details have been worked out! You, my faithful ones, will be given tremendous graces if you trust in me. The angels and saints are already assembled—they have their instructions. Do not neglect to ask for their assistance, for they are eager, very eager, to help and it is my joy to give them this honor and duty, especially in this dark hour, for their light can never be dimmed. Let the lights of heaven guide you, my children. Then you will know joy and peace, no matter what comes."

Jesus I trust in you and call on the assistance of the Gloriana now and in the time to come. May all you have planned come to pass, for your glory. Jesus I trust in you. Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter



FROM THE 'SPARROW' A Sparrow's Story at Christmas

It was cold, as I was perched on the roof of the small barn, as sparrows are wont to do, and watching a beautiful star that had appeared over Bethlehem. That was why I did not see the little

boy when he threw the stone that hit me on my folded wing. As I fell toward the ground I spread my wings in frantic flight and went inside the barn and flew up and landed on a ceiling rafter. In pain and hoping the boy did not follow me I noticed there was a man, a woman, and a

baby in a manger also in the barn. Now I understood why so many people had of late come into the barn for it was to see these people. The reason they wanted to see them was not clear. What was it they were looking for in this place?

The little Child Jesus lifted His head toward the door to look at the little boy who had now come into the barn. The boy was trembling and a bit scared. "Come," said the Child Jesus. "Why are you afraid?"

"I don't dare come to you. I have nothing to offer you like the others who came here. I only came in to find my little sparrow friend," he lied.

"Yet I would be so happy if you would give me a present." The little boy, red with shame, answered: "I really have nothing, nothing that belongs to me. If I had something, I would readily give it to you. See!" And he started to check the pockets of his shabby patched trousers. Then he pulled out an old rusted knife that he found. "That's all I have. If you want it, I'll give it to you."

"No," answered the Child Jesus. "Keep it. I would like something much more different than that from you. In fact, I would like you to make me three gifts."

"I'm ready to do that," said the little boy, "but what can I do for you?"

"Offer me the last drawing you made," answered the Child Jesus.

All embarrassed, the little boy started to blush. He came closer to the crib, and to prevent Mary and Joseph from hearing what he had to say, he whispered in the Child Jesus' ear: "I don't want to give you that. It's so ugly; nobody wants to look at it!"

"Well," said the Child Jesus, "that's why I would like to have it. You must always offer me what other people reject, what they do not like in you." Then the newborn Child Jesus continued, "I would like you to give me your plate."

"But I broke it this morning!" stammered the little boy.

That is why I want it. You must always offer me what is broken in your life. I want to put all the pieces back

together again." Then the Child Jesus insisted, "Repeat to me the answer you gave your parents when they asked how you had broken your plate."

The face of the little boy became sad and gloomy. He lowered his head and shamefully murmured: "I lied to them. I told them that the plate accidentally slid through my fingers, but it was not true. I was angry and I furiously pushed my plate and it fell on the floor tiles and shattered to pieces."

"This is what I wanted you to tell me," said Jesus. "Always give me what is evil in your life, your lies, your calumnies, your cowardice, your cruelties. I want to take this load off your shoulders, because you don't need it. I am here to help you in your life." Then the Child Jesus said to the little boy: "I want to make you happy, and I want you to remember that I will always forgive your faults. And I will console you when you come before me with honesty."

Then giving the little boy a big hug for having given him these three gifts, the Child Jesus added, "Now that you know the road that leads to my heart, I would be happy if you would come and see me every day."

As the little boy turned to leave he let fall to the floor a stone he had been clutching in his hand. The Child Jesus looked up at the rafter I was perched on and smiled and the pain in my wing was suddenly gone. I flew out of the barn and landed on the little boy's shoulder as he was standing there looking up at the star. He looked at me, then back to the star, then at the barn and nodded his head and smiled as if a great mystery had been revealed to him. Somehow the star and the Child had brought healing and peace between the little boy and this sparrow...but how long a time it would last was yet unknown in my little world...but for now it was enough.

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter



MEDITATION ON THE PASSION by Dawn Usak, BSP

Fifth Station: Simon Helps Jesus Bear His Cross

**We adore you oh Christ and we praise you.
Because by Your Holy Cross, You have redeemed the world.**

My dear Lord, the weight of my sins once again becomes too heavy for your innocent shoulders. Do I reluctantly help You carry the Cross out of some sense of obligation? Rather, may I willingly run to You and pick up the burden of my sins. May my life be one of atonement for the sake of Your Passion.

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.)

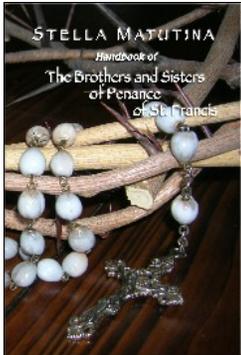


MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

PRAYERS FOR ANNA FERONI

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Anna Feroni is a sister in the BSP who is seriously ill. She is the original webmaster and has been a dear friend to Bruce and Shelley and many in the Association for a number of years. Please continue to keep her in your prayers.

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 next day (John) saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, "A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me." I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel.' John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit." Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.'"

(John 1:29-34)



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)

**The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF
PENANCE**



of St. Francis

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