... 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



5. After this, at God's prompting, Francis brought his little flock of twelve friars to St. Mary of the Portiuncula. It was there that the Order of Friars Minor had been founded by the merits of the Mother of God, and it was there, too, that it would grow to maturity by her intercession.

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE OF ST. FRANCIS

From the Portiuncula, Francis set out as a herald of the Gospel to preach the kingdom of God in the towns and villages in the vicinity, "not in such words as human wisdom teaches, but in words taught him by the Spirit" (1 Cor 2: 13). To those who saw him he seemed like a man from another world as, with his gaze fixed on heaven where his heart always dwelt, he tried to lift their thoughts on high. As a result of his efforts the supernatural vineyard of Christ began to put

forth shoots which gave out a pleasing fragrance before God and produced fruit in abundance, lush and rich.

6. Carried away by the force of his preaching, great numbers of people adopted the new rule of penance according to the form instituted by St. Francis which he called the "Order of the Brothers of Penance." The way of penance is common to all those who are on the road to heaven and so this way of life includes members of both sexes, clerics and lay-folk, married or single. How meritorious it is in the eyes of God is clear from the numerous miracles worked by some of those who followed it. Unmarried women were inspired to profess a life of perpetual virginity, among whom St. Clare was especially dear to God. She was the first flower in Francis' garden, and she shone like a radiant star, fragrant as a flower blossoming white and pure in springtime. She was his daughter in Christ and foundress of the Poor Clares. Now she has been glorified in heaven and on earth the church pays her the honor which is her due.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE Homily by Fr. Robert Altier... Self-denial, the Path to Holiness

As we begin this blessed season of Lent, the readings today lay out for us the manner in which

we are to approach this. We hear, for instance, in the first reading that we are to call together all of the people, to call an assembly, and to have them pray, and have the priests praying and weeping before the Lord, begging for mercy for the people. The people, on the other hand, are also to be praying and fasting. Saint Paul tells us that he is like an ambassador for Christ, God appealing through him that we would all be reconciled to God. That is what this is all about; it is about union with God, reconciliation with the Lord, uniting our hearts more perfectly with Him. It is

about growth in holiness.

This is a season, certainly, of self-denial; but that self-denial is not just an end in itself, but rather, it has a specific purpose – and that is to be able to grow in holiness. As we deny ourselves on one level, we need to fill that in with something else. We take one thing away and we fill that area up, and we fill it with holiness. So in the Gospel reading, then, Jesus tells us the way this is to be done. He tells us that we are to do this in secret, not to be making a big issue of what it is that we are doing, not to be running around trying to make a scene for others to notice that we are doing something different. In fact, on a



February 2012

day like today, we need to be particularly careful, as it is a day of fasting. And so for those who have to take care of children or those who need to go to work or whatever, anybody who does not just have to be all by himself, you need to be careful that you maintain your charity, your joy, your patience, and so on. Fasting and being impatient and biting people's heads off is not the way that God would have us fast, but rather if we are going to offer this little tiny bit (and that is really all that it is: this little tiny bit of suffering) to the Lord, we need to be able to do that with the greatest charity. And we need to keep in mind that we are offering it for the good of others.

Recall, again, that our Holy Father has asked specifically that we would fast and pray today for peace. If the result of what we are doing in praying for peace becomes a lack of peace around us because we are not at peace, then we are totally destroying the very purpose for which we are doing this. So we need to be at peace. We need to be in union with Christ; that is the way we will be at peace. If it is just "me fasting for the sake of fasting," first of all, it will be easy by lunchtime to give up, and secondly, it will be very frustrating because it is just "me by own strength trying to do it." But if I am fasting in union with Christ and for a purpose, then it takes on a whole different dimension. That is the way we need to see it: that we are

not doing it by our own strength but by His strength; and that we are not doing it for ourselves or some selfish reason, but rather it is being done out of charity for others. If we can keep that clearly in mind, then we can have strength to cooperate with the grace and have the strength to be able to continue with whatever our penance happens to be during this holy season.

But we need to look seriously at the penance we have chosen and ask ourselves, "Is this going to help me toward Christ? Is this going to help me move closer to Heaven? Or is it just something that is for myself?" That is what we need to look at. Is it just something that is earthbound or is it something that is going to lift me up toward Heaven? That is the question that is most critical because this holy season is about self-denial, and if our penance is selfish, it, again, defeats the purpose. Our penance needs to be out of love for Christ and it needs to lead us to greater union with Christ. So as we begin this season today with a day of fasting, with a day of abstinence, and a day of prayer, it sets the tone for the whole season to be able to deny the self - indeed, to learn to die to self - so that we can live for Christ and we can grow in perfect union with Christ; and in that way, to be reconciled to Him, and through us, through our prayer, through our self-denial, it will also bring others to be reconciled to Christ.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... On Our Call

We ponder often the direction that Archbishop Flynn gave us in this Association in October of 1996. He said:

> "I grant you permission to live according to the First Rule of the Third

Order of St. Francis - that given to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance by St. Francis in his day. I grant permission to gather in support of your efforts to live the Gospel more perfectly. I find this invigorating in this day and age when the Gospel is taken so lightly. I grant permission to promote this penitential lifestyle of the original Rule beyond your own families and to build a support network within the Church and with my blessing."

This was what we asked Archbishop Flynn for, the opportunity, in the Church, to live the Rule of 1221, gather in support of it, and promote it gently in the Church. it is worth pondering this message from Archbishop Flynn, from time to time.

We all have the ability and the call to live this Rule, especially those of us who have professed. In a very certain sense, for those of us professed to live the Rule, we can consider these words as addressed to each of us personally.

We have permission to live the Rule. Now that is what the call is all about, first and foremost. When the people came

to St. Francis in his day they asked him to give them a way to live so they could get to heaven. St. Francis took this request most seriously, and after extensive prayer and meditation, and using Cardinal Hugolini as his writer, he gave them the Rule of 1221. The Rule says little about bringing others into the lifestyle directly but indirectly it says a lot. Article 1 refers to "The men belonging to this brotherhood..." and in Article 3 he refers to "The sisters in turn...". Later, in Article 9 he says: "They are to fast daily", and in Article 11: "Those engaged in fatiguing work..." Again, in Article 19 he says: "All the brothers and sisters of every city and place are to foregather every month at the time the ministers see fit..." Notice these are all plurals.

So, the permission we are given to live the Rule ourselves is extended to all others by the intention of St. Francis as contained in the Rule itself.

And then there is the call to gather. All of us, all the brothers and sisters, are called to foregather every month, by Article 19. Where we are only one, and that is factually most of us right now in the Association, we are called to find others who want to live this way. Whether in our family or outside our family doesn't matter but our Visitor has said that to form a BSP Chapter we need people from outside our family. So our Visitor also has said we need to expand the reach of the Rule to others if we want to grow the Association. To help others to enter into this race for heaven with us. This in itself is a good meditation, and at the same time a call for us all, especially if we have professed to the Rule ourselves.

Finally, we have permission to promote it gently in the Church. That isn't stated in the original Rule but it is implied by various articles in the Rule in how they are worded.

It is good for us to consider what Archbishop Flynn gave us and to ponder in our own lives how we can turn this call we feel to the lifestyle that St. Francis gave us into a universal call to others. If you are looking for a ministry in the Church you have it in living and promoting our Rule.

If you would like help in reaching out to others feel free to

contact us, the Administrators, and we can give you some ideas how to do that. First and foremost, of course, is that you have to believe in the Rule yourselves and live it in your own lives. Invisibly, of course, as the Lord said we should not make a big deal out of living holy lives, but in gentle ways we should all be open to bring others into this way of life. That means we can all speak of it to others, when the opportunity presents itself. We do well to ask God to open doors in our lives so we can do that.

May the Lord bless and lead us all!

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





NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery BSP

"Blest are you, Simon son of Jonah! No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. I for my part declare to you that you are 'Rock,' and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:17-18)

"There have been four great divorces in the Church's two thousand year history." So began a talk by Patrick Coffin on EWTN, who is preparing a new DVD presentation on "Humanae Vitae," Pope Paul VI's prophetic encyclical of 1968, predicting with uncanny accuracy the current state of the Church and the world. These four divorces shed light on Cardinal Manning's lecture last month, that there are grievous consequences for those who consciously separate themselves from the Church which Jesus founded. Cardinal Manning faulted particularly the second and third divorces. He didn't live to see the fourth.

The **first great divorce** destroyed the Unity of the Church: the schism between West and East, between the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox.

The **second great divorce** was between the Church and Jesus Christ, known as the Reformation.

The **third great divorce** was between faith and reason, a triumph of the so-called "Enlightenment."

The **fourth great divorce** came in the twentieth century, a separation between Life and Love.

He said the problems Western Christian Civilization is now experiencing began with the Reformation. As a faithful Catholic all my life, I find it difficult to disagree, to empathize with the Reformers. Certainly the Church needed reform at that time, as it does in every age—as long as weak human beings subject to the effects of Original Sin are in charge. Nothing new there. But what began as a perhaps legitimate effort at reform ended in complete revolt against the authority of the Church, given it by Jesus Christ Himself. Today's bumper sticker: "Question authority," began with the Reformation. Many teachings of Jesus and the Apostles and doctrines of the Church held steadfastly for 1500 years were jettisoned.

The Orthodox denied the validity of the Pope as Vicar of Christ, the head of the Church, and felt they had similar Apostolic authority. But they never dreamed of changing doctrines! The words of Jesus ring out loud and clear, as He very publicly invested His Authority in Peter and His successors, and no one else. There is dispute about the words "on this rock," as though the "Rock" in question was not Peter, the ultimate Rock being Jesus. But the words that follow clearly indicate Jesus is talking to Peter and his successors through the unbelievable promise: "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven!" Talk about authority, there it is!

"We lost the vote," said a disgruntled Anglican when the Anglican Church voted to accept women to the priesthood. Mainline Protestant churches have voted to accept gay clergy to lead their congregations in spite of Sodom and Gomorrah. By what authority does any church or denomination vote on doctrine? They remain as changeless as God their Creator. Only the Catholic Church has remained changeless in doctrine over two thousand years, infallible in faith and morals because it is protected by the Holy Spirit, guaranteed by Jesus Christ, who is rather protective of His Bride, the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. People like to nitpick at the scandals of the human element in the Church. Rather than being a cause for loss of faith in this unique human/divine institution, it should be seen as the miracle that it is! The Church has survived all the human foibles from legions of weak individuals for two thousand years, and that is indeed a MIRACLE! Even with the recent clerical child sex abuse scandal, who would be foolish enough to say that therefore the Church has gone astray because of the scandal given by some of its unfaithful ministers? God has given mankind free will, and the consequences of the

misuse of that free will are devastating. But that has nothing to do with the nature of the Church, or the Word of God.

Perhaps the most revealing quote I heard in defense of the Reformation is one by Calvinist theologian R.C. Sproul. He said: "We believe in the infallibility of the books of the Bible, but not the process by which they were chosen." I laughed out loud at the complete contradiction inherent in that statement. How on earth can you believe in the infallibility of the books of the bible without also believing in the authority of the entity that chose which books were infallible, through whatever process it took? My mother converted to Catholicism from being a Methodist when she

learned the Church produced the bible, not the bible the Church! That's why the second divorce is between Jesus and the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, because many Protestants have rejected the Catholic Church as somehow unbiblical, and now stand alone on the outside looking in, still throwing darts and arrows – in very uncharitable, and un-God-like fashion. So who needs the Church? All one needs is Jesus.

There was a recent article in the Wall Street Journal which asked: "Can You Come to Jesus Without Church?" A young man wrote a poem: "Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus." It went "viral" on the internet with ten million violents.

went "viral" on the internet, with ten million viewings in ten days on YouTube. The poet describes religion as merely "behavior modification" and "just following some rules." The poem was seen by many as typical Catholic bashing. A Catholic commentator posted: "I can't help but think that this hating-religion-loving-Jesus thing is a logical consequence of Protestantism." He's right, "Religion" means the structure of the Catholic Church, the rules of which do not automatically lead members to a relationship with Jesus as their "personal Savior." So away with the Church! Become cafeteria Christians who pick and choose which doctrines they will believe, and which they will throw out. That was done in the Reformation; why should people today be denied the same opportunity? Instead of one Pope, every individual is his own pope. If moral relativism was good in the 1500's, it's even better today. If the followers of Jesus cannot be united and keep their own house in order, why would anyone else want to enter?

Non-believers, seeing the revolt against God's authority in the Church by believers, began the revolt against God Himself in the so-called Enlightenment, making man the creature the center of the Universe instead of God the Creator. This third divorce between faith and reason has led to the total separation between God's Love and Godgiven Life. There was another lost vote, when the Anglicans decided at the Lambeth Conference in 1931 to accept artificial contraception. In Humanae Vitae, Pope Paul VI tells how technological advances are used as an excuse in seeking to change yet another ancient doctrine:

"But the most remarkable development of all is to be seen in man's stupendous progress in the domination and rational organization of the forces of nature to the point that he is endeavoring to extend this control over every aspect of his own life—over his body, over his mind and emotions, over his social life, and even over the laws that regulate the transmission of life."

A contraceptive mentality ultimately excludes God from decisions on the life-giving aspect of marriage, as control of birth is transferred from God to man. Too easily, a sacrificial love open to new life becomes a self-centered act separated from the reproductive aspect. Once all manner of self-sacrifice is gone, it's easy to accept

what the world teaches: pregnancy is a disease, children are an obstacle to personal pleasure, and there are too many humans on earth already, according to

Environmentalists. This **Great Lie** has been accepted by legions of Christians, bringing ruin to the family unit in the plan of God. Self-control through obedience to God's law is replaced by many who seek total control of all aspects of their lives **as though there were no God**. This is the devastating consequence of the contraceptive mentality.

We know good and holy Protestants, true followers of Christ despite not having full access to the fabulous treasury of God's grace vested in the Church. They too are part of the faithful remnant seeking to follow Jesus, living lives pleasing to God in spite of disunion on all sides. In fact, America achieved its greatness through the Protestant ethic, advanced by mainline Protestant churches. With their collapse, America is now in severe straits, its future up for grabs, as is the rest of Western Civilization. The stakes could not be greater, and God will not be mocked. We know who wins in the end, and these are exciting times to live the faith radically as a true disciple of Christ.

Francis was called by God to renew the Church after the first great divorce. We are called to do the same after the fourth, and the task is much more daunting. Unbelievers today, without faithful Christian parents, church or society to guide them, can't even figure out that mothers shouldn't kill their children, or that it's completely abnormal for two men to get married! But Francis has given us the two great Gospel lessons by which to take on this challenge: prayer and penance. We in the BSP and all faithful followers of Jesus have a special calling to lead a life of penance in reparation for all offenses against God and His holy will, and for those who continue to spread division and disunity in the Body of Christ. That division can only be healed by earnest prayer to the Holy Spirit, for God is still in charge. "Father, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Paul Beery BSP - Morning Star Chapter - Minnesota





Rend Your Hearts A MEDITATION by Janet Klasson BSP

From the First Reading on Ash Wednesday "Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God." (Joel 2:13)

This passage is taken from the First Reading for Ash Wednesday. The image is rich with meaning and as penitents, it is well worth pondering.

It speaks of a depth of sorrow for sin that goes far beyond the superficial. In Biblical times rending the garments was an outward sign of deep mourning or contrition. Unfortunately in the time of Joel, it was often just an outward sign and did not reflect the heart of the person displaying it.

The call to rend one's heart implied a complete change of heart, the deepest contrition. That is what all God's children are called to, most especially in the season of Lent. Rending the heart involves a deliberate, intricate inspection of the heart that leads to a scouring out of even the least impurity. It leaves no stone unturned, no corner unexplored. It is a wrestling match with the angel of truth. Rending one's heart is no mere symbol, but an action that shows we hold nothing dearer than a right relationship with God, not even life itself.

St. John Chrysostum compares the rending of our hearts to the plowing of a field to get rid of any "evil plant, any treacherous thought (that may) be present in us."

"For if we do not now break up the fallow ground; if we do not now sow; if we do not now water it with tears, whilst it is a time of tribulation and

fasting, when shall we ever be brought to compunction? Will it be when we are at ease, and in luxury? But this is impossible. For ease and luxury generally lead to indolence, just as tribulation leads back again to diligence; and restores to itself the mind that had wandered abroad, and been dreaming after a multitude of objects." (Homily IV)

What a perfect image for we penitents to reflect on during Lent! What a wonderful image for us to use as we continue to seek after the holiness of a life of penance. Lent is a time for us penitents to reflect on what our minds and hearts have been dreaming after, and turn our minds and hearts back to God, who must be the object of our every thought, word, deed and desire.

The book of Joel is not the only place in scripture that mentions the rending of a heart but not a garment. Let us remember that the soldiers did not rend the garments of Christ at his crucifixion. Yet they rent his heart. This too is worth pondering. The heart of Christ was rent for **our sin**, not His, for he was sinless. What better reason is there for us to rend our own hearts in gratitude and contrition? Then on the last day, Christ will clothe us with the seamless garment of His perfection and purity, perfect attire for the wedding feast of the Lamb. Thanks be to God!

Reprinted from the March 2006 newsletter

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

"Do everything without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine like lights in the world." (Philippians 2:14-15)

"Above all, my child, strive to be holy, pure, and undefiled by sin. This world is enshrouded in increasing darkness. Let the sacrament of reconciliation give new brilliance to the light you bear. Each time you receive the sacrament, your light becomes infinitely brighter than before. You cannot measure the value of a good confession, so make each one good, sincere, and thoughtful. Remember that it is not just you who will benefit, but that the world needs your light, a light that is not hidden under refuse, but is high on a hill reaching far in all directions. Child confess, and your light will shine!"

Jesus, I ask for the grace of a good confession, one worthy of a beloved child of God. Come Holy Spirit, shine your light on my sins so that my light may shine, for without you I have no hope of a good confession. Come Holy Spirit! Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter



Turn away from sin... ...and believe the Good News...



FROM THE 'SPARROW' "Penguin Suit"

The peace of Jesus to each of you!

On December 29, 1987, a Soviet cosmonaut returned to earth after 326 days in orbit. He was in good health, which had not always been the case in those record breaking

voyages.

Five years earlier, touching down after 211 days in space, two cosmonauts suffered from dizziness, high pulse rates and heart palpitations. They could not walk for a week.

After 30 days, they were still undergoing therapy for atrophied muscles and weakened hearts. At zero gravity, the muscles of the body begin to waste away because there is no resistance.

To counteract this, the Soviets prescribed a vigorous exercise program for the cosmonauts. They invented the "penguin suit," (remember dear souls that the penguin is a distant cousin to us sparrows...but I digress...) which was a running suit laced with elastic bands. It resists

every move the cosmonauts make, forcing them to exert their strength. Apparently the regimen is helping then to stay fit in the zero gravity of space.

We, (sometimes storm tossed little sparrows), often long dreamily for days without difficulty, BUT God knows the better course for His little ones. The EASIER our lives, the WEAKER our spiritual fiber, for STRENGTH of any kind grows only by exertion. All this time when you didn't think God was on point with what was going on with your life...you had no idea that He had quietly put His tailormade "penguin suit" of life's resistance on you?? (I don't know about the rest of you but the one I'm wearing is KILLING ME.....SMILE!!!)

"Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Rom 5:3-4)

"Storms make oaks take deeper root."

-George Herbert (17th century English writer)

May you grow strong in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter



MEDITATION ON THE PASSION by Dawn Usak, BSP

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

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

Dear Jesus, on the road to Calvary You meet the lady Veronica. She gently wipes away the sweat and blood that have run down Your tortured Face. As a consolation You leave an image of Your Holy Face on the veil that she used. May our small penances help to wipe away some of what You suffered for us. May Your Blessed Image be imprinted upon our hearts as we meditate upon Your Most Sacred Passion

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

(Stations of the Cross. Painted by Sister Mary Leo Hargarten, 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.)

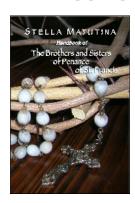


MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

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 Hompage. 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 Prayer Before the Crucifix

"Most High, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command."

-St. Francis of Assissi



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

The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE

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