



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

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter VI—Francis’ Humility and Obedience—God’s Condescension to His Slightest Wish



5. Another time he told his companion, “I should not regard myself as a Friar Minor unless I were prepared to behave like this. Suppose I were a superior and I went to a chapter where I addressed the

friars and gave them some advice. But then, when I have finished, they all say, ‘You have no education and you are not a good speaker. Besides, you are illiterate and inexperienced.’ Then I am thrown out ignominiously and despised by them all. I tell you, if I were not prepared to take all that without being disturbed or without losing my peace of mind, with a firm determination to use it all for my own sanctification, I should not be a Friar Minor.” And he continued, “The office of superior may lead to a fall, and praise is a dangerous precipice, but the lowly position of a subject contains great benefit for the soul. Why are we more anxious to run risks than to gain merit? Time has been given us only so that we can gain merit.”

It was for this reason that Francis who was a model of humility wanted his followers to be known as Friars Minor and their superiors as ministers. In this way he kept to the language of the Gospel (cf. Mt 25:45) which he had promised to observe, and impressed upon his friars that it was to learn humility that they had come to the school of Christ. Christ the teacher of humility instructed his disciples in perfect humility by telling them, “Whoever would be a great man among you, must be your servant, and whoever has a mind to be first among you, must be your slave.” (Mt. 20:26-27)

When the bishop of Ostia, the protector and foremost champion of the Order, who was afterwards to become pope with the name of Gregory IX as Francis prophesied, asked him if he would allow his friars to be promoted to various offices in the Church, the saint replied, “My lord, my friars are called Minors so that they will never think of becoming superiors. If you want them to bear fruit in the Church, keep them strictly to their vocation and never let them take any office in the Church.”



Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE
Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...
Give to God Whatever He Asks of You
Reading (Philippians 2:5-11)
Gospel (St. Luke 14:15-24)

In the Gospel reading today, Our Lord lays out for us the situation of trying to get to heaven, that it is

not necessarily going to be those who were invited. Now in the context, of course, He is talking about

His own Jewish people. However, today we can even look at ourselves and say, "Even though we were among those lying in the hedgerows and the alleys and so on, we have also been invited." The question is whether or not we are going to find an excuse for ourselves.

On one level, certainly, as we listen to the excuses of the various people, they were somewhat legitimate; and yet, at the same time, what they were doing was trading in something of earthly value for that which was of heavenly value. So the question of whether or not we are going to dine at the table in the kingdom of heaven, whether or not we are going to enter the banquet of the Lamb, depends, as Saint Paul makes pretty clear in the first reading, on our attitude, on our disposition. If we are to be the spouse of the Lamb, we have to have the same disposition as the Lamb. And we are told that He humbled Himself, that He was obedient even to the point of death. *He Who is God did not deem equality with God something to be grasped.* He was willing to be completely detached from everything in order to do the Will of God.

Now the great question is whether or not we can say the same. Are we really willing to do God's Will? Again, we would naturally say, "Of course I want to do God's Will!" But what if He asks you to do something that might be difficult, or somewhat inconvenient? We all have fairly legitimate excuses just like the people who are in the Gospel reading today, so we really have to look at this situation for our own selves and ask, number one, "Is my disposition the same as the Lord's, or at least am I trying to get there? Am I striving for humility? Am I striving for service? Am I striving for obedience?" Those are the things that Our Lord has shown us, and that is the disposition that must be ours. Number two, "Are we set on doing God's Will no matter what?" That is something we really, really,

seriously need to look at. If God asked us to do what we wanted to do in the first place, it certainly would not be too difficult to do His Will, but that is not usually what He does. He asks of us difficult things, sometimes very painful things, because He is going to find out from us just how serious we really are. Again, it is not that He does not know how serious we are; it is that we do not know how serious we are. We can sit here theoretically in the generosity of our hearts and say, "Lord, I will do *anything* for you!"—until He asks. Then we say, "Well...not that. How about something different? I'll do almost anything *except for that.*" If it is God's Will, it is the best; and if it is the best and it is God's Will anyway, we need to be willing to do it simply because we were asked by God.

Just put yourself into the position of what Our Lord did in an analogous situation. If the Lord came to you and said, "Would you become a fish? Would you become a dog? Would you become a salamander, or even worse?" We would say, "Well, that's beneath my dignity. Of course not!" Jesus is God, and He became one of us. And then He died for us. Is there anything that we really think we are too good for? That is what we have to look at: the disposition and the attitude. Otherwise, we can be reasonably assured that when the Lord calls and says that the dinner is ready we are going to have a hundred and one excuses and we are going to say that we cannot come. Unless we are willing to strive to do His Will, to answer His invitation no matter what it is and no matter when it is, seeking to be humble and obedient and detached, when the ultimate call comes we are going to have another excuse just like we do every day when He invites us to do different things. Remember, He will never force us; He will invite us.

We have been invited. Are we willing to come to the King's dinner, the wedding banquet of the Lamb?

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... A New Name

We build our lives on foundations. It is a fundamental truth. Many are based on the values we learned as children, and we were blessed if we were

raised in good families where the values and training we received led to us becoming better people and contributing to our societies and communities, not to mention our families. Good families are always based on good foundations. These foundations include the Faith, and all that is



important about living the Christian life.

Our Lord referred to good foundations in the Gospel on Saturday of the 23rd week of the year. He told a story in the Gospel of Luke, (Luke 6:43-49). **"Any man who desires to come to me will hear my words and put them into practice. I will show you with whom he is to be compared. He may be likened to the man who, in building a house, dug deeply and laid the foundation on a rock. When the floods came the torrent rushed in on that house, but failed to shake it because of its solid foundation. On the other hand, anyone who has heard my words but not put them into practice is like the man who built his house on the ground without any foundation. When the torrent rushed upon it, it immediately fell in and was completely destroyed."**

So the simple matter is we need to build our house, our lives, on a solid foundation. Jesus and what he taught us is that foundation, and there are at least two main lessons to keep in mind here.

First, Saint Francis always taught his first followers, his Friars, that the First Rule of the Friars was the Gospel. Not what he wrote or gave them, but the actual Gospel of Jesus Christ. If the Friars had questions on how to live or resolve a problem or concern they were to refer to the Gospel first. Then they could ponder other things, like their Rule, or consult their spiritual directors or mentors. It is good for us to keep this in mind.

Secondly, we as lay people are trying to live the life St. Francis gave the laity. For those of us who

profess, and those of us in formation, that is either our foundation or becoming part of the foundation of how we live. Our first call is like that of the first Friars. To live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but the way we intend to do that more fully is by living the Rule that St. Francis gave us. So, for us laity, the Rule becomes the Gospel in practice, and the Rule calls us to live the Gospel very literally. The Rule is the 'Rock' on which we build our lives and this rock will bring us to heaven.

And on this rock we can put together the rest of our life. How we deal with others, and how we live our Faith in our lives. It is a reference source that is always there for us. It always calls us to the Gospel, and it also explains how it is we can 'Deny ourselves...and take up our crosses...' in our daily lives. This key admonition of the Lord to those who wish to follow Him is built into the life that St. Francis gave us. If we have questions we can clarify them, and check them out, with our spiritual directors, or our confessors, since most of us don't have spiritual directors. These guides can fine tune our lives, and help us to ensure our foundations are right.

So, in our day-to-day lives let's rejoice that we have strong foundations on which to build our lives. Let's ponder our Rule anew, and seek to live it ever more perfectly. In that way we live the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we faithfully run the marathon to heaven.

Blessed be the Lord!

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP Administrators
Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

"I have been put to death with Christ on His Cross, so that it is not I who live, but Christ lives within me." (Galatians, 2:20)

Shortly after the BSP retreat, Donna and I went on vacation.

In North Carolina we found a wonderful sign of the renewal of the Church. Only four percent of the people of North Carolina are Catholic, but in Charlotte I saw something I had never seen before: more children attending Mass on Sunday than adults! We attended St. Patrick's Cathedral, a fancy name for a very simple church, befitting a "mission" diocese. It was stunning to see all the children, the future of the Church, for we live in another inner

city where the faith is dying, and children are few.

But in both churches we attended in the Charlotte area the faith is strong, and people are responding to the Pro-Life message in this very visible way: the fruit of a holy matrimonial union resulting in new life. It is so refreshing to see priests promoting orthodox beliefs and practices, and teaching them from the pulpit at Sunday Mass. And the Southern bible-belt culture is refreshingly different from the Secular Socialist culture promoted everywhere else.

We see the cultural difference in the local papers, and hear it on the radio. It seems the two go together: culture and faith.

The collapse of the American Christian culture I grew up with needs to be—and in places is—being restored. Such as in the Minneapolis/St. Paul Archdiocese, where many outstanding young priests are ministering to the faithful, such as our Retreat Master, Father Becker. He began the BSP retreat by commenting on the Good Shepherd leaving the ninety-nine just for the one that was lost (“Did those ninety-nine REALLY believe they were ‘just,’” he asked?). The voice of the Shepherd called us there, the lost found in the Presence of God.

Living our faith requires righteousness, which Father defined as: “Doing the acts of God. Doing the will of the Father. Inside out.” That is, internally we are called to overcome vice, gain virtue, and do acts of charity. Catholics and Protestants discern righteousness very differently. He said Protestants believe that Jesus imputes righteousness to us, which covers us exteriorly, as it were. We can declare ourselves justified with no interior conformity to the will of God. “Once saved, always saved,” fits perfectly with that understanding. For many that says, “Go and do what you will, you’re ‘saved.’”

But Catholics must have the interior disposition of a true disciple: “Inside out.” God the Father wants to see the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ **inside us**—inside our DNA—as we are transformed 100 % into the Image and Likeness of God! Not just covered over. Not just having His righteousness imputed to us. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives within me.” I actually **“own”** that righteousness.

Fr. Becker said his life changed when at the age of 21, he realized that Saints were people “just like us!” That sanctity was possible. That evil thoughts “were not my friends.” That my mind needs to think different thoughts. We need to see the beauty of grace in our lives, and what is yet to be fulfilled.

He told the story of a woman named Irena who transformed her marriage to one whose heart had grown very cold towards her. It was a story of an act of love in a loveless marriage, for love is an act of the will. One day at the Kiss of Peace, she turned towards him and said, “I love you.” He replied, “You’re a liar.” Same thing the second time, but she persevered. At the end of three months, he said, “I love you too.” Of course, that’s the short version of the story, leaving to the imagination what other acts of love she sent his way.

Fr. Becker commented on the Baptism of Jesus, from Mt. 3:13-17. Why was Jesus baptized? He said some of the early Church creeds included the baptism of Jesus, which was the second most important liturgical feast for a hundred years. We can see its importance.

1. Jesus sanctified the waters, instead of being sanctified by them.

2. Jesus drowns the sins of humanity in the waters. “We needed it, not Jesus,” said St. Ambrose. St. John Chrysostom said that the baptism of John the Baptist was only unto repentance, but that of Jesus is “unto the remission of sins.”

3. His baptism revealed the Trinity: the TRI-UNITY. “This is My Beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.”

4. Jesus baptizes the cosmos. In Genesis, at the time of Creation, “The Spirit of God swept over the face of the water.” But with the Fall, “Creation was subject to futility,” (Romans 8) for sin affected ALL OF CREATION. Jesus brings about our Redemption, our “Re-Creation,” where the chaos of evil, the chaos of sin is brought to order, beginning with our baptism with water and the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament the chaos of sin was brought to order by the Righteousness and Justice of the Chosen People through the laws that God taught them. Jesus came to fulfill those laws, transforming righteousness from keeping external laws, to internalizing the will of the Father and living a life of virtue. “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven.” For that righteousness is not our own, but a gift of the grace of God.

In the previous story, Irena chose charity, the greatest act of virtue. By an act of the will she chose to love her husband, and the emotions followed. Normally virtue is a mix of selflessness and selfishness. But in this case, it was a righteous act of charity, a supernatural virtue, as St. Paul teaches in his First Letter to the Corinthians, the famous chapter 13. Jesus says to us there: **“Enter the school of My Love.”** Jesus takes unto Himself all the selfless, righteous deeds of the Saints and wipes out the selfish motives. He says he will accept the 30 fold as well as the 60 and 100 fold. He will **multiply our righteous deeds**. His Father’s House has many mansions. There is room for all of us! Jesus will bring to fruition those deeds that are only three and thirty fold as well as a hundred fold.

That is how **God is bringing us to fulfillment!** "I have come that you may have life, life in all its fullness." (John 10, 10) Jesus is the **Receiver** of our righteousness. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ME?" Jesus says, I am IN all those people you are persecuting! Jesus receives our righteousness, purifies it, and gives it the Father. During His life on earth, Jesus personally taught, and received the righteousness of the Saints who walked with Him. But now even we can do the same, by loving the Word of God. Learn to become lowly. Have the disposition that says, "I will allow myself to be taught." I can minister to Jesus in others. I can minister to Jesus in the penance that I do for love of Him.

And Jesus will receive our gifts. Jesus will receive

all our acts of love and charity, and multiply them. **He wants to bring our participation in His Divine Life to its fullness. As Receiver of our acts of charity, He purifies them and brings them to the Father!** Therefore **our capacity to love can grow** in this life, from a thimble to a barrelful! The first quality of the Saints is Heroic Virtue. Every one of us is capable of that, even though it sounds impossible for those subject to human weakness. But nothing is impossible to God. Through purity of heart, we too can become lowly, become teachable, become vessels willing to be filled by the love of God, even become capable of Heroic Virtue! Praised be Jesus Christ!

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



Give Thanks to the Lord at All Times A MEDITATION by Janet Klasson, BSP



From the Second Reading for the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten (lepers) made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:17-18)

Here in Canada, since our harvest comes earlier, we celebrate Thanksgiving in October. I once heard a priest say something very challenging in his Thanksgiving homily. Essentially he said that gratitude to God is more important than any other pious act—including prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Many of us have come to the BSP in response to a felt call to increased prayer and fasting. Sometimes it is easy to feel that if we live the rule to the best of our ability, we have done what we should. But if our practice does not flow from a grateful heart, even if we manage to live the Rule perfectly, our sacrificial gifts will carry the stench of ingratitude. How can God be pleased?

Much is said about gratitude these days. Popular western culture has made it trendy. But in making it trendy, God is very often left out of the formula. In popular culture, gratitude is a feeling not directed up, but in. We are told we can feel good about *ourselves* when we are not taking things for granted. A worthy-sounding sentiment, but anything directed inward is a temptation to idolatry.

When we direct our gratitude upwards, when we give thanks to the Source of all good, the heavens open up. The Creator reveals a facet of himself in each created thing. In contemplating God's infinite generosity, our love for him cannot help but grow. Gratitude flows as we see his holy face in everything good and our gratitude gives him glory.

When we already spend one to two hours per day in prayer in living the rule, it is difficult to imagine that we might be leaving anything out. But Jesus tells us to pray always, not just one or two hours a day. If we make constant gratitude a practice, this will fulfill most beautifully what Jesus has asked us to do.

To live a life of constant gratitude to God, we need to be attentive to God in every detail of our lives, to give thanks at all times for even the smallest things. We may find that it is the smallest things that often evoke the strongest feelings of gratitude to our loving Father to whom no detail is too small to be left out. We will begin to see him as a doting Father, and our love for him will expand with each new expression of thanks.

Practically speaking it is easy to get caught up in our daily duties, our studies, or things that require our undivided attention. Sometimes at the end of my work day, I look back and see that there were very few times I gave thought to God, much less thanked him for his blessings. For me, it helps if I have a visual image of Jesus near to me. Perhaps the chair next to me is empty. As I work I can imagine him in it and thank him for each little thing, even asking him to correct the mistakes I make, especially when it comes to my dealings with others. I can offer up my daily inconveniences and challenges linking them to the cross, the image of which should fill me at all times with heartfelt gratitude. I can picture him walking with me, handing me the tools I need to do a good job, and most especially I can get in the habit of seeing him in the faces of those He sends me.

It is especially in difficult times that our gratitude should be given to the Father. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, **"In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."** God's love never fails. What the evil one means for our destruction, God can use for great blessings and glory.

St. Paul tells us that in our sufferings, we make up for what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. What

an unimaginable honor! He allows us to participate in his total love for souls by allowing us to take up our crosses for their sake. Seen in this light, it is our sufferings for which we should be *most* grateful. This excerpt from the writings of St. Rose of Lima is a most emphatic reminder of this:

"Our Lord and Saviour lifted up his voice and said with incomparable majesty: 'Let all men know that grace comes after tribulation. Let them know that without the burden of afflictions it is impossible to reach the height of grace. Let them know that the gifts of grace increase as the struggles increase. Let men take care not to stray and be deceived. This is the only true stairway to paradise, and without the cross they can find no road to climb to heaven.'"

It may at first take a conscious effort, but through practice we can integrate gratitude into every moment of our lives. In this way the sacrifices we make and the prayers we offer will be carried upward on the fragrant incense emanating from our thankful hearts. God will indeed be pleased.

May gratitude become for us a daily practice of holiness for the glory of God the Father.

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

2 timothy 4:4-5 For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected when received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the invocation of God in prayer.

"My child, much damage is done when souls refuse to give thanks for God's blessings. For everything that is blessed by God is good. So ask a blessing on all you consume, on all you do, on all you have. Let God determine what is good—not man! So many things are labeled as bad when what they lack is a blessing. Remember too that when you ask a blessing it behooves you not to misuse what has been blessed, but to act with temperance and prudence towards all created things. This age has seen a great shift, a polar reversal, in how creation is treated. That is having a direct consequence in the physical and spiritual planes. For created things are worshiped, abused, used to curse, but rarely blessed. Abomination! My children, make reparation to the Creator of all! So much damage has been done and purchased. Offer sacrifices and ask for blessings. The world is in dire need of blessing."

Jesus, in the Divine Will we ask that you will bless all created things, both on the earth and in the heavens. Bless all things to our use and grant us temperance and prudence so that all you desire may be accomplished, for your glory. Father, please bless all creation. Holy Spirit, come and renew the face of the earth. Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada

(The messages on the Pelianito Journal blog are the fruit of Janet's *lectio divina*. She submits all messages to her spiritual director, a Catholic priest. You may read his remarks here: <http://pelianito.stblogs.com/on-private-revelation/>.)



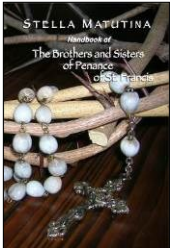
MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

MEMBER WEBSITES

[Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis](#) facebook page by Lisa Drago, BSP

www.returning-catholics.blogspot.com Blog for Returning Catholics—and others too—by Jim Mearns, BSP

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. **Bruce and Paul also have copies available.**

Quotes from the Saints on the Virtue of Humility

“To be taken with love for a soul, God does not look on its greatness, but the greatness of its humility.” —St John of the Cross, OCD

“It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.” —St Augustine

“The soul's true greatness is in loving God and in humbling oneself in His presence, completely forgetting oneself and believing oneself to be nothing; because the Lord is great, but He is well-pleased only with the humble; He always opposes the proud.” —St Faustina, Divine Mercy in my Soul

“The most powerful weapon to conquer the devil is humility. For, as he does not know at all how to employ it, neither does he know how to defend himself from it.” —St Vincent de Paul

“The highest point of humility consists in not merely acknowledging one's abjection, but in taking pleasure therein, not from any want of breadth or courage, but to give the more glory to God's Divine Majesty, and to esteem one's neighbor more highly than one's self.” —St Francis De Sales



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



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