



...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

10. In their pride the demons take flight at the sight of the sublime virtue practiced by those who are truly humble. However, God in his goodness occasionally allows them to distress us, as St. Paul tells us of himself (cf. 2 Cor 12:7) and St. Francis learned by his own experience. He had been invited by his Eminence Cardinal Leo, titular of the church of Santa Croce, to visit him in Rome and he accepted the invitation out of respect for the Cardinal who was a close friend of his. The very first night he was there, when he had finished praying and was trying to get some rest, he was surrounded by devils who attacked him brutally. They beat him severely for a long time and then went off, leaving him half-dead. As they left, St. Francis called his companion and told him what had happened. Then he added, "The devils can only do what God in his providence allows them and I am convinced they attacked me now because it does not look well that I should be living in a palace like this. When the friars who live in poor friaries hear that I am staying with a cardinal, they may think that I am getting mixed up in worldly affairs, or being showered with honors and having a good time. Anyone who is intended to be an example for others should avoid palaces and be content to live a humble life among ordinary friars in ordinary friaries. In that way he will share the poverty of others and give courage to those who have to bear similar privation." In the morning, then, they went to the cardinal and said good-bye and took their leave.



11. The saint had a horror of pride, which is the cause of all evil, and of disobedience, which is its worst offspring. On the other hand, he always had a warm welcome for humble repentance. A friar was brought before him one time who had sinned against obedience and merited just punishment. Looking at him, Francis could see sure signs that he was genuinely sorry and he was so pleased with his humble contrition that he decided to be easy on him. At the same time, he was anxious to avoid encouraging others to revolt by letting him off too lightly and so he ordered his capuche to be taken off and thrown into the fire. That would show all the friars the kind of punishment which disobedience deserved. Then, when the capuche had been in the flames for a while, Francis ordered it to be taken out and given back to the penitent. It was taken out and there was not the slightest trace of a burn on it. With one and the same miracle God approved Francis' holiness and the humble contrition of the delinquent.

Francis' humility, therefore, is worth imitating; it was honored even on earth, so that God inclined to his slightest wish and the citizens of Arezzo underwent a change of heart. He repulsed the presumptuous attacks of the devils by his command and tempered the heat of a fire at will. This is the humility which exalts those who possess it and is respectful towards all; and consequently it is found worthy to be revered by all.

[Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)]





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

Darkness Covers the Earth

Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

Today we celebrate a feast that has lost much of its meaning for people in the modern day. In the ancient world, the Feast of the Epiphany was one of the most important of all the feast days in the Church year. The word *epiphany*, recall, means "manifestation", so it is the manifestation of the divinity of Christ, that God has become man and He dwelt among us. What was so important about this feast to the early Christians was not only that Our Lord was made manifest, but particularly that He was made manifest to the Gentiles. It is precisely the mystery of which Saint Paul speaks, the mystery that was foretold by the prophets but not understood, and now the mystery that has been brought to its completion in Christ, the mystery that the Gentiles are now coheirs with the Jews, that they are members of the same body, that they are children of God and heirs of heaven. It is a mystery that points to the fact that all of us, being made in the image and likeness of God, now have the opportunity to live according to the fullness of our human dignity. In fact, in Christ, we have the opportunity to live with a divine dignity. This is something that the Jewish people of old were able to do, and now the Gentiles have been united with them so there is no longer this separation but all are one in Christ.

Now we look at this in our own day and we ask ourselves, "What is so important about this?" This feast is critically important because the mystery we celebrate today is so important for us. If we look in the first reading today from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, he talks about how *darkness covers the earth and the thick clouds the people*. Look around and ask yourself if it is not true that our world is in darkness and if most of the people we know are not walking around in something of a fog. Thick clouds seem to cover the minds and the hearts of the people. They cannot see clearly. They do not understand. They have given themselves over to sin.

What happens when someone gives themselves over to sin is the same basic problem that happened in Jerusalem when the three Magi came to the palace in Jerusalem to ask Herod where they would find the newborn King of the Jews. One of the most tragic lines of all Scripture tells us what

we would expect to hear and what we would not expect to hear: *Herod was troubled* (who would be surprised?) *and all Jerusalem with him*. The people of Israel were awaiting the Messiah. They knew the time, and now that the newborn King of the Jews was born, they were troubled, they did not want Him. Some of the people were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem, but the vast majority wanted to live in darkness because their sins had clouded their minds, just like today. When God makes Himself manifest, people do not want to believe. They do not want to see. They have chosen darkness instead of light.

But the beauty of what we celebrate today is that a star, which would be seen only in the darkness, is shining brilliantly so that anyone with the eyes of faith can see it. God made Himself manifest in this way to some pagans who were looking at the stars to try to discern what was going on in the world. Obviously, that is not the way Christian people are going to be operating. But it is not a question of a star up in the sky that we are looking for; rather, inside of each one of us God has placed a light. It is a light of faith that illumines the night of this world, that brings light into the darkness that surrounds us. It is, once again, exactly what Isaiah says: *Upon you a light shall shine, and the glory of the Lord will appear above you*.

We could ask ourselves in general, "How is it possible, on a natural level, that there would be darkness in some places while right next to that darkness is light?" It is not what is on the natural level; it is what is on the spiritual level. If you are in the state of grace, this light burns within you and it shines brightly in the darkness so that if you are surrounded by people who have rejected the truth, they have chosen darkness while the light shines in you. This is the way that prophecy can be fulfilled, that *darkness covers the earth and the thick clouds the peoples; but upon you a light shall dawn, and above you the glory of the Lord will be revealed*. That is happening inside of you.

If we consider what it is that the three Magi were seeking, it was not the star, but it was the Person represented by the star. It is precisely the fulfillment of what we hear way back in the Book of Numbers when the pagan prophet Balaam was hired to curse the Hebrew people. He climbed up

the mountain, and instead God required that he bless the chosen people. In one of those occasions, the oracle of Balaam says something to the effect of *I see him, thought not near; I behold him, yet far away. A star shall rise in Jacob and a staff in Judah.* The star is a king – it is the newborn King of the Jews – a newborn king not only for the Jewish people, but for the Gentiles as well so that all of us will be one in Christ. This being the case, what the Magi sought was a Person, and that Person is the Light, as Saint John makes very clear: *He is the Light of the world. The Light came into this world and the darkness could not overcome it.* Like that star the Magi saw, He shines brilliantly in the darkness of this world. And it is He Himself Whom we must seek.

We have been given knowledge of the truth. For whatever reason, in God's mysterious ways He has chosen each one of us. He has given to us this gift of faith, and He has given us knowledge of Himself. It is purely a gift on God's part; it is not something we have earned or deserved, but it is a gift. Now the question is, just like the gift the Magi were given, what are we going to do with this gift that has been given to us? The three Wise Men were willing to leave everything behind and travel a long and arduous journey across the desert to come to find this Child and bow down and worship Him. If this light of faith truly burns within our hearts, then it is that light of faith that allows the eyes of our hearts to see. Just as the Magi would not be able to see with their bodily eyes the fact that this little baby is God, yet with the eyes of their hearts they were able to recognize Him and they worshiped Him. They would not worship Him if He were just a human king; they will worship Him only because He is God. And they left behind all of their paganism. They left behind the darkness from which they had come because they found the light.

Now that we live in this neopagan society of ours, we too must reject the worldly ways, the pagan ways, because we have seen the light. We know Who He is. The eyes of our faith allow us to recognize that what appears to be a piece of bread is truly God. The eyes of faith allow us to be able to enter into our hearts and have knowledge of the

One Who dwells there. In the darkness that surrounds most people because they have rejected Christ, when they enter into their hearts all they find there is themselves. Their little world revolves around themselves, and everything is about themselves. For one who has seen the light of Christ and that light shines within their hearts, their lives then revolve around Him. And when they go inside of themselves, they do not find just themselves but they find Jesus Christ, indeed, they find the Holy Trinity Who dwells within. It is that which helps us in the midst of the darkness to continue to move toward our goal, toward the goal which is union with this One Who is the light. Just as the Magi followed the star and the star led them directly to the place where they found Our Lord and Our Lady, so too this light of faith shining within us is going to lead us directly to the place where we too will find Our Lord and Our Lady – and that is heaven.

In the meantime, we learn from the Magi what we are to do. We are to come before Him, to recognize Him for Who He is through the eyes of faith and open up our coffers. Not gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but a heart that is filled with love. That is all Our Lord wants. He wants us to give Him the greatest gift of all, and that is love – a life that is completely devoted to Him, a heart that is filled with love for Him, a mind that accepts the truth and lives it. Those are the treasures we can give to Him now. They are not too difficult for us, but it is just like the Magi: We will have to make a journey and we will have to give Him something which is very, very precious to us. But in return for their gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the Magi walked away with the greatest treasure of all. They held God within their hearts, and so can we. If we are willing to open our hearts and allow that light to shine in the darkness that is there to fill us with love, then we can give Him back that love. And the greatest treasure is ours because the light, Who is Jesus Christ Himself, will shine within us and the darkness will be dispelled. In this world that is filled with darkness, we will be able to see clearly as the light of faith guides us to the fulfillment of all our desires: union with Jesus Christ forever in heaven.

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





ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... Seek the Lord!

As we begin a new year we might do well to recall the message we got in the Office of Readings from Friday of the first week of Advent, from Saint Anselm. He begins by admonishing us. He says:

"Insignificant man, escape from your everyday business for a short while, hide for a moment from your restless thoughts. Break off from your cares and troubles and be less concerned about your tasks and labors. Make a little time for God and rest a while in him."

What a beautiful message to reflect on as we start the new year. Like it or not all that we do in this life is insignificant compared to eternity, which awaits us. Yet the world will call us to worry about tomorrow. To save for the future and seek all that life has to offer. Buy gold the world says, to avoid problems. Store up your wealth, here, where moth consumes and thieves steal. Never will the world warn us of the impending judgment of God, or speak of what is to come after we die and leave this world.

As Christians, and hopefully very committed Christians living a Rule of life given to us by a great Saint, we need to keep our focus on the things of God. The Rule makes that easy for us, actually. As we live the Rule we bring our hearts repeatedly back to holy things. Prayer, sacrifice, mortification, simplicity, and the love of God and neighbor. What a Rule we have!

In the midst of living it we need to realize that all the demands of this life, no matter who we are or what we do, are insignificant compared to what God has in mind for us. God has in mind eternal life and happiness for us, whether we have even a shred of happiness in this life. The cares of this life he gives us to call us to Himself. To bring us to focus on eternal things, and the Church continues to call us that way. Ever closer to God. Always more concerned about the Gospel and how we live it. So,

we need to focus our hearts, and hide from the call of our life in the world. We need to hide in God, who is always waiting for us. To make time for him and spend time with him, in our daily life. He needs to be our focus.

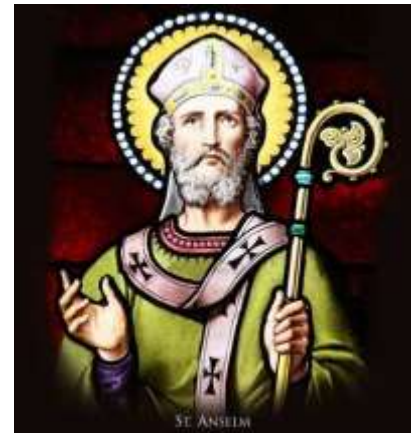
This is a most worthwhile objective for us to keep in mind as we go into the new year. If we are making resolutions this needs to be one of our resolutions. A key one. That we will try to make more time for God more often. We will actively seek him, for his is never far from any of us since it is in him that we live, and move, and have our being.

St. Anselm gives us a prayer we can say to grow in this dimension of our spiritual life. To grow closer to the Lord and to find him. We need to seek him until we find him and in finding him love him. Here is the beautiful prayer he gives us.

"Teach me to seek you, and when I seek you show yourself to me, for I cannot seek you unless you teach me, nor can I find you unless you show yourself to me. Let me seek you in desiring you and desire you in seeking you, let me find you in loving you and love you in finding you."

This is the goal of our lives. Let us pray that we can do this and make it a resolution this coming year. For nothing is so good a goal as to seek to find the God of love. And let us conclude our prayer by saying: *"Teach me that I might be a Saint.*

Reveal yourself to me that I might be a mystic, and let me find you in everyone I meet."



Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP Administrators
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NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

“Through one man sin entered the world, and through sin, death. If by the transgression of the one death came to reign, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” [Romans 5:18-20]

Pope Benedict had a saying: Keep repeating the Truth. The Truth has a power to break through the most ardent campaign of deceit, a product of the Father of Lies. In our daily battle of the War between Good and Evil, it’s difficult to not get caught up in the campaign of deceit, and remain on the defensive against it, instead of emphasizing the positive that will attract. It was said of the early Christians, “See how they love one another.” That’s what Pope Francis is trying to emphasize. It’s hard to argue against that emphasis, as it is the Gospel message. “See how they defend one another,” is part of the same picture, but follows naturally from their love.

One of the blessings of the computer is its ability to seek and find the nectar of God’s goodness and beauty from anywhere in the world, as almost everything, it seems, is on the internet. In preparation for the New Year, I went to the Vatican website, and came upon a list of the morning meditations Pope Francis gives at his daily Mass. I would like to share the following homily, from October 22, 2013:

Contemplation, closeness, abundance

I chose this meditation because Pope Francis is so close to the heart of our holy father Francis, who we know would emphasize contemplative prayer in such a manner. It’s fresh in my mind, because Donna and I are attending a class on Mystical Theology, which begins with Aristotle’s “natural theology,” in which man can understand the existence of God, the First Cause, from the Effects of Creation—clearly taught by Paul the Apostle in the first chapter of Romans.

There are three steps in knowing, and hence loving God: natural knowledge, super-natural knowledge, and the light of Glory in heaven, when God’s Essence will be revealed to us, and “We shall see Him as He is.” [1 John 3:2] But there is a step between number two and three: infused contemplation, where God reveals to his most intimate disciples a greater knowledge and love than is humanly possible—the beginning of heaven on earth!

Following are the words of Pope Francis, then, as he comments on the fifth chapter of Paul’s Letter to the Romans, especially verse 20: “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” That’s

where these three words come in, to help explain this difficult verse.

Contemplation. In order to understand the mystery of our Redemption in Christ, Pope Francis said: “We need to put ourselves on our knees, we need to pray and contemplate.” Then he said, “Contemplation is mind, heart, knees, prayer”, and it is the way we enter into this mystery, a mystery that “can only be understood on bended knee, in contemplation, and not with the mind alone.”

Closeness. Pope Francis noted that God’s closeness to us is a constant theme for St. Paul. “He is a God who is close to us. The mystery of our Redemption through Jesus Christ reveals a God who has been close to us throughout our history; from the first moment when He chose our father Abraham, when He walked with His people, and when He sent His Son to accomplish this work.”

Each of us knows the interaction between sin and grace. We know how miserable we feel when we sin, falling short once again of fully cooperating with grace. But God never gives up. Pope Francis added: “God gets involved with our misery, He draws close to our wounds and He heals them with His hands; He became man in order to have hands with which to heal us. The work of Jesus is personal: one man committed the sin, one man came to heal it, for God does not save us merely by decree or by law; He saves us with tenderness, He saves us with caresses, He saves us with His life given for us.”

That’s a great definition of the Love of God! Truly there is **No Greater Love** for us to imitate!

Abundance. The Holy Father noted that this word is repeated numerous times throughout St. Paul’s letter to the Christian community in Rome. “Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.” It is very clear, he said, that sin abounds in the world, and even in our own hearts: “Each one of us has his own inner poverty and weakness, and we are very familiar with it. Yet God triumphs over sin and heals our wounds, as Jesus did. What is more, He bestows on us the superabundant gifts of His love and grace.”

Understanding God’s superabundant love also helps us understand the preferential love for sinners that

Jesus had: "They accused Him of always keeping company with tax collectors and sinners, for eating with tax collectors was scandalous, because sin abounded in their hearts. But Jesus went to them with the superabundance of His grace and love."

Pope Francis continued: "Some of the saints say that one of the ugliest sins is the sin of diffidence, that is, distrust of God. How can we distrust a God who is so close, so good, and who shows such preferential love for our hearts, sinners though we are? Such is the mystery. It is not easy to understand, and our unaided intelligence alone can never comprehend it. But perhaps these three words will help us: **contemplation**, to contemplate this mystery; **closeness**, this mystery hidden for all ages in a God who is close and who draws near to us; and **abundance**, a God who always

triumphs over sin through the superabundance of His grace and tenderness, or as we prayed in the Collect, through the richness of His mercy." AMEN!

So let us draw close to Jesus as we contemplate His closeness, and the superabundance of His grace! The Rule of St. Francis, with its emphasis on prayer and penance, is an excellent training program to make our souls amenable to receiving the pure gift of infused contemplation. Here's to a New Year's resolution to strive for holiness by greater fidelity to the Rule, and our faithful response to the superabundant love and mercy of God - shown to us through His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



Opening God's Gifts by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading on the Feast of Epiphany

...the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord. [Isaiah 60:5-6]

Having just celebrated Christmas, it is likely that most of us participated in the giving and receiving of gifts. This lovely tradition, when celebrated rightly, brings joy—often more joy to the giver than the receiver. I think the closer we get to Christ, the more pleasure we derive from giving. This is a sign that we are becoming more like him. God's generosity knows no limits. At times we are permitted to participate in his generosity and it fills us with holy joy.

God's gifts are manifold, simple, and free. So much so that we often take them for granted. Right before Christmas Eve Mass, I thought to ask the Lord for a gift I was very much in need of—the gift of self-control. As I asked the Lord for this gift after Communion on that holy night, an infused knowledge came to me, as if God were saying, "I gave you that gift years ago...you just haven't opened it yet." It was one of those moments when the scales fall from your eyes and the truth can no longer be denied. Of course I received that gift years ago—on the day of my confirmation. It is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Have I really left it

unopened for over 40 years? Shame on me!

That experience led me to wonder what other gifts my loving Father had given me that I had not yet opened. This is worth pondering. It is the height of ingratitude to ask for and expect gifts from God, and then to pick and choose the ones we want to open. Surely if God has given us all these gifts, he wishes them to be used in his service. *Mea culpa!* If the Church is in crisis, I need only look in the mirror of truth to see why.

St. Paul is very clear about the importance of using our spiritual gifts to build up the Body of Christ:

"And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, so that...living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from

whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love." [Ephesians 4:11-16]

And no one is excluded. **Everyone** is given gifts. If we are not sure which gifts we have been given, we need to pray for the knowledge and perhaps ask God that others will reveal to us our gifts. Sometimes we don't see them for ourselves, but others notice them.

"To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes." [1 Corinthians 12:7-11]

We also need to ask for **more gifts** for the glory of God. St. Paul goes on to say that we should **"Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts."** [1 Corinthians 12:31] St. Faustina says that if a soul rejects a gift given at Communion, it immediately goes to another soul. After reading that, I started praying after Communion: "Lord I accept every gift and grace it pleases you to give me, and all those being rejected by others, for your glory, and for your kingdom to come." I do not do this for my own gain or glory. Often God's gifts are something we do not want, like the gift of suffering for souls. I

repeat, this is not for our own gain or glory. God's kingdom needs souls willing to open and use his gifts in order that his kingdom may come. St. Catherine of Siena once said: *"If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!"*

The wise men from the East brought gifts to our Lord. The holy family made use of them in God's timing. We too must pray and discern the gifts we have been given and how God wants us to use them in his service.

One of our BSP members posted on the forum a link to this blog: <http://stephanieswalk.wordpress.com/>, where the blogger encourages us to "name" our year. I think I will name my year, the "Year of opening God's gifts". It is probably a good idea then to write down the gifts I open and use; it will help me with gratitude and keep me honest about my response to the gifts, especially if they are gifts I would not necessarily ask for.

Speaking of gifts, this Christmas, my parish participated in the "Dynamic Catholic Parish Book Program" (<http://dynamiccatholic.com/parish-book-program/>) in which we purchased books to give away to all who wished one at Christmas. The books are offered to parishes at a greatly reduced price so they may give them away at Christmas and Easter as a way to engage those who perhaps are only coming to Mass twice a year, as well as the regular parishioners who just need a boost once in a while. The book we gave away this year was Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary Mission by John R. Wood. It is a book about each baptized Catholic's call to holiness, sainthood, and mission. There are a number of books available through this program. I encourage you to check it out and recommend the program to your priest.

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

Mark 12:44 "...She, from her poverty, has contributed all she had..."

"My children, what do you have that belongs completely to you? Everything you have is a gratuitous gift from your beloved Abba. Then why do you hold back? Does not this Father of yours shower you with blessings? Enter into his generosity, then, and give back to God everything he has given you. See your poverty and embrace it. Let all you do flow out of your poverty, for it is only from your poverty that God's fountain of generosity springs forth. Meditate on the poverty of Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who embraced the poverty of the human condition in order to let loose the fountain of God's generosity over sinful man. My children, be humble, be little. Blessed are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Jesus, my greatest poverty is my weakness. I offer you, merciful Abba, all my weakness, and with it every gift and grace you have given me. Help me to participate in your generosity with a loving, grateful heart, for your glory and for the sake of all those you place in my path. Jesus, I trust in you. Help me to desire to embrace poverty as completely as you did. Amen.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast.

"Beloved child, the gifts of God the Father are being lavished on this generation. Those who pick up the gifts and receive them with a grateful heart will be lavished with still more. That is the message you heard in today's Gospel. The fruitful will be given more responsibility. Do not limit me in what I can give. If I set no limits, why should you? Realize that my gifts always come with a promise and a purpose of fruitfulness. At no time is my purpose static, but always moving in an upward spiral. Ponder these things, my children. Be gracious with the gifts I have given you. Work tirelessly for the kingdom and at the end you will have the joy of hearing me say to you, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your Master's joy.'"

Heavenly Father, we thank you for counting us worthy to stand in your presence and serve you. May we always accept with joy and gratitude the gifts you offer. May your gifts to us always bear fruit for the kingdom, for the glory of your holy name. 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/>.)



A RE-TWEET FROM THE 'SPARROW'

Peace, my little friends! Jesus told us that Satan is the father of lies and that the whole world is under his influence (I add emphasis to that last statement!). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that there is a fundamental deception that underlies the world system. It

was also like this in the time of St. Francis of Assisi and he recognized it as such and turned his life (with the help of grace) in a 180 degree turn that set him on a course completely away from the social norms of his times.

St. Francis, like most Franciscans and true Christians, recognized that the world constantly promises something that it cannot deliver—satisfaction.

The illusion is that whatever we pursue—positions, possessions, or experiences—will somehow bring us inner peace. Yet it never happens. A more-desired object is always just over the next hill, and after climbing it, there suddenly appears one more obstacle to achieving our goal. Even if one is able to get hold of it, the result is still unfulfilling. It is not possible for the human soul to be satisfied with "things."

This, however, I have come to realize as a Franciscan and a follower of the Lord, is not, in itself, a bad thing, but rather part of the design of God!! In Romans 8, we are told that the creation itself was subjected to futility so that freedom for which every created being

longs could only be found in the Creator. God uses this to bring people to Himself and also to keep His children on the straight path. So if God uses a negative to get a positive that is not a bad thing...that's a good thing...haven't you heard that God can write straight with crooked lines...all that kind of thing is easy for Him because HE IS GOD!!!

Now, the journey (and the dream, if you will) can only be enjoyed when our eyes and hearts are NOT focused on the journey itself, but on Him whose kingdom and manifest presence should be the goal of all we do. This is what St. Francis did and how he lived and what attracts us to what he has left behind for us to follow. So let the journey and the dream begin in your lives this year...you won't regret it...it will be the most blessed thing you ever did.

Lord, today I will no longer allow the things of this world to blind me to their temporal nature and false promise.

I will see beyond them to the place of contentment in You Lord.

Your finished work, in Your Passion and Death of the Cross, has delivered me out of the darkness of the world and brought me into the Kingdom of Your Light.

All of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis give You thanks and praise for this deliverance through Your love and compassion for us and all men.

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, N. Carolina

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.**



*Holy Mother
of God
and our
Mother,
pray for us*

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)



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PENANCE



of St. Francis

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