

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

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter VII—Francis' Love for Poverty—His Needs Are Supplied Miraculously

1. Among the supernatural gifts which Francis received from God, the Generous Giver, his love for absolute poverty constituted a special privilege which enabled him to grow rich in spiritual wealth. He saw that it had been the constant companion of the Son of God, but that now it was scorned by the whole world, and so he espoused it in undying love. For poverty's sake he abandoned his father and mother and divested himself of everything he had. No one was so greedy for gold as he was for poverty; no treasure was guarded as jealously as he guarded this Gospel pearl. He used to be particularly offended if ever he saw anything contrary to poverty among the friars. From the first moment of his religious life until his death, his sole wealth consisted in a habit, a cord, and a pair of trousers, and he was content with that.



The memory of the poverty felt by Christ and his Mother often reduced him to tears and he called poverty the Queen of the Virtues because it was so evident in the life of the King of Kings and of the Queen, his Mother. When the friars asked him privately what virtue made one dearest to Christ, he replied as if revealing his closest secret, "Believe me, my brothers, poverty is the special way of salvation. It is the source of humility and the root of all perfection and its fruit is manifold, though unseen. This is the treasure hidden in the field in the Gospel to buy which we must sell all—and anything that cannot be sold should be abandoned for love of it.

2. "Anyone who wants to practice perfect poverty," he said, "must renounce all worldly wisdom and even secular learning, to a certain extent. Divested of these possessions, he will be able to make the great acts of God his theme (cf. Ps 73:15-16) and offer himself naked to the embrace of the Crucified. Anyone who clings to his own opinions in the depths of his heart has not renounced the world perfectly."

When speaking about poverty to the friars, Francis often quoted the words of the Gospel, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air their resting-places; the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Mt 8:20), and he gave orders that the houses they build should be small, like those of the poor. There the friars should live not as if the house belonged to them, but as strangers and pilgrims in a house which was not their own. It was part of a pilgrim's life, he said, to shelter under another's roof and pass on peacefully, longing for home. On a number of occasions, he ordered the friars to leave a house, or even had it pulled down, if he thought that it offended against Gospel poverty, either because the friars claimed the building as their own or because it was too sumptuous. He used to say that poverty was the basis of the whole Order; the whole structure of their life was founded on it, so that if it were solid, the Order would stand firm, but that if it were undermined, the whole fabric would be completely demolished.

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





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier... Darkness Covers the Earth

Reading (1 Kings 10:1-10) Gospel (St. Mark 7:14-23)

In the Gospel today, as Our Lord speaks to us about what defiles a person, we recall that from the Old Testament there were all kinds of ways that a person would become ritually impure: just simply touching something that was impure, eating something that was unclean, doing anything that would cause a person to become ritually impure. All of these things were external. There certainly were the commandments that God had given to the people, and their sins would also cause ritual impurity. But most of the things that the people would have to purify themselves for before they could enter the temple to worship God had to do with things that were external to themselves. For instance, if someone touched a dead body, if someone touched a pig, if someone touched a leper, even if you had a clay pot and it touched something that was unclean then everything in the pot became unclean, and if you drank or ate what was in the pot then you became unclean. That was the way they were looking at things. It all had to do with the idea of making sure that one was pure and proper before the Lord, and to be able to understand that there were lots of different ways that a person could be affected.

Well, what the Lord was doing was letting us know that what happened in the Old Testament with all of these laws regarding the ritual purity really was pointing, not to the externals that cause these things in the Old Testament, but to the internal realities. That is, if you just look at some of those points you see that if we are dead on the inside, if we are in the state of mortal sin, we are ritually impure; if we touch something internally, that is, if we choose it, if we accept something that is inappropriate, something that is unclean, we become unclean, we become ritually impure. And so what in the Old Testament was external, Our Lord is now pointing to the reality that it is what is internal that makes us impure, that those things simply are external expressions of the internal realities.

That is the way we would just naturally understand the way things operate. The body expresses the person; so when you make a choice, it is expressed in and through the body. Well, in this case, now it is to be able to say, "We can look beyond just the externals and we can look at what is on the inside."

And so the Lord gives a whole list of some of the things that are in the heart, all of the points that He talks about: the evil thoughts, unchastity, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, licentiousness, envy, blasphemy, arrogance, folly. All of these things, He tells us, make us unclean. So it is what is in the heart, it is the dispositions of the heart, it is the choices that we make. Those choices, of course, are going to find an external expression. But, nonetheless, it is the choice itself – not merely the expression of the choice – that makes us unclean. And in order to be ritually pure, to be able to come before the Lord to worship Him, we must go to confession. So we need to be very careful.

For instance, we can look at the situation in the first reading. We have two people whose motives were not good. We have the Queen of Sheba who comes to Solomon. She brings all kinds of gold and spices and garments and so on, and she plays this rather manipulative game because she came for a purpose. Solomon, being the wisest man in the world, had a major weakness. We know that he had hundreds of wives and hundreds more concubines. The Queen of Sheba was wiser than Solomon because she came for the purpose of going home with a baby and she succeeded in her purpose. So you have Solomon who is being arrogant and showing off, and, of course, desiring something that he should not. And you have the Queen of Sheba, who comes with an impure motive, hiding it under things that look good, that is, asking questions about a variety of things so that she can get answers to bring them home and buttering him up with all kinds of niceties and so on. But the reality is that when she went home she had exactly what she wanted. And so we see how it is what is in the heart, not necessarily just the external actions. In this case, the external adultery would certainly be that, and it certainly made both of them impure in that way; but it was the intention. She came with a bad intention. He is acting with a bad intention. Both of them, of course, wind up falling into sin. But the impurity was already there and that is the thing we have to understand.

It is what is in the heart. We need to be humble. We need to be charitable. We need to be pure. We need all the virtues that we have to be striving for. And it is not just the externals. That is how it has to start – we need to be able to stop doing whatever

unfortunate actions we have ourselves involved in – but then we need to continue on and we need to eradicate these things from our hearts; not just from our actions, but from our hearts, to change the disposition so that the virtue is true. Not just that we are putting up a nice façade and making it look good, but that we truly are holy. That is what the Lord is

looking for: someone who is not just exteriorly clean, but someone who is interiorly purified through prayer, through sacrifice, through the sufferings of life, through union with Christ. That is what He is pointing to: a deeper reality of holiness, not an external purity, but an internal purity, a purity of the heart, for persons who are truly filled with virtue.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

Our Call

St. Francis gave us the Rule to save our souls. The people of his day were impressed with his spirituality, and knew the friars had been given a Rule by St. Francis. So, they came

to him and asked him for a Rule of Life. A way that would lead them to heaven. It is in this spirit that he gave them the Rule, and formed his Third Order.

The First Order was the friars, with whom he shared his life for many years, as some men came to him and wanted to share his life, just as the apostles did with Jesus. Then the women came along, beginning with his friend, Clare of Assisi, who was the first member of the Second Order that he founded. Many young women of her day came to her or St. Francis and wanted to pursue a holy way of life with her and they were led to join Clare in her way of life, in a cloister, away from the world. This started the Poor Clares as they became to be known, the Second Order of St. Francis. So, the Third Order, the laity coming to follow St. Francis, was a natural, as the first two Orders were founded on the same basis: people coming to St. Francis to lead a holy life. For us that was lay people of his day voluntarily coming to St. Francis in their search for a holy way of life.

So, that is what we are about today, also. The Brothers and Sisters of Penance is a group of people gathering to live the life that St. Francis gave the laity in his day. We actually are living the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis even though we are not yet an Order in the Church. That makes us original, and unusual, in this age. That said, we are not going to get a lot of support for doing that from the people of our days. And it is a fact that most people, even

those in religious Orders, do not follow a Rule of life anymore. So, we do well to recall that the way St. Francis gave us has been lived by many Saints and Blessed in the Church, and in that sense we can know that we are reaching out to something very unique, very holy, and very challenging.

The world is our cloister, and if you think about it this is a real challenge for us. We live in the world but are not to focus on it or seek to be part of it as we go through our day to day lives. We are called to be in the world, but not of it, for Christ, which is the motto of the BSP. We are called to know our Rule, so we can live it, but not make a big deal out of it to others. To live it peacefully, quietly, and in a holy way. It remains between God and us, but if you think about it, so does the gospel. Every person that lives the gospel lives it in their own way. The key point in it all is that you believe in Jesus Christ and want to live like you do. You accept him as your savior and Lord. You strive to be a witness to him in the simplicity of your own life, where you work and live, and make His life your own, day to day. Our Rule helps us to do that.

The gospel was given to us to live so as to reach heaven. To follow the way of life the Lord identified, and taught us, so we can join the Lord in His Kingdom. We will save our souls by living the gospel, and the Rule helps us live the gospel. And Jesus asked us to be His witnesses, to spread the message of His gospel beyond ourselves. This remains the challenge of every Christian alive, and certainly is our biggest challenge.

There is an old saying that you cannot give away what you do not have yourself. Unless we lead a truly Christian life in a committed manner and seek to

know and love the Lord we cannot give that to others. If they ask we need to be ready to share. That is how our Rule really helps us. It is a holy way of life, given to us by a Saint, to lead us to heaven. And, we can share it if we are asked. This is how Chapters of the BSP have formed, and continue to form, as members discuss and share the Rule with those around them.

So, let's rejoice in the Lord and the way of life that St. Francis gave us, and share it where we can, when we can, without forcing it on people, or making them

feel inadequate. It is a beautiful call to a holy way of life. Yet, we need to remember that there are many ways to serve the Lord, and as many ways to live the gospel as there are people living it. The elements of a holy life, however, remain the same. Loving God, and neighbor, in a spirit of prayer and self-sacrifice. On the bright side, our Rule frames this life for us, and helps us live for Christ in a full and real way.

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

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6:56)

Donna and I recently went to a local Catholic church for a pot luck supper and fellowship. In the course of a discussion, a gentleman suggested we check out an article by NPR (National Public Radio) detailing the shortcomings of our Archbishop, even down to his management style. We both mocked the source of this story as having zero credibility for a faithful Catholic, and wondered why this man would give credence to—much less conform his attitude towards—one of the worldly enemies of Jesus and His Church. I have since laid awake at night, wishing I could sit down with every believer who listened, like Eve, to the slick presentation of evil espoused by the world, the flesh and the devil. Would we listen to someone who slandered our parents, who we are commanded to honor? Who slandered our spouse? Who slandered our Father in heaven through Whom we have life? What about our Father in Christ, a successor to the Apostles themselves, a good shepherd who is attacked solely for effectively defending and promoting the teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? What is wrong with us! Lord, to whom shall we go? And to whom shall we listen?

The pope blesses a parrot. That's considered newsworthy. But a Eucharistic miracle directly involving Pope Francis is not! Well, it's newsworthy here. The following story first appeared on the internet. I immediately set about verifying its authenticity. Unlike NPR, the sources are credible, as

we shall see. The main part of the narration is from the book "Reason to Believe," by Ron Tesoriero, published in 2007, where there are many other "reasons to believe" as well.

"The miracle took place in 1996 in the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires, Argentina, when the present Pope Francis was Auxiliary Bishop under Cardinal Quarracino. A consecrated Host was found in back of Church. The priest temporarily placed it in a container of water and put it away in the tabernacle of the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. A few days later, he saw to his amazement that the Host had turned into a bloody substance. The priest informed then-Bishop Jorge Bergoglio, who gave instructions that the Host be professionally photographed. The photos were taken on September 6. They clearly show that the Host, which had become a fragment of bloodied flesh, had grown significantly in size. For several years the Host remained in the tabernacle, the whole affair being kept a strict secret. Since the Host suffered no visible decomposition, Cardinal Bergoglio decided to have it scientifically analyzed."

Here's where the question of credibility comes in. A certain Dr. Castanon Gomez took a sample of the bloody fragment to New York for analysis. He did not inform the team of scientists where the sample came from. One of the scientists was Dr. Frederic Zugibe, the Medical examiner of Rockland County for many

years. He was a well-known cardiologist and forensic pathologist who had also done studies on crucifixion in general, and the Shroud of Turin in particular. He determined that the sample given him by Dr. Castanon was real flesh and blood containing human DNA. Dr. Zugibe testified:

"The analyzed material is a fragment of the heart muscle found in the wall of the left ventricle close to the valves. This muscle is responsible for the contraction of the heart. It should be borne in mind that the left cardiac ventricle pumps blood to all parts of the body. The heart muscle is in an inflammatory condition and contains a large number of white blood cells. This indicates that the heart was alive at the time the sample was taken. It is my contention that the heart was alive, since white blood cells die outside a living organism. They require a living organism to sustain them. Thus, their presence indicates that the heart was alive when the sample was taken. What is more, these white blood cells had penetrated the tissue, which further indicates that the heart had been under severe stress, as if the owner had been beaten severely about the chest."

Two Australians witnessed these tests. Knowing where the sample came from, they were dumbfounded by Dr. Zugibe's testimony. One of them asked the scientist how long the white blood cells would have remained alive if they had come from a piece of human tissue, which had been kept in water. *"They would have ceased to exist in a matter of minutes,"* Dr. Zugibe replied. When told that the source of the sample had been kept for three years in a container of distilled water, Dr. Zugibe was at a loss for words. He said passionately,

"You have to explain one thing to me. If this sample came from a person who was dead, then how could it be that as I was examining it the cells of the sample were moving and beating? If this heart comes from someone who died in 1996, how can it still be alive?"

When told that the analyzed sample came from a consecrated Host, Dr. Zugibe concluded, ***"How and why a consecrated Host would change its character and become living human flesh and blood will remain an inexplicable mystery to science; a mystery totally beyond her competence."***

The beauty of our faith is that there are such mysteries which we cannot comprehend, mysteries which we accept by faith. Jesus is constantly looking for such faith in His followers. He gives plenty of evidence for those who have eyes to see, to bring about this faith in that which cannot be explained scientifically. Eucharistic miracles have been with us for two thousand years. The most famous is that of Lanciano, Italy, around 700 A.D.

Wishing to compare these two particular samples, taken 1300 years apart, Doctor Castanon arranged to have the lab reports from the Buenos Aires miracle compared to the lab reports from the Lanciano miracle, again without revealing the origin of the test samples. The experts making the comparison concluded that the two lab reports must have originated from test samples obtained from the same person. They further reported that both samples revealed an "AB" positive blood type. They are characteristic of a man who was born and lived in the Middle East.

Is it possible to hear this story, and not be moved? I urge further study for anyone who may be even slightly skeptical of what seems to be "too good to be true." A yawn is not a proper response to such a miracle. It is said that an atheist cannot acknowledge the existence of God for fear that something will be demanded of him/her by his/her Creator. Duh! Of course!

Jesus has a love affair with mankind. That makes the devil detest us, and do everything in his power to throw us off the track. We must ignore the NPR's of this world, and concentrate on the proper response to that pure gift of love given us by Jesus. We don't have to think of someone who appeared two thousand years ago. **He is truly Present today in the Blessed Sacrament!**

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota





Hooked on a Feeling by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the Gospel Reading, Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

You have hear that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven... (Matthew 5:43-45)

I'm sure we have all heard the cliché line that a counsellor or therapist might use: "How did that make you feel?" The popular theory is that if we can identify our feelings, we can communicate more effectively and our relationships will improve. To paraphrase a 60s pop song, society is hooked on feelings.

That is a far cry from what Our Lord calls us to in the Gospel reading above. Continual self-examination maintains the focus on self. This can lead to idolatry of the self. And when we idolize the self, contrary to popular wisdom, our relationships will suffer and die. Christ shows us a different way. While our feelings are real and are important gifts of God, we need to master them, and not have them master us. Little children are mastered by their feelings. If as an adult we have continued to be mastered by our feelings, our emotional lives are stunted. We see this played out in many adult lives—if it feels good, do it! Homes are broken, money is wasted on frivolous things, compassion is buried under a pile of refuse called entertainment.

Spending too much time focused on feelings can become like an addiction. A long time ago I was a volunteer victim's advocate with the police department. I remember spending five hours one day with a woman who was in an abusive relationship. By the end of the day, I had become

aware of the addictive nature of the emotional roller-coaster she was on. In her case, I could see that she and the abuser were each other's drug. Society as a whole is riding that roller-coaster. Emotions are being used as a tool of the devil.

Conversely, God's way is the way of peace. Jesus often tells us to go against our feelings. To do good to those who hurt us. To pray for them. This is the way of the cross, dying daily to self. It is the way of discipline, the way of the disciple. The way of penance. It does not mean we need to be doormats, but that we stop **reacting** to things, and start **acting** in the way of discipleship, using faith and reason to guide us, not our emotions.

In many cases our relationships are disordered. The one thing we need to do is to improve our relationships is to start with our relationship with God and allow him to set all our other relationships in order. We need to start by increasing our prayer and entrusting all our relationships to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

I will leave you with three passages on this subject from my prayer journal. The Lord has had much to teach me on this subject and so, out of my weakness, I have something to offer others.

May God bless you all and lead you into his holy peace.

From www.pelianito.stblogs.com

John 13:21...Jesus was deeply troubled...

"Child do you see the anguish I felt at the betrayal by one of my own? And later in the garden as I struggled to accept the Father's will (Lk. 22:41-44)? Child, do not be surprised if these feelings overwhelm you at certain times. Your emotions are a special gift from the Father. They serve an important purpose. They can point you in a direction, but be aware child, that you must never be led by them. See them for what they are, but be led by faith and reason. One who allows herself to be led by emotion walks as a child (1 Co. 13:11-13). A sign of maturity is that one can master her emotions. So child, when I say 'do not be afraid', it is not that you must never feel fear, but that you must master it through faith and reason (1 Jn. 4:4). This is the way to peace. Shalom my beloved."

Jesus I love you! Grant me every grace I need to master my emotions and walk in your everlasting peace. Amen.

Philippians 2: 14 Do everything without grumbling or questioning, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation...

"Beloved child take care not to lose graces through bitter complaining. If feelings of bitterness or resentment come, just bat them away like pesky flies. With an act of the will set them aside and make an act of trust in your loving Father through Jesus. This will surely put an end to any power these negative emotions would exert over you."

Heavenly Father I repent of any bitterness or resentment, worry or despair. In you alone do I trust, through Jesus, beloved Savior of my heart. Cleanse me, heal me and in your mercy Lord, forgive my lack of faith and grant me every grace I need to more perfectly imitate Jesus your Son. Amen.

1 Corinthians 3: 3 While there is jealousy and rivalry among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving in an ordinary human way?

"Beloved, when these feelings overtake you, try your best not to let them control your actions. The feelings are one thing, coming unbidden, but the action may be controlled through discipline. It is this discipline, disciple, that will raise you above your lower nature where you are at the mercy of your emotions. It is slavery to remain so and not strive to overcome through discipline, your natural inclinations. Child, pray for grace and strength. Confess and be at peace."

Lord Jesus, I repent of any feelings of jealousy or rivalry that I have allowed to rule me. You alone are my King. Grant me the grace, O Lord, to discipline myself in order to be freed from slavery to my emotions. Lord Jesus, have mercy! 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/>.)



THE POPE AND THE SAINT

A Look at the Franciscan Themed Exhortation of Pope Francis

By Christopher G. O'Donnell, BSP

As a Director of Catechetical Ministry I have read and re-read the pope's newest Apostolic Exhortation entitled *Evangelii Gaudium*—'The Joy of the Gospel' and the more I read it, the more I see the themes of Franciscan spirituality running throughout it. I invite and urge every member of the Association to really read this document and to embrace our Holy Father's call to live a vibrant Christian life. Without going over every inch of the exhortation I would just like to point out some very 'Franciscan' ideas found in the document and compare it with the life and teachings of our Seraphic Father, Saint Francis of Assisi.

In the *Later Rule*, the Franciscan life is described as follows: "The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (LR 1). Francis saw his manner of life as being

evangelical, that is, grounded and driven by the Gospel preached by our Lord: "*This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel*" (Mk. 1:15). Francis desired for himself and his followers to live, not as the community described by Saint Luke (cf. Acts 2:42), which was and is the basis for Catholic parish life, but in the manner in which Jesus and his disciples lived during our Lord's earthly ministry prior to Pentecost: "*As you go, make this proclamation: 'the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or a walking stick*" (Mt. 10:7-10a). Thomas of Celano tells us that upon hearing these words "Francis immediately exulted in the spirit of God" and exclaimed: "This is

what I want. This is what I seek, this is what I desire with all my heart" (1C 22). And from that moment on "he then began to preach penance to all with a fervent spirit and joyful attitude" (1C 23).

Notice that Francis' spirituality and ministry were directly based upon the Gospel, not upon theology or devotional practices or canon law or spirituality but the plain and simple Gospel message of Jesus Christ. It was this basic message—called the "proclamation" (= *kerygma*) by biblical scholars—that was the focus of Francis' preaching and call to repentance. Now let's turn to *Evangelii Gaudium*. In his exhortation Pope Francis speaks of the importance of this foundational *kerygma* "which needs to be the center of all evangelizing activity and all efforts at Church renewal" (EG 164). He goes on to state that "this first proclamation is called 'first' not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in the qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways" (EG 164). We must focus again on the essentials and basics of the Gospel: God loves us. He sent His Son to redeem us from our meaningless lives of sin. He fills us with His own Spirit to live in a new manner. We need only trust in Him and turn to Him to receive mercy. Basic: "*Repent, and believe the good news!*"

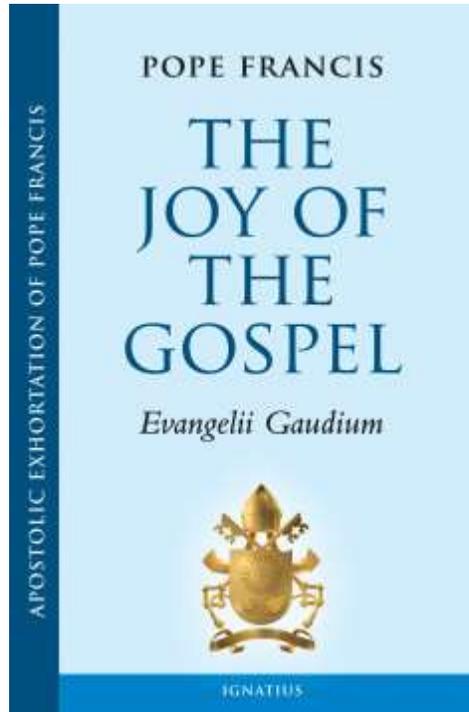
And because he himself had experienced that personal love of God and heard the Voice of the Father, Saint Francis attracted thousands of people because of his "fervent spirit and joyful attitude." Similarly, Pope Francis teaches that many of our lives as Christians "seem like Lent without Easter" and while we need to recognize that joy will be expressed in different ways in different experiences it nevertheless "always endures born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved" (EG 6). Evangelization leads us to authentic fulfillment in God so "consequently, an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral!" (EG 10). We, like Saint Francis, must radiate that joy that comes from God in a vibrant way that attracts others to Christ because of our witness!

Finally, the Franciscan understanding of "minority" (= *minorum*) consisting of interior humility and exterior simplicity is drawn directly from the life of Christ and the disciples. They are sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God to everyone and announce the reign of Jesus Christ. But they are not to 'weigh themselves down' with money or clothing or walking sticks because they must be free to move forward and preach the message. This humility and simplicity is not simply a means to an end for Francis but it goes to the very imitation of Christ himself who humbled himself (cf. Phil. 2:5-11) and came to serve, not be served (cf. Mk. 10:45). God is found 'at the bottom' the place of need and we, as His followers, must be found there as well. The pope warns us that Christians sometimes "are tempted to find

excuses and complain, acting as if we could only be happy if a thousand conditions were met" (EG 7) rather than simply living out the joy of the Gospel and the life of the Risen Christ. Instead, we seek 'things' to bring us happiness (which they may) but then true joy eludes us. Because many of us today have "an inordinate concern for our personal freedom and relaxation" they see faith more "as a mere appendage to their life" rather than being "part of their very identity" (EG 78). We need to look again at our lives and see how they add to or detract from our witness to Christ. The pope warns us against the dangers of materialism, modernism, and mediocrity which only draws us further from God, impedes our witness, and cools our desire to serve. We are all called to embrace the life of minority—true

humility and simplicity. And in doing so we are living like God Himself.

I hope these few reflections help us all to discover how deeply our Franciscan charism is needed during this time in the Church and in the world. As members of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of Saint Francis of Assisi we should be at the forefront of preaching the simple Gospel of our Lord to begin, person by person, to expand the borders of the Kingdom of God and overthrow the kingdom of the flesh, the world, and the devil. As Saint Paul says, we can boldly in this mission for "*if God is for us, who can be against us?*" (Rom. 8:31b). Amen. Saint Francis, pray for us.



Chris O'Donnell BSP, St. Anthony Chapter, Escondido CA





A RE-TWEET 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 them 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 tailor-made "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

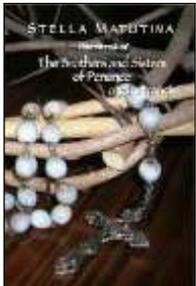
MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

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.**



*"The Lord is knocking at the door of our hearts.
Have we put a sign on the door saying: 'Do not disturb?'"*

Pope Francis @Pontifex Jan 13

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
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