



...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

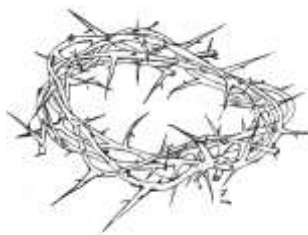
3. He had been taught by a revelation that anyone entering the Order should begin by fulfilling the precept of the Gospel, “If you have a mind to be perfect, go home and sell all that belongs to you, and give it to the poor” (Mt 19:21). In obedience to the Gospel and in order to avoid scandal, such as might arise if a friar retained his property, he never received anyone into the Order unless he had renounced everything and kept nothing for himself. When a man asked to be received to the Order in the Marches of Ancona, he told him, “If you want to joint Christ’s poor, give what you have to the poor in the world.” At that the candidate went off, but he was influenced by human affection to give his belongings to his relatives, not to the poor. When he came back and told the saint what he had done, Francis reproached him bitterly and said, “On your way Brother Fly. You never left your home or your family. You gave what you had to your relatives and cheated the poor. You are not worthy of Christ’s poor. You tried to begin your religious life by yielding to an earthly attachment and laid a worthless foundation for a spiritual building.” The poor fellow immediately returned to his family and

demanded his property; he had refused to give it to the poor and so he quickly abandoned the idea of embracing the religious life.



4. At another time the community of St. Mary of the Portiuncula was so much in need that they had nothing to offer the friars who came there visiting. Francis’ vicar approached him and told him how badly off they were and asked him to allow them to keep some of the property which those entering the Order brought with them; then the friars could fall back on this when the need arose. Francis, who was not without his own share of divine guidance, replied, “My dear brother, God forbid that we should sin against the rule for anyone. I should prefer to see you strip our Lady’s altar bare rather than have your commit the slightest sin against our vow of poverty or the observance of the Gospel. The Blessed Virgin will be better pleased to see her altar laid bare and the Gospel counsel observed perfectly, rather than to have the altar properly decorated and her Son’s counsel violated, which we have promised to observe.”

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



**‘When they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!’** (Matthew 27: 29)



## VISITOR'S MESSAGE

### Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

### Be Holy as God is holy

Reading (Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18) Gospel (Matthew 25:31-46)

In the first reading today from the Book of Leviticus, the Lord tells us that we are to be holy because He, the Lord our God, is holy. Then He goes on to give a whole series of statements about what this holiness is to look like, and it is all about treating people in the proper way, with charity, with justice, and so on. And Our Lord, in the Gospel, tells us basically the same thing: that it is those who fed the hungry and gave drink to the thirsty and clothed the naked and took care of the sick and the like who are going to inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Now the important thing to understand in this is that when God tells us to be holy, He is telling us that not only do we have to have holiness of life in prayer, but it has to come out in virtue. If we are going to be truly holy as the Lord is holy, we have to act like God; we have to be like Him. But the important thing also to see in this is that the righteous did not even realize that is the way they were because they would say to Him, "Lord, when did we see You this way and take care of You or feed You or give You drink?" They did not even realize that they had done it. It was not something they were thinking about and saying, "Oh, I should have to do this." Rather, it is something that will flow naturally from the holiness of one's life. At the same time, those who are unrighteous are going to attempt to justify themselves. They are going to say, "Well, when did we see You this way and not take care of You? If we would have seen You this way, certainly we would have taken care of You!" And He will say, "Whenever you failed to do this for one of the least ones, you failed to do it to Me."

So it is to be able to see Christ in others, and we can ask ourselves how often we do that. Do we see Jesus in other people? Do we treat them as we would treat Him? After all, if He were right here in front of us, we would want to do the best for Him. We would pull up a nice chair; we would seat Him; we would feed Him; we would take care of Him in whatever way that we could; we would want the very best. Yet if we do not see Him in others, then we fail to care for Him in others. This is the way the saints have done it throughout the years. When we see the heroic things that they did, it is not simply because they were looking at somebody and feeling pity for them; but rather, they were looking at

someone and they saw Jesus Christ in them. They had charity, they had true love toward those people, and they cared for them because they loved them. That is what Our Lord is asking of us.

We are to be holy as God is holy. That is a command; it is not a nice idea. And in case we want to be able to suggest that that was back in the Book of Leviticus and it is not something we have to worry about anymore, we remember that Jesus Himself gave us the exact same command. It is in the imperative form; it is a command. It would have an exclamation point at the end of it if we put it into typical English. It is not an option if we are going to be Christian people. The Lord is requiring this of us. And so we need to make sure that we are in union with God, first and foremost. Not only meaning in the state of grace (which obviously has to come first), but united with God in prayer, deep in union with Him in a relationship because how can we be holy as He is holy if we do not know the holiness of the Person we are supposed to be like? So that comes first. Obviously, no one can give what he does not have. If we do not have God, we cannot give Him to anybody else. We cannot serve God in anyone else if we do not even know Who He is. How can we see Him in someone else if we do not have a relationship with Him? So that must come first.

But if we are going to have that life of prayer and if we are going to be trying to live a holy life, the Lord makes very clear what we can look at in ourselves. The objective way that we can try to see where we are at as far as our level of holiness is going is to depend on the level of charity that we have toward other people. We like to think, in our little "ivory tower" way of thinking, "My prayer life is so wonderful! I've got this great thing going with Jesus and isn't this wonderful!" What happens when we walk away? That is the real question because what happens in the heart has to find its expression in our actions. If our actions betray what is in the heart, then, for many of us, we would have to say, "I'm not being very holy." We need to look at that situation. We need to size it up honestly, and we need to make the adjustments in our lives so that we can seek to be holy, not the way that we think it ought to be, but the way that God sees it: to be holy as God Himself is holy.

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





## ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... The Audience of One

In the book, *The Call*, the author, Os Guinness, speaks of the driving force in his life, singular, that is. He says, "I find it a tremendous comfort as well as a continual challenge to remember that above and beyond the impossible-to-satisfy constituencies (in our lives) is the one audience that matters – the Audience of One." (Chapter 9; Page 76 – *The Call*) That Audience is God.

The world will tell us otherwise. It will call us and prod us to be concerned about popular opinion, polls, and success. We do well to keep this in mind. The world will never tell us to make God number one in our lives, that our accountability is to God, but it is. We know that, and we do well in all we do to keep that in mind.

The world will tell us success is important. Money is the key to happiness, and power is worth striving for. If we look for it, and so many do, the world will set us on a collision course with damnation. It will call us away from God and the things of God. If we follow the world's call we will come to God nonetheless but rather than us saying "Thy will be done." God will say to us "thy will be done", and since our will was always God-less we will go into the ultimate God-less-ness of hell forever.

Forever. That is something to ponder. In eternity we will live in the perpetual state of 'now'. There will be no bells, or chimes, or whistles, or clocks, to mark time. We will just exist and our state will remain forever unchanged. If that state is fire, hatred, Godless, so it will remain forever. If it is peace, joy, light, and love, with God, forever, so it will always be and God will never be undone in what he adds to our lives in heaven. He is Creator, and limitless, omnipotent and omniscient, and in the joy of his presence and the presence of all other creation we will be lost in joy forever. Our forever will be forever pleasant. Warm, friendly, and happy. So, in considering our call we do well to consider the reward of following our call. This alone is an incredible meditation, for any of us. The world will NOT call you to do it though. That is a given.

We need to pray. Prayer is our link to God and to really understanding His call. The world will not call us to

pray, but we can call each other to prayer, and keep each other in prayer. Prayer should be the glue of the BSP. The binding on the book of our lives, which are together even though we are apart. We are apart physically, unless we have been blessed to start or be members of a Chapter, but we are not far apart in the common call of our Rule. That spans the world now, and even though we are drop in that ocean that is also true of our lives in God. Mother Theresa once said that all we do is like a drop in the ocean but without it the ocean would be incomplete.

Our love needs to be limitless too, to the best of our ability. The Lord called us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and that should be an objective for all of us as part of our call. This will sometimes take great sacrifice but sacrifice we must. And these sacrifices, and this love, become the work of our lives. This work is at the center of the call for in fulfilling this work we fulfill the gospel and in living the gospel we come to know, love, and serve God better, and we prepare ourselves for our final meeting on that final day after we die when we stand before God, our Audience of One. The only One that matters.

So, let's live our Rule and always remember the First Rule that St. Francis gave us all was the gospel of Jesus Christ. He told his first followers to always remember that the gospel was their first Rule, and so our call to God rests in this First Rule. The gospel calls us to live holy lives and so the Rule of life St. Francis gave us, now the Rule of the BSP as it was the First Rule of life that St. Francis gave the laity, does that for us. It calls us to live holy lives, in simplicity, discipline and prayer, and to realize in our lives our call to know, love, and serve God and it defines that for us. Our Rule challenges us to become holy. The challenge is worth it and in living the challenge we live for God and prepare to meet him by answering the call that Jesus gives us all. He said "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." So, as Os Guinness says at the end of each chapter in his book: "Listen to Jesus of Nazareth; answer His call."

And, what better time to work on this call than during Lent! So, let us all have a holy and happy Lent!

May the Lord give us all His Peace!

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





## NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

***As Jesus was starting out on his way to Jerusalem, a man came running up to him, knelt down, and asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? [...] I've obeyed all the Commandments since my youth." Looking at the man, Jesus loved him. "There is still one thing you haven't done," he told him. "Go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." At this the man's face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.*** (Mark 10:17, 20-22)

In this condensed version of the story of the rich young man found in Mt. 19 and Mk. 10, we see the classic dilemma of all mankind. **What's the minimum I must do to inherit eternal life?** Isn't that what he was asking? It's relatively easy to follow a few commandments, and do what one wills the rest of the time. It's quite another to accept the invitation from Jesus, who said: "If anyone wishes to be first, he must be the last of all and the servant of all." (Mk. 9) What that means to me is that the process of giving up our own will and following that of another—even God Himself!—is so traumatic, that most people will do **anything** to avoid doing it! Be last, and the servant of all, with no thought of self. That's a hard saying for people of any age, particularly this one with so many possessions.

"Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." John 12. Jesus is very clear about the difficulty of the road to discipleship. Those who can follow that road most perfectly are called Saints. The rest of us are somewhere along the way, perhaps have skidded off the highway and are now in the ditch, for example. Especially this winter. I think most people mirror the attitude of the rich young man and go away sad, for the price of following Jesus is too high. A Fallen Race is not easily redeemed, especially if it doesn't know it has fallen in the first place.

I recently heard a talk by an outstanding young priest (Fr. John Floeder, M. Div.) of this Archdiocese entitled: "Moralism or Morality." He drew heavily from the book: "Morality: A Catholic View," by Servais Pinckaers, O.P. The talk was along the lines of the direction Pope Francis is leading the Church, which also bears heavily on this issue. Fr. Floeder defined "Moralism" as people following a list of do's and don'ts, much like the rich young man who had kept all the Commandments from his youth. Yet they cannot take the leap of faith and live a life of true Morality to follow Jesus most perfectly. Pope Francis understands that people today are completely turned off even by the list of do's and don'ts. Better to first promote an intimate, loving, personal relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and the rest will follow naturally. In sports, a team is either on its heels playing defense all the time, or on offense – in this case proclaiming the Good News of God's Love which initiates a strong response!

The problem, Fr. Floeder said, is that there are very few rational people out there who will listen to rational arguments, for most have been educated to respond only to emotional arguments. Forget objective norms to live by, much less the pursuit of absolute Truth; the emotionally driven are guided by "what my heart tells me," and "what feels good." And of course after the Sexual Revolution, we

all know what "feels good." But it's how we got to this point that intrigued me.

Father made the point that the Catholic Church had a great deal of influence on society sixty years ago, even though there were no prominent Catholics as such (I immediately thought of Bishop Sheen and Cardinal Spellman, but the 32 year-old priest had only read about those times, not lived through them. Even Hollywood feared the Legion of Decency). Now it's just the opposite, he said. The Vice President is allegedly Catholic, as is the head of Health and Human Services, as well as the current and former Speaker of the House of Representatives. Six of the nine Supreme Court Justices are Catholic. Yet Catholics seem to have **no influence** on society today (more like a **negative** influence, perhaps due to the negative attitude many Catholics have towards their own Church! How did that happen?).

Father said something rather obvious upon reflection, which I think is a good part of the answer to that question. In 1960, Catholic John F. Kennedy was running for president, and he had no chance of winning without wooing millions of Protestants to his side by telling them he would not be taking orders from the Vatican. So he made the following statement to a group of Protestant Ministers in Houston:

***"I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute—where no Catholic prelate would tell the President (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote—where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference..."***

***I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish—where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source—where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials..."***

***Whatever issue may come before me as President—on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject—I will make my decision in accordance with these views, in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates."***

And the rest is history.

Many Catholics were elated with the election of the first Catholic President, who represented the de facto "Catholic" political party. But the seeds of dissent and disobedience to Church teaching and authority were sown in this speech, and members of his political party learned that lesson well. They have gone out of their way to make sure no one can accuse them of being too "Catholic." On the contrary, after triumphantly marching hand-in-hand with Seculars over Civil Rights, they chose the same partners on the next major issue: Feminism, which meant support for birth control and abortion. Moving down the road to complete Secularization, the "Catholic" party soon chose to be the party of abortion, and now supports every principle of what Pope John Paul II calls the Culture of Death. It has by now become the virtual "anti-Catholic" party, subverting traditional Christian moral values, religious freedom, and even the conscience rights of individuals, forcing faithful Catholics into an appalling decision: can they any longer, in conscience, support what was once an honorable political party?

In such a situation, it's difficult for the bishops to not be pre-occupied with all the do's and don'ts of a recalcitrant flock, which advocates and defends teachings contrary to the Gospel of Life itself, especially through the promotion of abortion and the gay rights agenda, all the while claiming to be Catholics in good standing! Various bishops have counseled such individuals, especially prominent politicians, to not put their souls in serious danger by continuing to promote evil, and publicly repent of very public sins.

Fr. Floeder said to bring about true conversion, words are not enough. It takes Saints, in effect. The lived example of true conversion influences people today, for example Mother Teresa. They say, "What does that person have that I don't have? What is the cause of joy that radiates from them? I want to have that..." The old saying is to "fight fire with fire." So we need to "fight emotion with emotion!" And that means living not just the Commandments, but the Beatitudes. That gets us away from the calculated minimum we must do to gain eternal life, and expands our horizons exponentially!

Father ended by saying, "don't just diagnose an illness, show the cure: a life centered in Jesus Christ, centered on virtue! Desire to see God, then moral actions and a virtuous life will follow." These things are elementary for us in the BSP, but still bear repeating for those of us trying to get out of the ditch...

*"Invite Jesus into your heart, and get to know Him through daily personal prayer. Read Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels. Live a Sacramental life, daily Mass if possible, and pray with the priest. Receive Holy Communion with reverence and cherish that intimate time with Jesus. Live always in close spiritual communion with Jesus, the center of our moral life.*

*"Keep growing in conversion, especially during lent. Love is not satisfied with just being good enough to get by. See joy in the Saints. They radiate joy: go and do likewise!"*

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



## Jesus I trust in you... by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading on the First Sunday in Lent

**(The serpent) said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?"** (Genesis 3:1)



With the devious line in the above Scripture passage, the serpent casts doubt in the minds of Adam and Eve about whether or not God can really be trusted. Our first parents fell for that line, and fallen humanity has been repeating the sin ever since.

The Tower of Babel was built because the people didn't trust in God's promise to Noah. And then there were the Israelites who grumbled in the desert: "Sure, God parted the Red Sea and defeated the Egyptians, but can he feed us out here in the desert? Can he give us water to drink? Can he give us meat?"

The Lord tested their faith. He gave them manna, but they could only gather enough for one day. They had to trust

that the next day the manna would come again.

There is no shortage of anecdotes in human history to illustrate our repeated lack of trust in God. The serpent, having so easily duped our first parents, continually tries to undermine God. Yes there are in every age righteous souls who trust in God implicitly, but original sin lingers. And the tempter is constantly whispering in our ears, "Do you think almighty God cares about your little problems. Can you really trust him to look after you? You'd better take matters into your own hands."

The story of Job is a microcosm of humanity's trust and mistrust of God. Job was righteous and maintained his trust in God, even though he lost everything he held dear

on one single calamitous day. "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." He had no support for his righteous attitude, not even among friends or family—his wife urged him to "curse God and die."

Think of how painful it must be to our Lord when we fail to trust him, when we take things into our own hands instead of waiting on his timing, when we grumble and complain, and continually place our own will above his. Do we not believe in his unfailing love? Is it his unlimited power or his infinite goodness that we doubt? What part of God do we think is untrustworthy?

God has been enduring this attitude from humanity since the fall. How it must tear at his flesh. He who is love, who can do nothing but love, is constantly doubted, by you and me, and by the whole of humanity. Psalm 95 gives us a hint of God's frustration with this attitude:

**Oh that today you would listen to his voice!  
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
As on the day at Massah in the wilderness,  
When your ancestors tested me,  
And put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.  
Forty years I loathed that generation  
And said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray,  
And they do not regard my ways.'  
Therefore in my anger I swore,  
'They shall not enter my rest.'**

O praise the patience of God who even after centuries of humanity "going astray" continues to offer us remedies for our afflictions! One of the most efficacious remedies we have been given is of course the image of Divine Mercy, with the words inscribed on it, "Jesus I trust in you." Can God make it more plain? Our trust is what he wants, what he longs for and craves. But more than that, our trust is necessary for the plan of salvation history to come to its rightful conclusion. Jesus would not have given such a powerful message to St. Faustina in our day if it were only incidental. It is critical to the plan of salvation; it is critical to our time in salvation history. Our trust in Jesus, especially through this image, offers reparation for centuries of mistrust. Those five little words crush the enemy, and unravel the unholy tapestry so meticulously

woven by him.

Trust in God purchases for us and for the world many graces. Jesus told St. Faustina: "*The graces of my mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, that is TRUST. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive.*"

*"My child, make the resolution never to rely on people. Entrust yourself completely to my will saying, 'Not as I want, but according to your will, O God, let it be done unto me.' These words, spoken from the depths of one's heart, can raise a soul to the summit of sanctity in a short time. **In such a soul I delight.** Such a soul give me glory. Such a soul fills heaven with the fragrance of her virtue. But understand that the strength by which you bear sufferings comes from frequent Communion. So approach this fountain of mercy often, **to draw with the vessel of trust whatever you need.**" [V.1487]*

We can see how this also ties in with the message of the Divine Will, a teaching based on the word *fiat*—let it be done—the Father's Fiat of Creation; the Son's Fiat of Redemption; the Spirit's coming Fiat of Sanctification, and Our Lady's "fiat" to God through the angel Gabriel. The message given to Luisa Piccarreta is one of living always in the Divine Will, not just doing the will of God, but living in it. The more we trust in God, the more we long to live in his holy will. It is our place of safety in this treacherous age. These pieces all fit together. It is all part of God's holy tapestry. We see the underside and can make little sense of the design, but God sees the whole picture and a glorious picture it is! But we need to trust him and do exactly what he puts in front of us each day, without grumbling or complaining.

I can't do justice to the Divine Will teaching in this short article, but encourage you go to YouTube and find the videos on the Divine Will by Fr. Joseph Iannuzzi, who is one the only one authorized to teach about Luisa Piccarreta's writings on the Divine Will.

As we begin our 40 day fast, let us pray for the grace to fast from our own will and to grow daily in our trust of God, who is love and mercy itself.

Jesus we trust in you. May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

## From [www.pelianito.stblogs.com](http://www.pelianito.stblogs.com)

I am sharing this message of trust based on a dream I had last September. Given the winter we have had, the dream has proved to be prophetic. I posted this on September 2, 2013.

**Matthew 8:25-26 They came and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" He said to them, "Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?" Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm.**

Dream: I dreamed that we were being warned about a sudden cold front, more severe and fast-moving than ever had been seen before. It would come down from the arctic and swoop down to cover all of North America and beyond. Almost as soon as we heard the warning it was upon us, even though the weather had been nice just before. Suddenly there was thick frost on the windows. The dream ended there.

I believe this dream has many levels and is, as always a call to prayer. Are we in for a hard winter? Perhaps. If not in weather, then perhaps in the coldness of men's hearts. Perhaps in the coldness of war or terror attacks. When I asked

the Lord for a Scripture passage, I was led to Matthew 8: 23-27—Jesus stills the storm. The same day, I read about the Holy Father's worldwide call to fasting and prayer for peace in Syria and the Middle East. He has set September 7, the vigil of the nativity of Mary, as the date to fast and pray for this intention. This, I believe, confirms the dream as a call to invoke Our Lord and Our Lady in this matter.

I was then reminded of a previous blog post, from [May 12, 2008](#) which quotes the same Scripture passage:

*"My beloved, the storm is coming; many will be terrified. But you my child must be the one to say, 'Fear not! The Lord is in the boat with us. He is the Lord of the wind and the waves. Do not be afraid, but believe!' My child, if you do this many will come to believe. Have faith. I am near."*

Jesus and Mary we trust in you!

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** **Rejoice in the Father's great love for you...**

The peace of Jesus be yours!

"When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers...what are mere mortals...that you watch over them with such care?" (Ps. 8:3[4]-4[5])

When God created "lights in the dome of the sky to divide the day from night," he said, "Let them be for signs, seasons, days and years" (Gen. 1:14). Later, these seasons became known in Hebrew as "*mo'adey Adonai*" (the appointed times of the Lord)--the yearly cycle of festivals ordained for Israel (Lev. 23:1-2, 44). Before Israel or even mankind had been created, God anticipated Israel's life of worship and made detailed provision for it. As Christians we inherit similar seasonal provisions from the Lord and it is easy to look at our liturgical calendar and recognize these structured seasons of worship that occur all during the Church year. One of them is Lent. Another Easter.

Science may describe the "heavenly lights" as distant

planets, stars, and galaxies hurling through empty space. Humankind, in this view, often seems dwarfed and insignificant against the vastness of the cosmos. To the eye faith, however, these same planets and stars are reminders of a loving Creator. He is not a nameless force, but a Father who made plans for His children from the very beginning. Here is an aspect of love that we do not always speak of, but that parents understand instinctively. Love anticipates the needs of the beloved and seeks to meet them before they arrive. The Lord who created the boundless expanse of space "is mindful of us." Such is the Father's love!

*"God cannot endure that un-festive, mirthless attitude of ours in which we eat our bread in sorrow, with pretentious, busy haste, or even in shame. Through our daily meals He is calling us to rejoice, to keep holiday in the midst of our working day."* —Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Rejoice in the Father's great love for you and for yours . . . again I say rejoice!

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter



## **A CROWN OF THORNS**

**Taken from the BSP website:** [http://www.bspenance.org/A\\_Crown\\_of\\_Thorns.shtml](http://www.bspenance.org/A_Crown_of_Thorns.shtml)

Calvary is a strangely attractive place. It is attractive to both the Christian and to the non-Christian. I remember, in my own unconverted days, how a sermon on Calvary would hold my attention as no other sermon would do. I used to wonder what the whole theme was about. Jesus, such a good man, and yet men, men like ourselves, took this good man Jesus and they led him outside the city of Jerusalem and there crucified him. What was it all about? I pray that if you do not yet know Jesus as your Savior

that as we come to Calvary again, Calvary will leave a question mark in your heart and you will have to ask, 'What is it all about?'

Calvary brings us near to the heart of what Jesus was doing dying for our sins, taking our place before the majesty of the God who is righteous and holy and of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Why did the Lord Jesus go through with the crowning insult described in the text? He

was already wounded and bruised from scourging and almost the only place that had not known pain was his head. Why was he made to suffer this final indignity? This crown would have caused him physical suffering. It must also have caused him terrible spiritual suffering considering who he was. That the Jews and the Roman soldiers should mock his kingship in such a cruelly tangible way—a crown for the King of the Jews—and should force it on his head must have caused him great anguish of mind and body and soul.

### **A symbol of all his suffering**

Jesus had already suffered greatly. He had been led from one great man to another. He had been roughly and brutally handled all through the night. He had been stripped and scourged and on his back on the orders of Pilate. Now the soldiers are ready to take him away and to fulfil the cry of all the people to crucify him. Before they do that, they weave this crown and place it on his head—a symbol of all his suffering and of the fact that his greatest suffering is not physical pain. His outward sufferings were terrible. But we believe that these outward sufferings were nothing compared to the suffering of his sinless soul. It was John Owen who expressed this so beautifully when he said, 'The sufferings of his soul were the soul of his suffering.'

Think for a moment of who was being subjected to the sort of treatment that this text summarizes. He was the one of whom John the Apostle wrote: "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:3, 4).

He was the one who from all eternity was with God and was God and had fellowship with God, face to face. He was the one who was 'the upholder of all things by the word of his power' (Heb. 1:3). He was the one who was upholding the very people who were subjecting him to suffering and to indignity and mockery. If this is true, and we believe with all our minds that it is true, what a sharpness there must be in his suffering. The creature he has made in his own image, that he had made to fellowship with, that strangely he had loved from all eternity, of whom he had said prophetically, 'My delights were with the sons of men' (Prov. 8:31)—they rejected him. The rejection comes fully to light here when they make him suffer the great indignity of the crown of thorns.

### **A symbol of his substitution**

In Genesis 3:18 God said to Adam that because he had listened to his wife and had eaten of the tree which had been forbidden to them the ground would be cursed and thorns and thistles would grow - symbols of God's curse on disobedience. The same truth is set out in Hebrews 6:8: 'that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.'

What is happening when men take Jesus and weave a crown of thorns and place it on his head? Something is happening of which they are not aware. Something of

which these soldiers have never dreamed is taking place in this simple, cruel transaction something that will be spoken of as long as the gospel is preached. They are taking the symbol of man's sin and disobedience and they are weaving it into a crown. Who will they crown as the chief of sinners? Who will they crown as the one who will stand in the ultimate place of God's curse? They take the one who is holy and harmless and undefiled and they take this symbol of sin and they crown him. Why? Because this is why he came. This is why he is there at all.

He is taking delight in doing the will of his Father. He is coming into the place of the shadow. He is coming under the shadow that came into God's universe when created intelligence turned round and attempted to wrest God from his throne. He is coming under the shadow of that mystery of iniquity. He is coming into the place where evil is crowned and holds sway. He is coming in there as the one appointed so to do by God himself.

Who is he when he comes under the shadow? Who is he when he stands under the cross with a crown of thorns on his head? He is the man who takes your place before God. He is wearing the crown that you should have worn throughout eternity. That crown is a symbol of what happens when a holy God comes into contact with sin. When his curse comes out it bears thorns. What a crown there must be for those who go into eternity without Jesus.

What is the spiritual reality of which this speaks? What will it be like for the soul to stand in the place of the utmost curse upon sin - to bring forth, not fruit, but briars and thorns in its own living spiritual experience? We don't know, but Christ knew and went through the depths of pain for us. He knew it personally.

That was just the outward crown that men made. But there was another hand at work. There was the hand of God the Father, the representative of triune deity, the representative of a Godhead that is holy and just and who had said, 'The soul that sinneth, it must die.' That hand wove another crown that can't be seen and laid it on the man Christ Jesus. It is the crown of God's eternal curse on the sins of all his people. Jesus stood there and bore the wrath of God. I don't know what that is, nor do you. He bore the wrath of God although he did no sin. What sort of twisted, awful thing must sin be when it does such a thing in one who is a substitute for others. What an awful thing sin must be if it can do this to the man who is God's fellow, if it can bring him into the suffering and the darkness and the death of Calvary. The crown of thorns is a symbol of his substitution, of his standing there for us, crowned with the symbol of God's curse.

He was a king, God's king and the king of God's people—and as king he was bearing God's wrath for them. He was never more of a king than he was then. He is now on a throne—the throne of God and of the Lamb. Because he suffered on the Cross, crowned as our substitute and representative, there is a place in the universe of God where these beautiful words stand written, 'There shall be no more curse' (Rev. 22:3).



What was due to your sin? What was due to my sin? What was due to us became his, and he took the curse into his own infinite and eternal being and he bore it away

### **A symbol of his salvation**

He's crowned in mockery, as a taunt. In this action we can see the distortion that sin brings into the mind of man. It is described to the smallest detail so that we will be able to appreciate the wonder of his saving love to us. When Paul wrote, 'the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2:20), he knew that Christ loved him because he had given himself for him. How do I know tonight that Jesus loves me? It is because I can go to the place called Calvary. There I see what he bore for me and what I see tells me of the reality and of the strength and of the power of his love. That love brought him to the place of suffering. He endured it because of his love for you and for me. Oh, the love of the Lord Jesus to people like us! How do we react to it?

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan,  
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man.  
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span,  
At Calvary.

What do you see in his crown of thorns? You see one great sign of his kingly love to your soul. How Jesus loved you! Words can't express that love, only the heart can experience it. I hope that you know it for yourself. The love that went as far as that is a love you can trust. Through any shadow or any darkness, through the melting of the universe itself, you could trust the love that stood there.

As Christ felt the thorns pierce his head he, who had suffered so much already, was willing to suffer this further indignity. He was willing to have the kingship of his divine nature mocked for your sake and for mine.

We would never have asked him to stoop so low, would we? Would we have asked that the Son of God, whose glory is the same as the glory of the Father, whose Godship and Godhead is as real as that of God the Father, would bring his love as low as this? Would we have believed that he would have brought his love from heaven's throne to the place where he would allow the scum of the earth to crown him with thorns? We would never have asked him to go so far but his love had to go as far as that because that was as far as man's sin went - where they could take God and crown him with thorns. That is the essence of sin - to tear God from his throne. That same sin works in us in myriad ways. We refuse to give God his lordship over us. That essentially is the same sin. It is the sin that will shut God out from any corner of the heart and from any part of the life and which will look at Jesus and say, 'We will not have this man to rule over us. In order that sin in our hearts should be unraveled and removed from its rule over us, Christ came all the way to Calvary—and he came in love.

When they had crowned him with thorns they bowed the knee and they mocked him. 'Hail, king!' They didn't know how truly they spoke even although they spoke in mockery. Christ indeed is king. Is he your king in truth and in love and in salvation? Or is he your king only in mockery and in refusal and in rejection of his claims? Only you can answer that question. May God help you to answer it honestly and may God open your heart to feel and to know the love that stooped so low, and to experience the great salvation that is symbolized in this event.

What can you do with this Jesus who was crowned with thorns for you? You can take him as Christ and him crucified and make him king of your heart and of your life and of all your days.

## **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](http://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 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!*

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