



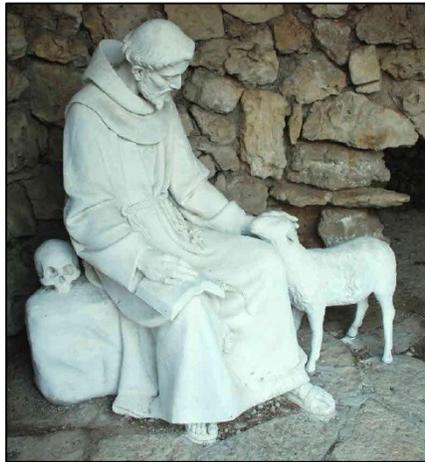
...IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT, FOR CHRIST!

## BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

### Chapter VIII—Francis’ Loving Compassion and the Love Which Creatures Had for Him

7. When he was travelling near Siena, St. Francis came upon a large flock of sheep grazing in a field. He greeted them lovingly, as usual, and immediately they stopped grazing and ran to him, standing there with their heads erect and their eyes fastened on him. They showed their appreciation of him so clearly that the shepherds and the other friars were amazed to see the shearlings and even the rams jumping excitedly about him.

Another time he was offered a present of a sheep at the Portiuncula and he accepted it gladly in his love of innocence and simplicity, two virtues which the image of a sheep naturally recalls. He exhorted the animal to give God praise and avoid offending the friars, and the sheep was careful to follow his instructions, just as if it realized the affection he had for it. If it was entering the church and heard the friars singing in the chior, it would go down on one knee spontaneously and bleat before



the altar of our Lady, the Mother of the Lamb, as if it were trying to greet her. At the elevation during Mass, it would bow profoundly on bended knees and reproach those who were not so devout by its very reverence, while giving the faithful an example of respect for the Blessed Sacrament.

On another occasion while in Rome, St. Francis had a lamb with him which he kept out of reverence for the Lamb of God; and when he was leaving, he gave it to Lady Jacobs di Settesoli to keep. The lamb accompanied its mistress to church and stayed there with her, refusing to leave until she left, just as if the saint had trained it in its spiritual exercises. When she was late getting up in the morning, the lamb nudged he with its horns and roused her with its bleats, urging her to hurry and get to church. She was amazed and became very fond of the animal which had been a disciple of St. Francis and was now a master of the religious life.

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



### VISITOR'S MESSAGE

#### Homily by Fr. Robert Altier... Our Lady heard the Word of God and kept it

Reading (Song of Songs 2:8-14) Gospel (St. Luke 1:39-45)

In the first reading today, we hear from the Song of Songs about the beloved leaping over the mountains and bounding over the hills. In other words, even though the

beloved is looking for her lover it is still unknown when it is that he will arrive. As she seeks out her lover, he comes at a time she does not necessarily expect and in a manner which is going to be hidden. That is exactly what Our Lord did as well two



thousand years ago. We hear about Our Lady going up into the mountains carrying Jesus within her, over the hills and through the mountains, to the one who was awaiting His arrival: Saint John the Baptist, still hidden in the womb of his mother.

Along with this, we have to look at that relationship between Our Lord and Our Lady because all the people of Israel were waiting for the Lord, for the One Who loved them; but of all the people on the face of the earth, it was Our Lady more than anyone who was looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. So there is this relationship that is there between Jesus and Mary. She is truly the beloved. Of all people in humanity, she above all is the one loved by Our Lord because she was the one who could receive His love most perfectly. Only God, of course, can perfectly receive love because His love is infinite; but, of all humanity, Our Lady had the greatest capacity to be able to receive His love and to be able to love Him in return. She truly is the beloved and He is the Lover, and He filled her heart with love.

So when Elizabeth says to her that she is the most blessed among all women, it is on one level because of her fullness of grace; one could also say, of course, because she is the Mother of God; and one could also say because she loves more perfectly than anyone else. Yet if we go back to the Book of Genesis and we look at creation, we see that there is this order of perfection in creation. The woman, being the last one created, is the most perfect being of all. We see that she is the highest of all creatures. The man was made from the dirt. The woman was made from a living human being, and she is the one above all of God's creatures who is the most exalted and the most perfect. From that class of exalted beings – women – there is one who stands out above all, and that is our Blessed Lady. All women have this wonderful capacity to be able to love, to enter relationally into union with God, to have that very, very special intimate union, that spousal kind of union with the Lord that men do not have and cannot have – but women do. And of all women, it is Our Lady who truly is the spouse of the Holy Spirit; she is the daughter of the Father; she is the mother of the Son.

When Elizabeth greets Our Lady with this wonderful greeting that she gave, we have to hear the words that are there, not only that she is the most blessed among all women (all women, of course, are blessed in her), but also the words that she is blessed because she believed that God's word to her would

be fulfilled. Remember, that is exactly what Our Lord told us in the context of what many people think is a put-down to Our Lady when the woman in the crowd said, Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that gave you suck, and Our Lord said, Blessed rather is the one who hears the word of God and keeps it. And what does Elizabeth tell Our Lady? Blessed is she who believed that the word spoken to her would be fulfilled.

She heard the word of God and she kept it. She heard the word and kept it so perfectly that the Word became flesh in her womb. She had conformed herself perfectly to the Word of God, so perfectly that the Word of God could be conformed to her without losing anything of Himself. And so she is the one who brings that Word of God into the world in a physical way. Our debt to our Blessed Lady is eternal. How grateful we have to be for this extraordinary woman! For all eternity we will have the joy of being able to praise God for her. While we are going to look at God face-to-face for eternity (assuming we go the right direction), the next one in line is Our Lady. All creation – every creature that is in heaven – will thank God for all eternity for our Blessed Lady.

So when Elizabeth looks at her and says, And who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? each one of us can say the exact same thing because she is our mother, because we are members of the Son of God. Who are we that the mother of Our Lord should come to us? It is merely because of His love for us and her love for us. That love is infinite and that love is showered upon each one of us. That love was so profound that Saint John the Baptist leapt with joy in the womb of his mother. So much love was there that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spouse of Our Lady, so wherever she goes the Holy Spirit is there. That is the kind of love they shower upon each one of us. We need to have the same response as John the Baptist and as his mother Saint Elizabeth, to leap interiorly with joy, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to proclaim the greatness of the Lord, to proclaim our own humility, and to praise the blessed woman who said "yes" to God and who brought the Word of God to us so that we can be blessed because the Word of God spoken to us has been believed, has been accepted, and has been loved. Obviously, none of us can have the same experience as Our Lady, but the closest we can come is to carry Jesus within us in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Word of God continues to be spoken. Blessed are they who hear the Word and keep it.

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



## ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... On Charity and Christmas

All the followers of Jesus Christ know that this life is a test. In the visible absence of God will we prevail in believing in the invisible reality of God and act accordingly? Will we have and develop Faith in

God? Having done that, will we use our free wills to pursue this unseen God by doing what we feel he asks of us, or not? Do we want to get to where God wants to take us, which is to heaven?

As Christmas comes again we consider anew that Jesus came as God's gift to us to make this message clear, and show us, and tell us, how to live if we want to get to heaven. Yet, He left it up to each of us to decide how we will live, as neither He, nor His Father, will tamper with our free wills without our permission. That is why it is important that we surrender ourselves and our lives to God. So He can move our wills to know, love, and serve Him better and gain a happy eternity with Him forever.

St. Augustine wrote, among his many letters, of the visible and invisible, the physical and the spiritual, and the things we can or cannot do, here or hereafter. Among those things are a salutary number of writings on charity as the driving force in our spiritual growth. On charity he writes of what is ordinary, and extraordinary. His are enlightening and encouraging dialogues.

Acts of ordinary charity are those things that ordinary people do on a daily basis to assist, aide, or complement others in their family and outside their families. Among these things are the many routine things we do for others. We cook, and clean, and help others, including especially our families and children, in various aspects of their lives. We smile at people, and encourage them, and help them get their lives in order, and accomplish the work of their

lives. We live positively with others and promote peace for the love of God and of neighbor as the general way we live our lives, and for the love of God.

It is imperative that if people seek God, and His Kingdom, that they routinely live lives marked with ordinary charity. If we routinely practice ordinary charity with hearts that believe in and seek to serve God we are on our way to God. And we do well to keep in mind that many of the Saints have said that charity within and to our brothers and sisters in the Church is of the highest order.

Extraordinary charity, on the other hand, is consciously doing something exceptional that you don't have to do for the love and the good of another person or persons. It requires exceptional energy or dedication to accomplish and its primary objective is to more perfectly and completely fulfill the two great commandments, to love God and neighbor. To follow the commands and example that Jesus gave us more perfectly, on an exceptional basis, in the way we live.

A very good example of someone who practiced extraordinary charity in our day would be Mother Theresa of Calcutta. She in our time is what St. Francis was in his time. As professed followers of St. Francis dedicated to living the life he gave us for the glory of God and good of our souls and the souls of others it is useful for us to reflect on our very special calling to live lives of extraordinary charity. That is what our Rule calls us to do.

As brothers and sisters of penance who we are before God is our primary and daily focus, and this in itself is wonderful and exceptional. Especially in this Christmas season, as we see anew the Child, let us ponder anew how we can live for Him more perfectly.

Have a holy and blessed Christmas!

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP Administrators, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota  
(Reprinted from a previous newsletter.)



## NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

**"Like the deer that yearns for running streams, so my soul is longing for you, my God. My soul is thirsting for God, the God of my life; when can I enter and see the face of God?" (Psalm 42:1, 2)**

A recent event has brought me once again to that place of

thirsting for God: "When can I enter and see the face of God?" Or was it recent events? A brief summary.

On the way to a funeral in a small town in Western Minnesota a deer found itself directly in front of our car. It was late October, 10:00 AM, not a time when deer are supposed to be chasing cars. Perhaps it was the rut, or the deer was indeed yearning for running streams and in haste to get there. It may have survived the collision for I couldn't find it later. The car survived with over six thousand dollars damage. Donna and I survived with no apparent harm. But there are internal injuries.

Two weeks later, I had another heart to heart encounter with atrial fib that brought me to the same hospital where I had a fifth cardio-version two years ago. Donna found a pulse too rapid to count. I got all hooked up to numerous gadgets which also found blood pressure of 218 over 110, when the doctor suddenly announced: "Well, your heart has just reverted back to normal sinus rhythm without assistance. You will be able to go home this evening as soon as your blood pressure goes down." That's the first time such a thing has ever happened: "without assistance." It was like a small miracle.

In these days that follow, I am living in a different state of mind. I long for peace and quiet, for a chance to ponder the four last things: life, death, heaven and hell. But it is elusive. Time has built up many occupations that need attention, that demand attention. And if there are a few moments available, who can use them properly? How many moments of our life can we say that we have lived them to the fullest? They say most people apply themselves to just a tiny fraction of what they are capable of. Somehow human weakness frequently gets in the way. Yet Jesus said He came to "bring us the fullness of life." And I believe it. It's just not all going to happen on this earth.

Paul the Apostle perfectly explains the dilemma of longing for heaven, when we truly "can enter and see the face of God." In his letter to the Philippians he says: "Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by The Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage that now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. What am I to choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two; I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is necessary for you that I remain in the body..."

Who am I in the light of such holiness? Paul was a faithful instrument in the hands of God. By contrast,

what have I done on earth to merit so great a reward? The rich young man in the Gospel said that he had kept all the Commandments—he didn't do what he was not supposed to do. But life should not be about not doing things. "And Jesus looked on him with love." Wow! In one simple phrase, we are told what life is all about! It's not something negative, but how have I **positively responded to the love of God each and every day?** Therein lies the problem.

The Saints always say "Yes" to God. I say, "Well, let me think about that a minute." Or, "Call me back sometime in the future. I'm too busy doing my own thing right now." If we say NO often enough, how often will we be asked again, or even **hear** the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit, who respects our free will? A key to happiness is to take advantage of opportunities presented to us. It seems the reverse is also true, that unhappiness results from failing to take advantage of all the little inspirations the Holy Spirit sends our way. It seems that one in pursuit of holiness should respond in a positive way more often than not. Yet what is likely to be remembered, the successes or the failures? The failures. That's a difficult burden to bear for certain opportunities may never come our way again.

We may think, what kind of legacy will I leave behind? Is the world a better place for my having been born? Hopefully the good fruit outweighs the bad. Yet, no matter what good a person has done, no one is indispensable. That's a very humbling feeling as we prepare to meet our Maker. Those we leave behind will be well taken care of by the One who brought us all into existence.

These thoughts have been a preoccupation. Time is running out. Wake up! Where is that wedding garment? No, I'll look for it tomorrow. "The Procrastination Support Group Meeting has been POSTPONED." Oops, if I had just attended that last meeting, all would be well. And if I wait long enough, these thoughts too will pass...

Fortunately there is help, even for the helpless and hopeless. The Church has this wonderful calendar, going all the way back to the very beginning, when our Blessed Mother counseled the Apostles on how to commemorate the life of Christ. Having reached the end of the liturgical year, the time for thinking of the four last things gives way to Advent, a new beginning. It's time now to ponder a new life in Christ through the mystery of His Incarnation. Time to realize life is not ending, but beginning anew each day. Time to say YES to God, who is always faithful, even if we are not. Time to look forward to meeting our merciful Savior who we pray will say: "Good and

faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master.”

We in the BSP have the Rule of St. Francis to prepare our hearts for our ultimate encounter with Jesus. He prescribed a time of fasting and prayer from the Feast of St. Martin to Christmas similar to lent. He gave to all the Christmas crib as a reminder what it was like on that Holy Night when our Savior came to earth as a helpless child, a supreme act of humility. Around the manger are Wise men who have come from afar to worship the newborn King. Donna and I have adopted a wonderful song that we sing every day for Night Prayer, to accompany the Magi on their journey to Bethlehem. It's called:

### WHAT STAR IS THIS

What star is this, with beams so bright, More lovely than the noonday light? Tis sent to announce a newborn King, Glad tidings of our God to bring.

Tis now fulfilled what God decreed, "From Jacob shall a star proceed;" And lo! the Eastern sages stand, To read in heaven the Lord's command.

While outward signs the star displays, an inward light the Lord conveys, And urges them with force benign, to seek the giver of the sign.

True love can brook no dull delay; Nor toil nor dangers stop their way. Home, kindred, fatherland and all, They leave at their Creator's call.

O Jesus, while the star of grace, Impels us on to seek your face; Let not our slothful hearts refuse, The guidance of Your Light to use.

To God, Creator, Heavenly Light, To Christ revealed in earthly night; To God the Spirit blest we raise, **An endless song of thankful praise!**

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



## The Word was made flesh by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading Solemnity of Christ the King

**John 1:1, 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.**

I have been pondering lately the importance of words. Our culture constantly bombards us with words—written, spoken, tweeted or texted, there is no escape. As with all things, it seems that an excess of anything cheapens the whole. On further examination there is a whiff of the diabolical in this.

St. John's Gospel begins with the words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." No wonder the enemy wants to cheapen the word—he is trying to undermine the Word made flesh by drowning the **Word** in a trash heap of **words**.

Jesus tells us in Scripture that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If Jesus is Truth, then every word he speaks has infinite significance. How easy it is to gloss over the familiar words of Scripture. However, if the Word **is God**, we should be trying our best to spend quality time with Scripture, letting the power of each Word have its way with us, pondering, savoring, letting each word soak in, until the Word once again becomes flesh and dwell within us.

This is especially true for the Mass. How easy it is to

drift off during the beautiful prayers that have become almost too familiar! Like a family member whose presence and service we take for granted, it is easy to just hang around the edges of the Mass prayers without actually taking them into our hearts. This requires discipline.

One way that I have found to be helpful came about through something I read regarding one of Our Lady's apparitions. I don't remember which one and I don't remember the exact wording, but the gist of it was this. The visionary was praying the Creed and Our Lady was listening intently and nodding her assent to each phrase, as if to say, "Yes He is the Father Almighty," or "Yes He is seated at the right hand of the Father." Every word was alive for her. It was her Son, the Truth she was hearing and assenting to. And so should we recognize the Jesus the Word in the words of Scripture and prayer.

Since reading that, I have tried to imitate Our Lady while listening to the readings at Mass, adding some words of assent or thanks or praise at each phrase. For example, "In the beginning was the word (Jesus you are the Word!) and the Word was with God and



the Word was God (You are Lord forever!)...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Thank you Jesus!) and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, (All glory to you Lord!) full of grace and truth (Lord I believe!)."

Someone told me recently that she felt that too often we were responding at mass with a dirge, when we should be responding with joy! *Mea culpa!* May God grant us the grace to hear and respond to the Word of God with faithful attention, especially in the Mass.

That is one front in our battle to reclaim the power of the Word. The second is to examine how we use words in our daily lives, how we speak, how we pray, how we write, how we tweet and text! If we are spending quality time in Scripture, it should move us to be more deliberate with all our words, to treat

them as precious gifts to be bestowed sparingly with good reason, golden coins lovingly given to God and those he sends us.

Advent is a perfect time to examine how we use words, and perhaps even to include the use of words in our 40 day fast, not to eliminate them entirely, but to choose carefully the words we give life to, and be willing to let words die in silence if they do not conform to the life-giving Truth. Advent is a perfect time to open Scripture and let the Word made flesh come alive in our hearts. Our Christmas celebration will be fresh and new as we celebrate the glory of the Father's only Son.

Wishing all my brothers and sisters a holy Advent and a most blessed octave of Christmas. May the Word of God dwell in us all. Amen.

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

### **3 John 1:4 Nothing gives me greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.**

*"My beloved, there is much to distract you and much to deceive you. What joy you give me when you seek the truth and cling tenaciously to it, even though everyone around you is calling you away from it! My beloved, live in me and the truth will live in you. Enter into my heart through the sacraments, through prayer, through the living Word. Give us both the joy of letting me purify and refine you. Do you not see that for those I love, for those who surrender joyfully to my will, nothing that befalls them is an accident? If you have surrendered to me, then you must accept with joy everything I send you, no matter how painful. Even what the enemy intends for destruction, I use to accomplish great good in a soul abandoned to me. Fear nothing except sin. Abandon yourself to my will and my truth will set you free."*

Jesus, Beloved, give us strength and courage. Send forth your Spirit to give us hope and to make our joyful surrender to you complete. In this way alone will we be prepared for what is to come. Jesus I love you, I trust you. I surrender myself joyfully to your loving, perfect will for me and mine. Amen. Fiat!

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/>.)



## **FROM THE 'SPARROW' Sailing...**

Peace! In my meditation today I thought back to my sailing days. Something that was pleasurable and peaceful...something I felt St.

Francis would have liked as well. Sailing can be one of the most peaceful experiences on smooth water, gently rocking in the sunshine and listening to the sound of water lapping against your boat--a picture of peace. But put some strong wind into that picture, and you've suddenly got stormy weather.

Life is often like that. When things are calm, we float along without a care in the world. Then a storm comes. Financial troubles, health problems, relationship struggles--these are the storms of life that can make us feel as though we're going to sink.

But Jesus brings peace. Through His grace and love, He calms our storms and brings us safely to the shore. Jesus defeated sin through His sacrifice on the cross, and He overcame death when He rose from the dead on Easter morning. No storm in this life can take us away from Him. He is more powerful

than any force of nature and any problem that comes our way. Through His Holy Spirit living in our hearts, we know He is always with us, bringing us peace that goes beyond the storms of this world.

## Hope...

In his book "Through the Valley of the Kwai," Scottish officer Ernest Gordon wrote of his years as a prisoner of war during World War II. The man suffered from malaria, diphtheria, typhoid, beriberi, dysentery, and jungle ulcers, and the hard labor and scarcity of food quickly plunged his weight to less than 100 pounds.

The squalor of the prison hospital prompted a desperate Ernest to request to be moved to a cleaner place--the morgue. Lying in the dirt of the death house, he waited to die. But every day, a fellow prisoner came to wash his wounds and to encourage him to eat part of his own rations. As the quiet and unassuming Dusty Miller nursed Ernest back to health, he talked with the agnostic Scotsman of his

Lord Jesus, calm us down when storms are raging in our lives. Thank you for Your peace in this chaotic world. Fill us with the peace that You filled St. Francis with!

own strong faith in God and showed him that--even in the midst of suffering--there is hope in God.

The hope, my dear little sparrows, that we read about in Scripture is not a vague, wishy-washy optimism. Instead, biblical hope in God is strong and confident expectation that what God has promised in His Word He will accomplish. Tribulation is often the catalyst that produces perseverance, character, and finally hope.

Seventy years ago, in a brutal POW camp, Ernest Gordon learned this truth himself and said, "Faith thrives when there is no hope but God."

Christ, the Rock, is our sure hope!

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, NC

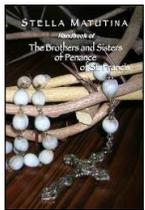


## MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

### BSP MEMBER WEBSITES

[Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis](#) facebook page by Lisa Drago, BSP  
The Joy of Penance by Janet Klasson [www.joyofpenance.wordpress.com](http://www.joyofpenance.wordpress.com)

### 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.



*I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'*  
(Luke 2 10- 12)

May the Infant King bless you and yours with peace and joy!

# The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE OF ST. FRANCIS

A.k.a. BSP, is a non-profit Private Association of the Faithful, which is dedicated to renewing the ancient way of penance as contained in the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of 1221 for lay people in our modern world. We have the blessing of the Catholic Church to do this through several of its Archbishops, Bishops, and priests. If you are bound by another Rule of life in another profession of the way of St. Francis that does not permit you to enter other religious families you are nonetheless invited to add the elements of this beautiful way of life that Saint Francis of Assisi gave us to the lifestyle of your profession.

All members, and Franciscans, are welcome to submit articles for consideration for inclusion in this newsletter if they are directed towards the spiritual formation of members or are the outgrowth of the lifestyle of the Association. Just send them to the BSP at minncc@aol.com. Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends or neighbors. It is intended to be the primary monthly communication of the Association, and ongoing formation for all members and friends. And if you can find it in your heart and in your budget remember that donations to the BSP are used strictly to promote the lifestyle and are tax deductible.

We remain, always, sincerely yours in the love of Jesus Christ!

*Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP, Editors*



**Welcome to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance!**

*In the world, but not of it, for Christ!*

[Website: www.bspenance.org](http://www.bspenance.org)



The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF  
PENANCE



of St. Francis

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