

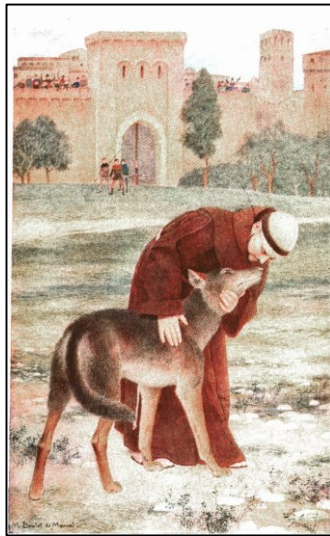


...IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT, FOR CHRIST!

## BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

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

11. When St. Francis was living in the hermitage at Greccio one time, the local people were in a very bad way because of a series of disasters which had struck them. Ravenous packs of wolves had been known to attack human beings as well as livestock in the area and every year the corn and the vineyards were laid waste by hailstones. In the course of a sermon which he preached to them, the saint told them, “For the honor and the glory of almighty God, I promise you that all these calamities will come to an end and God will shower his blessings on you, if you trust me and show that you want mercy for yourselves by making a good confession and bringing forth worthy fruits of repentance. But I promise you this too, if you are ungrateful and go back to your old ways, your afflictions will be renewed and be worse than ever, and God’s anger will be redoubled.” The Townspeople did penance on his advice and from that time their troubles were at



an end. The danger passed and the wolves and the hail did no more harm. In fact, hailstorms which devastated neighboring areas and were approaching their lands either stopped or changed course. The hail and the wolves kept the pact St. Francis had made, and as long as the people observed God’s law as had been agreed they made no attempt to molest them, now that they were living good lives.

We should have the greatest reverence, therefore, for St. Francis’ loving compassion which had such wonderful charm that it could bring savage animals into subjection and tame the beasts of the forest, training those which were tame already and claiming obedience from those which had rebelled against fallen mankind. This is that virtue which subjects all creation to itself and “is all-availing, since it promises well both for this life and for the next” (1 Tm 4:8).

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



### VISITOR'S MESSAGE

#### Homily by Fr. Robert Altier... If you do not repent

**Reading I (Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15) Reading II (1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12) Gospel (Luke 13:1)**

In the second reading today, Saint Paul speaks about his own people, the people of Israel, but from ancient times. He talks about how God had blessed them in so many ways, how they

were all baptized into Moses under the cloud and in the sea, how they all ate the same spiritual food and they all drank the same spiritual drink. If we look at the first reading, we know that they had been blessed abundantly by God. The Lord had sent Moses



to the people and revealed His Name to them. They saw the ten plagues in Egypt, all the various things that happened, and yet they were unfaithful to God.

Now when we look at the pattern of the people of Israel from ancient times (since Saint Paul tells us that all of these things were written for our example so we would be able to learn from it and not repeat the same pattern, which unfortunately happens in all of our lives all too often), we look back to ancient Egypt where the Israelite people were enslaved. When Moses first came to announce to the people that God had appeared to him and had sent him to tell the people that they would be freed from their slavery, they thought this was great news. They rejoiced to hear that God had visited His people, and then of course we know the story. The way that Pharaoh enslaved them became even crueler, and the people grumbled against God and against Moses. When God worked the ten plagues amongst the Egyptians, suddenly the people of Israel had faith. But then as soon as they walked out and got to the Red Sea and the Egyptian army came up behind them, they grumbled once again against Moses and against God. God opened up the Red Sea and let His people through, and when it closed upon the Egyptians and the Israelites saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore, once again they had faith. They walked a couple of days out into the desert, and when there was no food and no water they once again grumbled against God and against Moses. They got to Mount Sinai and Moses went up the mountain, once again they grumbled against God and against Moses and made the golden calf. Then for forty years they wandered in the desert because of their disobedience, and the same pattern continued.

They would have this sort of instantaneous faith when something extraordinary would happen. And as soon as things became difficult, the depth of their faith was demonstrated; they really had very little, if any. And Saint Paul telling us that these things were given to us as an example points out to us that most of these people, to whom God had revealed His holy Name and had shown Himself powerful through signs and wonders in Egypt and out in the desert, died in the desert. There were two from that group that made it into the Promised Land, and that was because they had been faithful. Beyond that, every single person who came out of Egypt died in the desert because of their infidelity to God. Saint Paul goes on in this reading today to remind us that we are not to grumble against God as the Israelites did; otherwise, we are going to be in the same boat.

Jesus tells us the exact same thing in the Gospel. He points out the way that some of the people had died

in Jerusalem, as well as in Galilee, and then says that they are not the worst of the sinners. And He said, If you do not repent, you will all die just as they did. So we are called to a greater holiness. We are called to accept our share of the Cross. We are called to bear fruit for God, as Jesus made clear in the Gospel reading today. If we are not bearing fruit, we deserve to be cut down. It is not enough just to simply be there with nice-looking foliage; it is absolutely required that we bear fruit. And in order to bear fruit, it is made very clear what needs to happen: The gardener was going to work the soil and then he was going to put some fertilizer on it.

If you think about what God does in our own lives whenever He does the same thing, we grumble and we complain. We do not like being worked over, we certainly do not like the fertilizer being dumped on us, and yet it is the only way we are going to bear fruit. All of us know from experience how many times when awful things happen in our lives – the things that we did not want, the things that we do not even want to accept – the good that God brings out of it. Yet, every time it happens, we continue to grumble and complain. You would think that by now most of us are old enough to have learned and there should be enough wisdom developed within us from experience that we would not do that anymore. Thirty-five hundred years of example before us of people grumbling and complaining against God and we still have not learned the lesson.

We are being called by God to unite ourselves with Christ, to take up the Cross, and to walk with Our Lord. But many of us think we do not need to do that. The “American Way”, after all, is to make sure that we do not have to suffer anything, to make sure that everything is comfortable and easy. The Cross is a scandal to us, just as it was to the Jewish people of old; it is absurdity to us, just as it was to the Greeks of old – unless we can see it with faith. Not the kind of faith that shoots up out of no place because something extraordinary happened, but the kind of faith that comes only by working through the suffering and recognizing that God is faithful to everything that He has promised. We are the unfaithful one, and the only way we learn to be faithful is to go through the suffering, to continue to pray, and to be faithful in the midst of the trials.

What happens, however, is that for many of us when the trials end, we fall right into the pattern that Saint Paul warns against when at the end of the reading he says, “Anyone who thinks he is secure had better watch out because he is about to fall.” That is one of the most frequent pieces of advice that I give in the confessional. All of us have certain habitual sins that we have been working against for many years, and

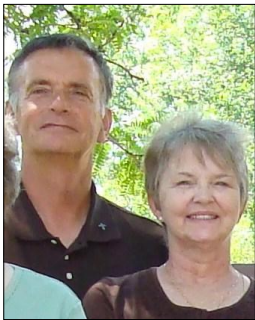
we get to the point where we have made it for a week, maybe two weeks, maybe even a month or two, without falling into whatever sin it is that we struggle with; and what happens is we fall into the same pattern that we have been talking about. We stop praying about it. We start thinking thoughts like "I finally overcame this! I'm not going to fall into this anymore. I've finally mastered it. I have overcome!" First of all, we recognize that we are not giving the credit to God but we are taking it for ourselves, and then we do not turn to God anymore. So as soon as we hear those words in our own minds, we must recognize that really what that means is we are leaning over the edge of the cliff and we are about to fall flat on our faces because we have just let the guard down. That is exactly what the devil is waiting for, and then he pounces with everything he has and down we go because we were relying on our own strength and we were no longer praying. This is precisely the point that Saint Paul is warning against.

When we look at the pattern of infidelity of so many people who have gone before us and then we look at the pattern of fidelity in the lives of the saints, the pattern especially laid out for us by Jesus Himself, the pattern followed by Saint Paul when he tells us that we are to be imitators of him as he is an imitator of Christ, we have plenty of examples of people who

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

have lived the Faith, people who have been faithful to God in the midst of the trials, people who did not rely on themselves but continued to rely on God. It is that which we must do because all of us have been baptized into Christ, all of us have eaten the same spiritual food and we have drunk the same spiritual drink. That is not enough to be able to say that we have it made. The people of old who did that died in the desert because of their infidelity to God. Jesus has made a promise for those who are faithful that they will live forever with Him. He has given to us a promised land of heaven; we do not want to die in the desert.

We need to be faithful to Him. He has shown the way of fidelity and He has given to us the example to follow. We have our choice. Both examples are written down. Both are there for our learning and as a warning to us. We can be like Jesus, we can be like Our Lady, and we can be like all of the saints who were faithful to God in the midst of their trials; or we can learn from the people of old and we will be unfaithful and we will die in the desert. The choice is ours: to choose Jesus and live, or to rely on ourselves and die. This is precisely the point that Jesus makes in the Gospel: If you do not repent, you will die like all of them.



## **ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...**

### **The three comings of Christ**



We were struck in the Office of Readings for Wednesday of the First Week in Advent by St. Bernard's summary of the three comings of Christ. We never considered three

comings of Jesus. Although the season is past the message is still firm. Jesus is to come three times, not twice. The first time he came we just celebrated with Christmas. He came and he walked among us as a man. Now we celebrate in Lent the end of that life and his gift of salvation. St. Bernard points out that the third time Jesus will come in glory and we can only hope we are close to that with all the terror and evil we see in the world. The second coming is a wonderful Lenten meditation for us and it goes on well beyond the season. St. Bernard says that "The intermediate coming is a hidden one; in it only the elect see the Lord within their own selves, and they are saved." So right now He is coming all the time in our own lives

and in our own time. This second coming speaks to all of us for in it He is Lord of our day. He is here the Lord we seek. We need to see Him and celebrate Him!

He comes in so many ways to us that it is a worthy reflection for all of us especially in this season of Lent when we see his first coming reach its holy conclusion. Even now we see Christians being slaughtered in Syria and Lybia by ISIS. Just yesterday more than a 100 Christians were captured by ISIS soldiers and now they face imminent death. Yet in these terrible times we see the Lord of Martyrs still gathering His own. He holds in his hands for these martyrs the crown of eternal life. Even children go to their death proclaiming Jesus Christ as their Lord, and all this in our day! Who would have ever thought it could happen now and like it is! It is incredible but it is happening. The Lord is there though. He is with them and in that He shows He is still with us. Thank God these times will pass.



He is here in the events of our lives too, day by day, if we believe in Him and live as if we do. He is the Lord of our relationships. His Gospel guides us in how we act and in acting that way we bring Him to life again. In ourselves and the lives of others. We don't often consider that is what we are doing but it is. When we forgive others. When we choose not to judge others. When we turn the other cheek to offenses. When we share our clothes, or our money, or our food with those less fortunate than ourselves. When we give even a drink of cold water to a little one because we believe in Jesus and His love for us. When we smile in the circumstances of life even when they are unpleasant because we believe in Jesus. We are doing all these things for Christ and so in us, in our actions, He is among us again. We bring Him to life and He gives us this love to share.

Love to share. Love in our families. Love in our marriages. Love in our deeds and words. God is love and when we act in love we act in Christ, with his blessing and guidance, in hope of pleasing Him when He is in fact in our actions. It is Him who gives us the strength and good will to act. We do well to remember that.

Mother Theresa once wrote to us "Always remember that charity begins at home." We had sent a modest donation to the Sisters of Charity and she replied in person. We still have her note. And that is so true. We learn to love in the easy familiarity of family. The love we learn there we share in other ways outside the family but it does in fact begin at home. In that way we bring Jesus to others.

As Mother Theresa prayed "Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go...flood my soul with thy spirit and life...penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly so as to shine on others...that light will be all from thee...none of it will be me...it will be You shining on others through me...Let me thus praise you in the way you love best

by shining on those around me. Let me preach you without preaching; not by words but by my example, by the catching force, the sympathetic influence of what I do; the evident fullness of the love my heart bears for thee." And she did that so well. Like her we need to become Jesus to those around us and in this Jesus is alive again in our world, in us. And, sometimes the Lord reveals Himself to us even more openly. This He promised He would do in the Gospel, to those who love Him.

And we reflect Jesus in living our Rule. However humbly we live it this life that is in Christ shines out at others. The Rule prepares us to carry forward the message of Jesus in a beautiful awareness of His Presence and Power. In living it we are called to live the Gospel more perfectly. We deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow Jesus and don't think the world doesn't notice. It is just that the world doesn't encourage it or acknowledge it. Those around us see it though. In this the second coming of Christ He, Himself, is alive in us and our world.

And, of course, this all pervasive all-around-us second coming of Christ moves always ahead. It is the presence of Christ in this world that has moved down through history in the Church and will continue in this world by His Will and Power until He comes again in glory and reclaims for Himself the world He created as He said He would. As Archbishop Flynn, who in the history of this Association always supported our mission to live the Rule that St. Francis gave us, always said: "Come, Lord Jesus, Come!"

So, let us rejoice in Christ. Let us see His presence in ourselves and our world, and in that what He does through us and in us, and let us live our Rule in joy and let us stand up and be counted when He comes the third time if we are blessed to see it!

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**

**"This is my body, which is given up for you. Do this in memory of Me."**  
(Luke 22:19)

*"God inspired me with such faith in his churches that I used to pray with all simplicity, saying, 'We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all your churches in the whole world, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed*

*the world.'*

*"God inspired me too, and still inspires me with such great faith in priests who live according to the laws of the holy Church of Rome, because of their dignity, that if they persecuted me, I should still be ready to turn to them for aid. And if I were*



*as wise as Solomon and met the poorest priests of the world, I would still refuse to preach against their will in the parishes in which they live. I am determined to reverence, love and honor priests and all others as my superiors. I refuse to consider their sins, because I can see the Son of God in them and they are better than I. I do this because in this world I cannot see the Most High Son of God with my own eyes, except for His most Holy Body and Blood which they receive and they alone administer to others.”* (The Testament of St. Francis)

*“Sacred Scripture tells us that the Father dwells in light inaccessible, and that God is spirit, and St. John adds, ‘No one at any time has seen God.’ Because God is a spirit He can be seen only in spirit; ‘It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing.’ But ‘God the Son is equal to the Father and so He too can be seen only in the same way as the Father and the Holy Spirit. It is the Most High Himself who has told us, ‘This is My Body and Blood of the new covenant, and ‘He who eats my flesh and drinks My Blood has life everlasting.’*

*“And so it is really the Spirit of God who dwells in His faithful who receive the Most Holy Body and Blood of our Lord. Every day He humbles Himself just as He did when He came from His heavenly throne in to the Virgin’s womb; every day He comes to us and lets us see Him in abjection, when He descends from the bosom of the Father into the hands of the priest at the altar. He shows Himself to us in this Sacred Bread just as He once appeared to His Apostles in real flesh. With their own eyes they saw only His flesh, but they believed that He was God, because they contemplate Him with the eyes of the spirit. We, too, with our own eyes, see only bread and wine, but we must see further and firmly believe that this is His Most Holy Body and Blood, living and true. In this way our Lord remains continually with His followers, as He promised, ‘Behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world.’”* (The Admonitions, #1, The Blessed Sacrament)

Our holy father Francis knew the importance of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our daily lives. *“Above everything else, I want this Most Holy Sacrament to be honored and venerated and reserved in places which are richly ornamented.”* (The Testament of St. Francis) As poor as he was, Francis made sure the King of Glory was to be honored and venerated in places that were “richly ornamented,” where we meet Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Msgr. Ronald Knox (“The Wine of Certitude”) helps explain this most Sacred Mystery in the following meditation. He looks at the Song of Songs as a powerful symbol of the appeal of Christ to the wayward sinner. The “wall” separating the lovers is constructed of spiritual dullness, layered over with sins:

*“The wall is our corrupt nature, which shuts us off from breathing, as man breathed in the days of his innocence, the airs of heaven. It is the wall of sense, which cheats us when we try even to imagine eternity; the wall of immortalized affection, which shuts us in with creatures and allows them to dominate our desires; the wall of pride, which makes us feel, except when death or tragedy is very close to us, so independent and self-sufficient. Our wall –we raised it against God, not He against us. Through that wall the Incarnation and the Passion of Jesus Christ have made a great window... and let light into our prison.”* (This and following quotes are from “The Window in the Wall”.)

Knox is reminded of the symbolism of the window when he looks at the host, as elevated during Benediction, a *“chink through which, just for a moment, the light of the other world shines through. Burn all the candles you will in front of it, call to your aid all the resources of science, and flood it with a light stronger than human eye can bear to look upon, still that white Disc will be nothing better than a dark veil, hiding the ineffable light of glory which shines in and through the substance of Christ’s ascended Body. A veil - that is what we look at, a curtain drawn over the window. But behind that curtain, all the time, is the window which lets our world communicate with the world of the supernatural. As the angels ascended and descended on Jacob’s ladder, so here our prayers go out into the unseen, so here grace comes flooding through, like a mighty rushing wind, into the stagnant air of our earthly experience.”*

Knox associates Christ giving of His Body to the three stages of human life: birth, marriage and death. At his birth, Jesus *“wore that Body in its state of infancy, humiliated, annihilated for our sakes. This is My Body for you, my Mother, to feed and tend; this is my Body for you, my Foster-Father, to support and protect.”*

Jesus *“wore it in its state of maturity, espoused to poverty and hardship for our sakes. This is My Body, life-giving and life-bringing, stinted of food and sleep, traveling mile upon mile over weary roads, to claim that Church which is my destined Bride.”*

And Jesus *“wore it in the state of death, drained of*

*sweat and blood for our sakes. This is my Body, so torn with scourges and buffeting that it can scarcely be recognized; for you, with the nails, to crucify; for you, with the spear, to pierce; for you, Joseph, to bury; for you, Magdalen, to embalm. The Body of a Man, belonging to Me, who am God; here it is, helpless; here it is, over-spent; here it is, pale in death."*

Then Knox shows us how we can follow these three stages when we receive Jesus in Holy Communion. We can prepare like the shepherds watchfulness at His birth, and adore Him like the three Kings. At the actual reception, contemplate the union of mankind with God, the union of our souls with Jesus. And at thanksgiving, think of the veneration the holy women gave the Body of Jesus as they anointed it with precious ointments. There is much food for thought/prayer here.

*"Come away from the ointments and the spikenard of Solomon's court that stupefy and*

*enchain our senses, to the gardens and the vineyards, to the pure airs of eternity. Arise, make haste and come. Come away from the blind pursuit of creatures, from all the plans your busy brain revolves for your present and future pleasures, from the frivolous distractions it clings to. Come away from the pettiness and meanness of your everyday life, from the grudges, the jealousies, the unhealed enmities that set your imagination throbbing. Come away from the cares and solitudes about the morrow that seem so urgent, your heavy anxieties about the world's future and your own. Come away into the wilderness of prayer, where my love will follow you and my hand will hold you; learn to live with the innermost part of your soul, with all your secret aspirations, with all the center of your hopes and cares, in that supernatural world which can be yours now, which must be yours hereafter."*

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



## **Do not hold this sin against them...**

**by Janet Klasson, BSP**



From the Gospel Reading on the Fifth Sunday of Lent

**Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.**  
(John 12:24)

The power of forgiveness. We hear about it, we know about it, and most of us have experienced it. Those of us who take advantage of frequent confession—especially if we are prodigal children returned to the embrace of our Father—know very well the power of forgiveness and what it has meant in our own lives. But have we reciprocated that gratuitous gift to others? This is something we must examine ourselves thoroughly on, for it is one of the criteria we will be judged on and it is the true sign of a humble, contrite, and grateful heart.

Every day people cause us grief, just as we cause grief to others. Our fallen natures ensure that we have plenty of opportunities to practice the virtue of forgiveness. Often there are two sides to the story, but sometimes we are viciously attacked seemingly without cause. It is easy to credit this to the evil one. Yet, it is good to remember that for his own reasons, Our Lord has allowed this attack to happen. This is worth pondering, because God often uses such trials to strengthen us in virtue. With every lash of the

whip we endure, we should practice saying with our Lord, "Father, do not hold this sin against them." Seventy times seven times. "Father do not hold this sin against them." This does not mean that we are doormats and let others abuse us without consequence. People must be accountable for their actions. However, in our hearts we must say with the Lord, "Father, do not hold this sin against them on account of me. For my part I have forgiven them."

St. Monica is a worthy example of long-suffering forgiveness. Her husband, Patricius, a pagan, was violent and licentious. His cantankerous mother also lived with them giving St. Monica even more opportunity to practice forgiveness. We hear often of how the tears and prayers of St. Monica led to the conversion of her son, St. Augustine. But her charity and prayer also made converts of her husband and mother-in-law. Mercifully her husband died one year after his conversion. St. Monica is a worthy example of someone who died daily to self, actions which bore

abundant fruit in both time and in eternity. God be praised!

But she's a saint, you may be thinking. Are we ordinary sinners called to the same level of virtue? The answer is—YES! If we feel unable to accomplish this, let us begin as they do in training camp—with little things. If we build spiritual muscle in the little things, then when the big things come, we will find they are not so big and heavy as they would have seemed had we not been training ourselves in virtue.

Forgiving those who trespass against us is a beautiful way to die daily to self, as we read in the above Scripture passage. This passage also ties in very well with the BSP rule. Certainly we penitents are called daily to die to self in order to bear fruit, fruit that will last. And what better fruit than the fruit of forgiveness born of a contrite heart filled with gratitude at the forgiveness it has received.

Often we underestimate the power of forgiveness in the one we forgive. As we forgive the one who trespasses against us, we unbind them and give them the ability to break away from the power of sin that has them bound. In forgiving them we are working towards their freedom and salvation as well as our own. Perhaps we will not see the fruits personally in our lifetime. After all, the seed that has died has no idea how much fruit if any will be born from its passing. So, too we penitents are not called to look for results but to daily look only for new ways to die to self.

In the remaining days of Lent, may we look for ways to practice the virtue of forgiveness, to loosen the chains that bind others as well as ourselves, in order to free those held captive by sin. In that way, like St. Monica, we will bear fruit both in time and in eternity.

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

**Matthew 5:22 "But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool!' you will be liable to the hell of fire."**

*"My children, never has it been more important that you set a guard over your thoughts and words. What you utter has ramifications in the spiritual realm. Remain pure. Do not give the devil a toehold. Words spoken in anger invoke the enemy; words spoken in love, peace, forgiveness, and fellowship drive him away. Always remember who your true enemy is—not the one who has injured you, but the enemy of souls. It is only when you bless your detractors and do good to those who injure you that you truly defeat evil. Then do not be alarmed when these situations come, but put on the armor of grace and let go a volley of arrows tipped with love and self-sacrifice. Yes, these are the weapons most feared by the enemy. Remain steadfast, and pure. Forgive always. Do not focus on what is earthly but focus on defeating the enemy. See all these situations as strategic battles and be glad of the opportunity to defeat the enemy one arrow at a time. Children—love! This is no mere platitude, no sugary sentiment, but a strong weapon in the spiritual battle raging all around. Children—love!"*

Jesus, beloved, show us how to love with your own Heart and that of our Mother. We are weak in love, but you are infinitely strong. Therefore we place all our trust in you. Love in us. Tip our arrows with your love. Lord Jesus we surrender to the invincible power of love. Work in us and through us! Save souls! 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/>.)



## FROM THE 'SPARROW' Forgiveness, Part I

Peace, my little sparrow friends. Of late I have received messages from some sparrows about how they find it hard to forgive others and their selves. I've spent some time in meditation and have some ideas I'd like to share with

you on the topic of forgiveness.

Men and women in prisons most likely have more of an understanding about forgiveness because of their crimes against society. Forgiveness is never far out of a prisoners mind as he or she is wondering "can



they be forgiven." Will other people in the world forgive and forget their aberrant behavior?

Let us say that you just witnessed a brother or sister in the free world, who believed in Christ commit an act of sheer disobedience against the Lord. Even when the initial shock wears off, you cannot erase the incident from your mind. You are disappointed and disillusioned. What should you do?

First, we must never allow the acts of another person to pull us away from our relationship with God. Instead, we should hold onto the promise that He is the One who will never fail us, even when others do. God stands firm when others fall, and He provides strength, support, and refuge.

Second, we should forgive those who offend us. Harboring resentment or bitterness is never the Christ-like thing to do. Luke 23:34 supports this notion by pointing out that Christ forgave the Roman

## Forgiveness, Part II

Peace my dear sparrows. Following along with yesterday's ideas on forgiveness is the following:

Have you heard someone say, "I know God has forgiven me, but I will never be able to forgive myself."

Such self-condemnation can come from several sources, but in any case, it is an enemy of God of which He has already defeated. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Romans 8:1 This encouraging scripture covers all condemnation, including SELF-RECRIMINATION.

How should we deal with those condemning voices within us when they come to haunt our memories?

First, we need to distinguish between remorse and guilt. It is appropriate to feel sorrow for past wrong deeds, but to carry guilt for them is not necessary. The Word of God assures us that if we confess our sins, God is faithful to forgive us (1 John 1:9). Any lingering feelings of guilt after the Sacrament of Penance (or Reconciliation) is from our enemy trying to rob us of our freedom in Christ.

## The gift of repentance

Peace! The psalm that is most likely used by penitents is Psalm 51. We hold it so dear to us, as we listen to David's words of lament. We also see our own selves in the psalm as well.

After God exposed David's sin with Bathsheba, David's heart was filled with remorse. His spirit was crushed by what he had done. At one point, David's shame became so great he cried out: "I have sinned

soldiers even as they led Him to His crucifixion.

Third, we can draw comfort from the Great Comforter, the Holy Spirit. When we are grieved by things that displease God, we must remember that our greatest source of comfort is the Holy Spirit who resides within us for this very purpose. (some thoughts paraphrased of C. L. Stanley)

The next time, as a sparrow, you are failed by another person (or sparrow even!) remember: draw near to God, forgive your offender, and allow the Holy Spirit to bring comfort.

Is there an offense that needs to be erased from your mind? Release it to God right now, and pray for the person who disappointed you!

*"To be little is not to be discouraged at our faults, for children fall often, but they are too small to hurt themselves much."* –St. Therese, the Little Flower

These feelings of guilt come from the mistaken notion that we must still pay for our sins, so we unconsciously embrace guilt as a way to make restitution for past wrongs. Such a practice suggest the faulty notion that Jesus did not really pay for sin by the shedding of His precious blood. To make atonement for sin, or to embrace doing penance is NOT still embracing our past sins of which we have been forgiven through a good Confession. We have no guilt, we are forgiven, and should anyone try to tell you that you are guilty of sin, you may, in good faith, call them a liar! When we realize that He stamped "paid in full" on our account, then we must never dare to side with those who would have us believe otherwise.

Since God has given us His Word, we can reject all accusing voices and rest on His promise: "For if our heart condemns, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." (1 John 3:20)

*"It is only through the poor we can offer anything to God, who also has need of the poor in order to ask anything of us."* –St. Francis of Assisi

against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13). Notice David did NOT deny his sin or excuse it. He owned up to what he had done and sought God's forgiveness.

When we confess our sin to the Lord, we are in essence agreeing with Him that what we have done is wrong and not in keeping with His moral standards. It is at this point that we acknowledge our sin and decisively turn from it in the Sacrament



of Penance.

Sin has its consequences. Bathsheba became pregnant with David's baby who later died. Not only did David have to endure the sorrow connected with his sin, but he also had to face the death of his son. Yet we never hear David wallowing in guilt and shame. He sought God's forgiveness in humility and then set his heart on continuing to be the king God had called him to be.

When you sin, pray as David did. Know God's mercy keeps you. Confession and repentance are your hope. The moment you seek His forgiveness, He restores you. And it is there that you will find His love is unchanged by your failure.

*"What a sweet joy to think that the Lord is just, that He takes into account our weakness, and knows perfectly the frailty of our nature."* -St. Therese, the Little Flower

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, NC

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

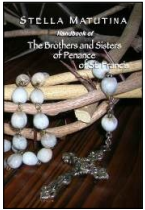


### BSP MEMBER WEBSITES

[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.

**The spirit  
of Lent  
is  
reconciliation**



# The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE OF ST. FRANCIS

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

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

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

*Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP, Editors*



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

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

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



The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF  
PENANCE



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