



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

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter XI—Francis’ Grasp of Sacred Scripture and His Spirit of Prophecy

8. When St. Francis was on his way home from overseas, he was accompanied by Brother Leonard of Assisi. He was tired and worn out and he rode on an ass for part of the journey, while his companion walked. Brother Leonard, too, was very tired and, yielding to human weakness, he began to complain

to himself, “My family was better off than his and now I have to walk and lead his ass, while he gets a ride.” When this thought came to his mind, the saint suddenly jumped off the ass and exclaimed, “Brother, it is not right that I should ride while you have to walk. You were of higher birth and position in the world than I.” Brother Leonard was dumbfounded and overcome with

embarrassment; he realized that he had been caught and he fell at Francis’ feet and tearfully confessed his fault, begging his forgiveness.

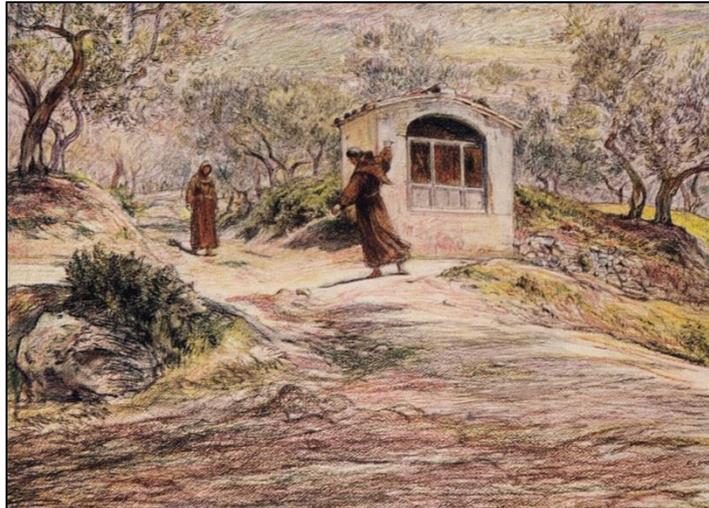
9. Another friar who was a good religious and very devoted to St. Francis had the idea that anyone who enjoyed the saint’s intimate affection would enjoy God’s favor and that the person to whom he refused his friendship would be rejected by God. He was obsessed with this idea and it disturbed him; he longed to be on close terms with the saint, but he never told his secret to anyone. Then one day Francis invited him to come to him with every sign of

affection and told him, “Do not let these ideas disturb you, my son. You are most dear to me, among all my special friends, and I am only too glad to show you all the love and friendship I can.” The friar was amazed and he became more attached to the saint than ever. As he grew in the love of Francis,

he was showered with still greater gifts by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

When Francis was living in his cell on Mount La Verna, one of his companions wanted to have some short phrases of the Bible in the saint’s own hand-writing; he was being assailed by violent temptations of the spirit and he was sure it would put an end to it, or at least make it easier to bear. He was all

on edge and he was worn out with longing, but he was so shy that he was afraid to tell the saint what he wanted. However, Francis learned from the Holy Spirit what his companion was afraid to tell him, and he asked him to bring a pen and paper. Then he wrote a number of phrases in praise of God with his own and added a blessing for the friar saying, “Take this piece of paper and keep it carefully as long as you live.” The friar took the gift he wanted so badly and his temptation vanished immediately. The page of writing was afterwards preserved and worked miracles, testifying to St. Francis’ wonderful power.



Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier... Fasting

Reading (Isaiah 58:1-9a) Gospel (St. Matthew 9:14-15)

In both of the readings today, we hear about fasting. Now fasting is critically important for our spiritual lives; it goes hand in hand with the prayer and the almsgiving. If we really want to grow in prayer, it is going to require self-denial. As we hunger for the food that we are lacking, it leads us then to a greater spiritual hunger if we can take that hunger and translate it into a spiritual means; but, at the same time, it needs to end in something that is even greater in the way that we live our lives.

We hear in the first reading about the kind of fasting that was being done by some of the Israelites. They are wondering why, if they sit there in sackcloth and ashes, God was not hearing their prayers; and the Lord says, "It is because of the way that you act when you fast." If you are driving your laborers, if you are striking people, if you are angry, if you are being mean, if you are being selfish, what good is fasting? If it is leading you to be uncharitable and more selfish than it is having exactly the opposite effect of what it is supposed to do. The idea of fasting is self-denial. The idea of fasting is hungering for God. If what it is doing instead is making us edgy and angry and mean and selfish, then it is doing exactly the opposite of what was intended.

The Lord is telling us that we need to fast, but that it needs to be in the proper manner. If we are going to be fasting, it needs to end up in greater virtue. That is what we have to focus on. If all we focus on is the fasting, then we are going to think we are doing something heroic just because we are allowing ourselves to feel hunger. And if that is all we are focused on, it is not going to come out in a good way. But if our focus is on the Lord, then the fasting will actually have a greater effect. The fasting is not an end in itself; it is merely a means to something else. So what we need to look at is not merely the fasting, which is a very easy thing to do. When you are feeling hungry, it is very easy to focus on your own self; it is very easy, of course, to focus specifically on the belly; and as Saint Paul comments to some,

"Their gods are their bellies and their glory is in their shame." That is not what we want. What we want is for the focus not to be on the belly but on the heart, to be on the Lord not on the self, and to be on virtue rather than on any kind of vice.

And so if we are going to be fasting, which the Lord tells us we need to do – the Bridegroom has been taken from us, so we need to fast; this is not something which is merely optional to us – our fasting needs to have a proper focus, it has to have a right purpose, and it has to end in greater holiness. That is something all of us can look at, and I suspect we will see quite easily how it is being done. Is our fasting ending up in being angry? in being mean? in ripping into people? in being more selfish? Or is our fasting ending up in deeper prayer? in greater virtue? in more charity? in a more profound holiness? The Lord is looking for the good to come out of fasting, so if we are focused merely on our own bellies, or if we are focused merely on the fasting as an end in itself, then it is going to end in something that is not good. But if we are focused on why we are fasting – we are offering it to the Lord and we are seeking Him – then our fasting is going to have a very good end. That will be very evident in our own lives, not only to ourselves but especially to the people around us. I am sure if you are married that your spouse will be very quick to help you see whether or not your fasting is having a proper end because it is the people right around you who will notice most easily how you are acting and whether there is greater charity or not. That is the way we need to be able to gauge the quality of our fasting. The Lord makes very clear in Isaiah that the kind of fasting He wishes is to get rid of injustice and any lack of charity, and if we are not then our fasting is not going to be pleasing to the Lord because it is either being done for the wrong reason or because our focus is not where it belongs. So our focus in fasting needs to remain on Christ, on a spiritual hunger more than on a physical hunger, and uniting ourselves to Christ through greater prayer and virtue.

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





ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

From St. John Chrysostom

St. John says:

"Would you like me to list also the paths of repentance? They are numerous and quite varied, and all lead to heaven." (As

does living our Rule we would add.)

"A first path of repentance is the condemnation of your own sins. Be the first to admit your sins and you will be justified. For this reason, too, the prophet wrote: I said I will accuse myself of my sins to the Lord, and you forgave the wickedness of my heart. Therefore, you too should condemn your own sins; that will be enough reason for the Lord to forgive you, for a man who condemns his own sins is slower to commit them again. Rouse your conscience to accuse you within your own house, lest it become your accuser before the judgment seat of the Lord.

"That, then, is one very good path of repentance. Another and no less valuable one is to put out of our minds the harm done us by our enemies, in order to master our anger, and to forgive our fellow servants' sins against us. Then our own sins against the Lord will be forgiven us. Thus you have another way to atone for sin: For if you forgive your debtors, your heavenly Father will forgive you.

"Do you want to know of a third path? It consists of prayer that is fervent, careful and comes from the heart.

"If you want to hear of a fourth, I will mention almsgiving, whose power is great and far-reaching.

"If, moreover, a man lives a modest, humble life, that, no less than the other things I have mentioned, takes sin away. Proof of this is the tax

collector who had no good deeds to mention, but offered his humility instead and was relieved of a heavy burden of sins.

"Thus I have shown you five paths of repentance: condemnation of your own sins, forgiveness of our neighbor's sins against us, prayer, almsgiving and humility.

"Do not be idle then, but walk daily in all these paths; they are easy, and you cannot plead your poverty. For though you live out your life amid great need, you can always set aside your wrath, be humble, pray diligently and condemn your own sins; poverty is no hindrance. Poverty is not an obstacle to our carrying out the Lord's bidding, even when it comes to that path of repentance which involves giving money (almsgiving I mean). The widow proved that when she put her two mites into the box!

"Now that we have learned how to heal these wounds of ours, let us apply the cures. Then, when we have regained genuine health, we can approach the holy table with confidence, go gloriously to meet Christ, the king of glory, and attain the eternal blessings through the grace, mercy and kindness of Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Often in doing the Office of Readings we encounter these wonderful messages from the Saints. Usually we don't just quote them as our message but this particular message from St. John Chrysostom, the 'silver tongue' as he was called, is a wonderful meditation for us during Lent. So, we lifted it right from the pages of the Divine Office for the Twenty-First Week in Ordinary Time, and know you will enjoy reading it. It ties right in to us living our Rule too, which is always a focus we like to give in our messages.

Have a holy and happy Lent!

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



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

"Pilate declared, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just man. The responsibility is yours.' The whole people said in reply, 'Let his blood be on us and on our children.' At that, he released Barabbas to them. Jesus, however, he first had scourged; then he handed Him over to be crucified."
(Matthew 27:24-26)

There are so many things to say about the Passion of Jesus as we come closer to the culmination of the Lenten season. I couldn't make up my mind until Donna put a copy of one of my favorite books on the computer desk, and the decision was made for me. It's called "A Doctor at Calvary," by Pierre Barbet, M.D. The doctor introduced his book in this way:

"I have been asked to collect together in one book the results of my anatomical experiments, of my archeological and scriptural researches, finally of my reflections on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It's a subject which for more than 15 years has in truth never been out of my thoughts. For has this world any more important subject for meditation than those sufferings, in which two mysterious truths have become materialized for mankind, the Incarnation and the Redemption?"

We know that Jesus wants us to meditate on His Passion, both to know the depth of His Love for us, and somehow elicit some kind of response in return. Dr. Barbet examines the Shroud in detail, and gives us a clinical diagnosis of the pain suffered by Jesus, "of which the smallest detail seems to me to have an infinite value."

Dr. Barbet witnessed the exposition of the Shroud of Turn in 1931, and was one of the first to comment on its anatomical accuracy. He did many experiments in the 30's, and wrote many scholarly articles up until his book was published in 1950. The doctor is blessed with a wonderful humility, and it shows in how he introduces his work. He mentions a Franciscan connection which I will quote in full:

"I can write 'The Passion according to the surgeon' having spent my whole career examining the anatomy of the living. I only undertook my experiments when I made sure none of my colleagues were doing the same. But I felt reassured, as I read over again the delightful chapter IX of the Fioretti, when Brother Masseo, in order to test the humility of his master, kept saying to St. Francis: 'Why you, rather than anyone else?' And Francis answered, 'Because the eyes of God on high have not seen anyone amongst sinners any more vile or unworthy than I. And for this reason He has chosen me to perform this marvelous work in order to confound the nobility and the greatness and the beauty and the strength and the wisdom of this world, so that it may be understood that all virtue and all good come from Him, and not from creatures, and that no person can glorify himself when in His presence; but if anyone would glorify himself, let him glorify himself in the Lord, to Whom be honor and glory forever.'"

Dr. Barbet chose to follow the evidence to determine the authenticity of the Shroud. What seemed the strangest markings showed him that this portrait of the sufferings of Jesus was not drawn by the hand of man. He explains how certain blood flows that seem odd are completely valid according to the nature of the wound and how the body was laid in the tomb. Only a doctor with his credentials could explain all the complications the Shroud presents.

For example, he takes up the issue of the stigmata, especially the wounds in the hands, as displayed by many Saints, which appear in the palms of their hands. On the Shroud, the nails are clearly through the wrists, which Barbet claims, are also part of the hands, as spoken of in the Gospels. That brought up another issue with St. Francis, the first to be "honored" with the stigmata.

"Sometimes, as in the case of St. Francis of Assisi, one meets with a kind of fleshy excrescence, which bears no likeness to anything I have ever seen. It is exactly described in the Fioretti. 'And thus his hands and feet appeared nailed with nails, of which the heads were in the palms of the hands and in the soles of the feet, outside the flesh. Their points came out on the back of the hands and the feet, where they were twisted and turned back; this was done in such a way that it would have been possible to pass a finger quiet easily, as through a ring, where this twisting and turning back had taken place, for it came out right above the flesh. And the heads of the nails were round and black.'"

Dr. Barbet explained that the stigmata of St. Francis and other Saints, "Are not exact reproductions of the wounds of the Savior. It is the opinion of the stigmatists themselves that their wounds have only a mystical value to them. Theresa Neumann said to one of her friends, 'Do not think that our Savior was nailed in the hands, where I have my stigmata. These marks only have a mystical meaning. Jesus must have been fixed more firmly on the cross.'"

There have been many books on the Shroud of Turin. I don't think any measure up to Barbet's account of the pain Jesus suffered from all His wounds, which exceed five thousand, according to testimony of St. Bridget of Sweden. Like the movie "The Passion of the Christ," this book is best meditated upon during Holy Week, especially Good Friday. It is painful to ponder, when one thinks of how most people ardently flee from such suffering instead of accepting it in imitation of Jesus, and for love of Him.

That had to be part of the mental anguish Jesus experienced during the Agony in the Garden. But just think of how much He blesses those who ponder

on the mysteries of His Passion, especially as shown to us through the Shroud. Those who praise and thank Him for coming as our Savior to Bethlehem,

through Mary, and showing us in living color that there is No Greater Love anywhere on the face of the earth!

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



Learning our lessons... by Janet Klasson, BSP



From the Gospel Reading for the Fourth Sunday of Lent

"... (The prodigal son) would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and

before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.""
(Luke 15:11-32)

Like the prodigal son in the Gospel reading above, we all have lessons to learn, and they may indeed be just as hard-won for us as they were for the prodigal! Usually there is pride involved on some level. Lately I have felt the Lord revealing to me some of my defects of character, some of which I counted as strengths. Ouch! It has meant a series of trials, big and small, in which I had to assiduously inspect my own motives and actions, until finally, when the lesson was ready to be learned, a light went on.

Devout people, as you and I are trying to be, are often the most blind to their own faults. I suppose that is why St. Francis was so eager to thank those who corrected, insulted, or even physically abused him. He knew that anything the evil one would use as a means to harm him, could actually be a force for growth in virtue, and lead him deeper into the heart of God. As St. Paul tells us in Romans 8:28, **"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."** ALL things.

St. Bernadette of Lourdes also knew the value of giving thanks for everything, especially the sufferings and humiliations, as she shows us in her testament of gratitude. In her words:

- For the poverty in which my mother and father lived, for the failure of the mill, all the hard times, for the awful sheep, for constant tiredness, thank you, my God!
- For lips, which I was feeding too much, for the dirty noses of the children, for the guarded sheep, I thank you!
- Thank you, my God, for the prosecutor and the police commissioner, for the policemen, and for the harsh words of Father Peyramale!

- For the days in which you came, Mary, for the ones in which you did not come, I will never be able to thank you...only in Paradise.
- For the slap in the face, for the ridicule, the insults, and for those who suspected me for wanting to gain something from it, thank you, my Lady.
- For my spelling, which I never learned, for the memory that I never had, for my ignorance and for my stupidity, thank you.
- For the fact that my mother died so far away, for the pain I felt when my father instead of hugging his little Bernadette called me, "Sister Marie-Bernard", I thank you, Jesus.
- I thank you for the heart you gave me, so delicate and sensitive, which you filled with bitterness.
- For the fact that Mother Josephine proclaimed that I was good for nothing, thank you. For the sarcasm of the Mother Superior: her harsh voice, her injustices, her irony and for the bread of humiliation, thank you.
- Thank you that I was the privileged one when it came to be reprimanded, so that my sisters said, "How lucky it is not to be Bernadette."
- Thank you for the fact that it is me, who was the Bernadette threatened with imprisonment because she had seen you, Holy Virgin; regarded by people as a rare animal; that Bernadette so wretched, that upon seeing her, it was said, "Is that it?"
- For this miserable body which you gave me, for this burning and suffocating illness, for my decaying tissues, for my de-calcified bones, for my sweats, for my fever, for my dullness and

for my acute pains, thank you, my God.

- And for this soul which you have given me, for the desert of inner dryness, for your night and the lightening, for your silences and your thunders, for everything.
- For you—when you were present and when you were not—thank you, Jesus. (Saint Bernadette, *Saint Bernadette Soubirous, Abbe Francois Trochu*)

In addition to teaching us lessons, these trials are also sent to us as heavenly jewels we can use to purchase souls, or for some other divine purpose. I love this quote from Fr. J.P. de Caussade, from Abandonment to Divine Providence:

"All these monsters only come into the world to exercise the courage of the children of God, and if these are well trained, God gives them the pleasure of slaying the monsters, and sends fresh athletes into the arena.

"And this life is a spectacle to angels, causing continual joy in Heaven, work for saints on earth, and confusion to the devils in hell. So all that is opposed to the order of God renders it only the

From www.pelianitoblog.wordpress.com

Matthew 3:10 Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

"Beloved children, by your fruits shall you be judged. Therefore, be especially careful to examine the fruits of all your actions. If what you do does not build up the kingdom and glorify God, then be ruthless in rooting it out. What is the signature of good fruit? Purely and simply it is love. I have told you before, act with love and you will never be wrong. Be wise and discerning in this. Sometimes love is like medicine—it tastes bad, but the fruits are good. Children, these are difficult days for you. The enemy has sown many seeds of confusion. Therefore, ponder often what it means to act with love. Ask our Mother to assist you, she whose every breath was an act of love. She will not leave you unaided. Children, intricately inspect all your attitudes and actions. Keep what is good and root out what is not. The orchard of the Lord can only be filled with trees that bear good fruit. Work hard to ensure that you will be found there."

O my Jesus, thank you for this reminder! Blessed Mother, help us! Teach us how to act with love always. Help us to inspect our attitudes and actions with honest eyes, that we might root out what would exclude us from the Divine orchard. Help us to be humble servants of truth and love. 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: <https://pelianitoblog.wordpress.com/about-2/on-private-revelation/>.)



FROM THE 'SPARROW' Where are you staying?

Peace my little sparrow friends! Reading and meditating on the Gospel of John I was struck by the words of the two disciples who were following Jesus and in answering

more to be adored. All workers of iniquity are slaves of justice, and the divine action builds the heavenly Jerusalem on the ruins of Babylon."

God is infinitely patient and will send us as many trials as it takes for us to learn the lessons he wishes to teach us, or to grow in the virtues we are sadly lacking. We do ourselves a great favor by being good students and learning our lessons quickly! Jesus and Mary, please grant us the grace to be good students!

However, if the trials continue, we can have great confidence that not one of these heavenly jewels will fall to the ground. By grace, and in Christ, each jewel is deposited in our name into the heavenly treasury, where no power can destroy it. There we can borrow it back when needed to accomplish God's work. In addition, every delicious morsel of the heavenly treasury is ours to borrow. We need only ask and we can use these jewels to purchase a great deal more than would be possible through our own sufferings alone.

God's generosity is a great and glorious mystery. May his name be praised in all things! Jesus we trust in you.



Jesus' question of whom they were seeking. The short dialogue has far reaching implications for them and for us today.

The Scripture excerpt for the Gospel of St. John is:

"When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon." (John 1:38-39)

The question of Jesus is side-stepped at first by the two disciples. Instead of "who" they were looking for is a circumvented question of "where" was Jesus staying? The "where" seemed more important than the "who" in their line of reasoning. Jesus, the ever kind and considerate man, draws no attention to the obvious discrepancy in their answer. He chooses to answer their question with the answer, "Come and see."

It is here that I want to diverge and address the "where" that the disciples were asking about. "Where" you are is a good place to start if you are planning on going to "where" you are not. Though that last surmise sounds simple it is not so easy to brush off the underlying logic needed to go from point "A" to point "B" without some form of plan.

Maybe, dear sparrows, you or a loved one you know is struggling with the assurance of knowing which is the correct path to God. I, in my simple way, would like to share an illustration that may help you know "where" you are today.

A surveyor is laying out the lots for a new subdivision, and he is working along the street, establishing where the front pins will be placed for each lot. If he wants to do his job accurately, he will need to know a few things. First, he must know where he is coming from. This is established by a fixed reference point behind him. Second, he must know where he is going. A fixed point ahead of him determines that. Only as he knows these two things can he know where he is.

It is the same with us on our spiritual journey. We must know where we are coming from and where we are going. These focal points are found in the Church tradition and embellished by the Sacraments and the Word of God found in the Liturgy of the Word.

The Word of God always gives us our starting point...it shows that we need to start at the Cross. Jesus provided the atoning blood at Calvary for our sins and with that sacrifice of Himself He starts us on our way to His Resurrection which is in all reality our destination. The two disciples were just a mark off in the ultimate answer to what they were looking for. You see, my little sparrow friends they needed to answer His question of "Who they were looking for?" For Jesus would have told them, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

"I shall desire in heaven the same thing as on earth—to love Jesus and make Him loved."

---St. Therese, the Little Flower

Pax et bonum

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, N. Carolina

MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

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.

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.

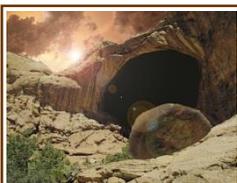
BSP MEMBER WEBSITES



† [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

Bruce and Shelley Fahey for the BSP



Lent is but half over, but as Easter comes before the next newsletter, we take this opportunity to wish you and yours a blessed Easter. We may be penitents, but we are still an Easter people, thanks be to God!

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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