



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

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter XIII—The Stigmata of St. Francis

1. St. Francis never failed to keep himself occupied doing good; like the angels Jacob saw on the ladder (cf. Gn 28:12), he was always busy, either raising his heart to God in prayer, or descending to his neighbor. He had learned how to distribute the time in which he could gain merit wisely, devoting part of it to his neighbor by doing good, and part to the restful ecstasy of contemplation. According to the demands of time or circumstances he would devote himself wholly to the salvation of his neighbor, but when he was finished, he would escape from the distracting crowds and go into solitude in search of peace. There he was free to attend exclusively to God and he would cleanse any stain he had contracted while living in the midst of the world.

Two years before his death, after a period of intense activity, he was led by Divine Providence to a high mountain called La Verna, where he could be alone. There he began a forty-day fast in honor of St. Michael the Archangel, as was his custom, and he soon experienced an extraordinary in-pouring of divine contemplation. He was all on fire with heavenly desires and he realized that the gifts of divine grace were being poured out over him in

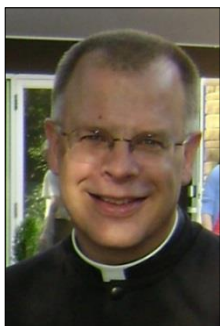
greater abundance than ever. He was borne aloft not as one who would search curiously into the divine majesty and be crushed by its glory (cf. Prv 25:27), but as a faithful and wise servant anxious only to discover God's will, which he wanted to obey with all his heart and soul.



2. By divine inspiration he learned that if he opened the Gospels, Christ would reveal to him what was God's will for him and what God wished to see realized in him. And so Francis prayed fervently and took the Gospel book from the altar, telling his companion, a devout and holy friar, to open it in the name of the Blessed Trinity. He opened the Gospel three times, and each time it opened at the passion, and so Francis understood that he must become like Christ in the distress and the agony of his passion before he left the world, just as he had been like him in all that he did during his life. His body had already been weakened by the austerity of his past life and the fact that he had carried our Lord's Cross without interruption, but he was not afraid and he felt more eager than ever to endure any martyrdom. The unquenchable fire of love for Jesus in his goodness had become a blazing light of flame, so that his charity could not succumb even before the floodwaters of affliction (cf. Ct 8:6-7).

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

Reading (Hebrews 4:1-5, 11) Gospel (St. Mark 2:1-12)

Saint Paul, in the first reading today, speaks about the rest that God entered into on the seventh day of creation and tells us, as the Psalmist would say, that this generation (speaking of the people out in the desert), because their hearts had gone astray, would never enter into His rest. We have to remember that these were the chosen people. These are the people that God brought out of Egypt with strong hand and outstretched arm, as Scripture says, with all of the miracles and all of the extraordinary events that took place; and yet he said that not one of them would enter into His rest because of their disobedience.

More than that, Saint Paul tells us that His works were accomplished at the foundation of the world, that God knew from all eternity exactly what was going to happen. Even though this was a wayward people, He still accomplished all of those miracles for them knowing fully well that they were going to go astray, that none of them were going to be faithful to Him. We need also to keep in mind, then, that God knew from the foundation of the world that the present situation would be going on, that the evil in the world was going to be happening around us. We need to remember also that He specifically created us in this time for a reason, and He Who is faithful will give the grace necessary for us to be faithful to Him.

So the choice is entirely ours. The people of Israel out in the desert had the grace to do God's Will, but they chose to rebel against Him. Now, at this point, we are not quite at the point where we would be rebelling against God. Remember what happened out in the desert. The people wandered around out there, they had no food, they had no water, they had little children, they were starving, they were dehydrated, and they grumbled against God. When things get really bad, chances are that we might do the same. It was the disobedience over and over and over again of these people that brought about the condemnation that they would not enter into God's rest.

We are going to see some very difficult things; yet, at the same time, just like the people in the Gospel, we are going to see some extraordinary things. We will all one day be sitting back, saying, "We have never seen anything like this," for the good as well as for the ill. So we need to make sure, as Saint Paul

tells us, that we strive to enter into that rest, that no one may fall after the same example of disobedience. This is what is being placed before us: the example of a disobedient people who saw extraordinary things that have never been seen since on the face of the earth, and still their hearts went astray. They did not trust God and they grumbled against Him.

We know our own weakness well. We know how easily we can fall into the exact same trap. Given the wimpy society in which we live, it has gotten to the point just about that if we scratch our finger we complain against God. What is going to happen when things get really bad? How much faith is the Son of Man going to find? Will He find any at all? We need to realize that we are exceedingly weak. We need to realize that we can fall very easily. And we need to realize that we cannot do this by ourselves. We need to remember also that God is not going to make it easy for us. The grace is going to be there, but it is not going to be easy. So let us not deceive ourselves into thinking, "Well, because I believe in Jesus either I'm going to be raptured out of here," – which is nonsense! – "or nothing is going to happen to me." That is not true. It is like saying that because He was Jesus nothing was going to happen to Him either. Well, that did not occur either.

It is going to get very bad. There is only one way, and it is the One Who called Himself "The Way". If we are not on that Way, then we are going to be wandering in the desert and we are going to grumble against God. It keeps coming back to the exact same thing. If we do not pray – and I mean pray; not say some prayers, I mean pray – if we are not deeply rooted in prayer, focused solely on Jesus Christ, we will not make it. Saint Paul makes that very clear, and he lays out to the people two thousand years ago how easily they can fall into the same example of disobedience, these people who had also seen extraordinary things: the miracles of the apostles, the miracle of Pentecost. These people were so close to the Resurrection, and Saint Paul is warning them that they too can fall astray so easily. We must not be arrogant and think we are not going to be tested, or even worse, "It's no problem because I can handle it." No, we cannot. Unless we are cooperating completely with the grace of God, we will not be able to handle it.

So that is the point. We are like the paralytic lying on that mat, and the only way we are going to get

up and walk is if Jesus tells us to. That is what we have to keep in mind: We cannot do this alone. We cannot do it by our own strength or by our own

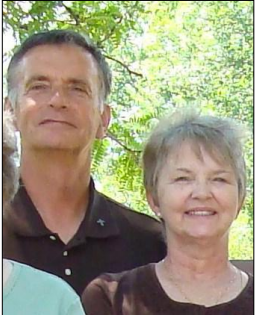
ability. There is only one way, and that way is Jesus Christ.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

Martyrs of Love



During the Christmas Season there were several messages on love in the Office of Readings. One that jumped out was a discussion of us becoming martyrs of love. We die for love of the

Lord. Like Mary did. She was in fact the first Martyr of love, and she died with her son on the cross in her spirit. A lance pierced her heart as foretold by Simeon so many years before. And in that she was a martyr of love, which we are called to become too.

Love is relentless. Saint Peter Chrysologus writes of it in the Second Reading of Thursday of the Second Week of Advent. He says: "Love does not reflect; it is unreasonable and knows no moderation. Love refuses to be consoled when its goal proves impossible...Love destroys the lover if he cannot obtain what he loves, and follows its own promptings." When you think about that it was Mary at the foot of the cross, and holding her dead son after he had died the terrible death on the cross which Mary completely beheld. So much so that she was given to all of us as mother by the dying Lord. We need to reflect on this love she had. We celebrate her feast day on January 1st and it is a wonderful reflection for us to ponder her maternal love, for her Son, and for us.

And martyrs of love have eyes of love. Eyes that see opportunity everywhere. In our neighbors these eyes look for chances to be kind and help them. In our family they look for opportunity to be loving and present and to rejoice in shared love. To our enemies they see chances to forgive, and in those who hate us chances to return love. The eyes of love are something else. From them we see Christ as life and His call to love as our call to love. In that love we see death as gain and suddenly we are like Saint Paul. Christ is life and death is gain.

Love is like that though. We need to love like that. With total commitment to those around us and our families. They come first and our love should move us to share ourselves with them, and others, to the depths of who we are. How do we do that?

We do it day to day. One event to another. In every situation we put others first.

We can't be martyrs if we don't die in the process. That does not mean we need to physically die, but it could. We may need to actually, factually put ourselves last in situations that could be life-threatening. We stand up for others and take the hits. We brace ourselves to shield others and we did, at least in spirit, in the process.

We die when we give ourselves to others, however we do that. It might be in ministry in the Church. It might be in ministry to the poor or homeless. It could be in caring for our own. Family situations that bring us to use all our capacity, and means, to help others. We do that without thought to ourselves. We do that at our own expense, and it could even be physical expense not just financial expense. Helping people until it hurts. Until we are dead tired. Until we have nothing more to give.

We are all called to be martyrs of love. Like Our Lady. For each of us the call is different. We might have family members who are ill, or dying. We might have family members who are outside the Church, or are without means. We need to look at each of these different situations we all face and see what ways we can share our love, or bring love, to the situation. It is not easy, but that love will flow from us if we hold that love all the time in our hearts. We need to do that certainly in our relationship to God and in the final analysis that is what will flow from it. We will become martyrs of love for God.

God will become why we live. We will want to know him more perfectly and see Him in His fullness and divinity. We will long for Him beyond the things of time. We will long to see Jesus Christ. Some of us will see Jesus Christ. But that love will be consuming as it was for Mary, and in loving God in fact and in service we will come to a fullness of who we are in God. Our love will become a burning presence within us and we will take that presence wherever we go. As we do that we become martyrs in love with God and the love of God shows in our love for all others. And this is a wonderful goal in life that will take

control of us and be what we are when we advance in this love of God.

Our Rule calls us to love God and neighbor. Our love calls us to live the gospel more fully. In that exercise we fan the flame of love and we do it daily and it will set us on fire. That fire, burning from our Rule, will lift us more closely to God and call us more perfectly to love others. This is what we want and that love

will want it for us even more than we do for ourselves. So, we become love, and God is love, so we can become one with God. That is what it means to be a martyr of love. So then Christ becomes our life, and death becomes our gain for in dying we will be united to Love forever.

Praised be Jesus forever.

A Happy New Year to all!

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



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

It's time for New Year's resolutions. They are nice, but usually don't last long. Ninety two percent of people break them in the first week. BSP members have a permanent resolution, however: live the Rule of St. Francis faithfully for a continuous conversion of heart and soul as a true disciple of Christ!

The title of this article is "No Greater Love." It's hard not to respond to our Creator who knew us and loved us even before the creation of the world! It's harder to love and teach our fellow creatures who are not only the epitome of unlovable, but who are doing everything in their power to thwart the plan and the love of God. How do we love our neighbor, and do good to those who persecute us? A reflection for the new year...

The Christian community is dealing with two "enemies," Communism and Islam, and it's questionable which one is worse. This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the appearance of Our Lady at Fatima. As a lover of history, I am fascinated by the part of Mary's message that said Russia will be converted, and there will be a time of peace. That will come after Communism has spread its errors throughout the world. There are few Communist nations remaining today, but Communist ideology – Marxism – is alive and well. In its many disguises, it is still taught in many institutions of alleged higher learning, and even churches throughout the world. So Communism's errors continue to be spread to millions of people, young and old. Not good.

Russia appears to play a major role in the message of Our Lady. Has it already been converted by supposedly rejecting Communism, and we are near a time of peace? Or is that drama about to be played

out? Either way it appears that if we heed Mary's message that Russia **will be converted**, shouldn't we one day become Russia's ally instead of its enemy?

Growing up in the middle of the Cold War, we seniors thought Communism was the greatest evil in the world. It is now probably surpassed by militant Islam, causing among other things a major refugee/immigration crisis. The two come together in Syria. It appears Russia has orchestrated a cease-fire there. God willing there will be peace after a tragic civil war, and soon Syrian refugees will find a place to live in their own homeland, where they belong, especially Christians. I know many see the solution is to resettle Middle Eastern refugees in the West. Why? There is a Christian genocide going on, Muslims killing Christians and forcing others to leave their homeland where they have lived for centuries. Only about a third of the million and a half Christians in that area remain. Why should we cooperate in facilitating the removal of every Christian from that Holy Land? Safe zones can be made in the Middle East for them to live, so they can return home when all the craziness is over. Twelve refugees can be supported that way for every one that tries to relocate in the West.

As for Muslim refugees invading the West, Cardinal Schoenborn of Vienna began a much-needed conversation by asking in a Sept. 11 homily, "Will there be a third Islamic attempt to conquer Europe? Many Muslims think this and wish this and say that Europe is at an end." When the left charged him with "thought crimes," he tempered his remarks by saying that he was not so much condemning Muslim immigration as lamenting the loss of faith by Christians, seen as an obvious sign of weakness that



could be exploited by Islam.

The Cardinal continues. "They think that Islam will be a good thing for Europe, to bring Europe on a better path of morality, of faith in God. So for me, the threat is not the believing Muslims. The real challenge is, what does it mean for the Christian roots of Europe? Christianity is a missionary religion. Jesus Christ, its founder, said 'Go and make all nations my disciples. Teach them what I taught you, baptize them.' And a similar thing is true for Islam. For Muslims in Europe, the question is, 'can they learn to respect the other's conscience' as Christendom did across painful centuries."

Cardinal Schoenborn concludes: "Do we Christians believe that the Gospel teaching of Jesus is really what helps people lead a good life, for a good society, for paths to eternal life, which is really the final question and the purpose of life? Early Christianity didn't expand through arms or proselytism, but through attraction – **it was attractive to become a Christian!** If the West was imbued with a similar metaphysical confidence it needn't fear other people and other religions."

That's all well and good in theory. But **when one side uses arms and fear and forced proselytism while the other doesn't**, that's an inherently unfair fight, as the blood of millions of Christians rather clearly attests. It is obvious that Muslims will not likely ever "learn to respect the other's conscience," because they read and adhere to the Koran, which teaches the opposite.

A nice overview of the whole immigration issue is in the Dec. 24 Wall Street Journal titled: "A Christian Answer to the Age of Terror," by Sohrab Ahmari, which features Cardinal Schoenborn. The pull quote is: "Pope Benedict's 'spiritual son' on the future of a Europe unmoored from its religious roots." Especially interesting is the close relationship between Cardinal Schoenborn and Pope Benedict, but also Pope Francis, who never tires of promoting massive immigration of Middle Eastern Muslims into what is now a largely de-Christianized and vulnerable Europe. Islam has tried to conquer Europe for 1300 years. Ahmari says that "many in the West have relinquished their own inheritance, let alone any

desire to share it. Muslims remain devout and are growing more so. The clash between a secularized, doubt-ridden West and a missionary Islam is Europe's cultural crisis in a nutshell."

Yet Cardinal Schoenborn defends Pope Francis from critics "longing for very clear answers. But Pope Francis is the right man for the right time." The Cardinal supported massive immigration at first, "We will manage it," but soon felt overpowered by "the unbelievable number of refugees." He said "we have had to learn. This goes beyond our capacities and possibilities." He is now "more cautious" in how he chooses his words. He also sees hope for some refugees to return to their native lands, especially those who have fled Iraq.

Europe is in the front lines of this war on Christianity. How do we love our neighbor when they seek to destroy us? One can see the anguish in how the Cardinal approaches the subject. On the one hand, he seeks to imitate the compassion of Pope Francis by calling for a "European-wide solution to the problem, due to its immense dimension," and then realizes it is getting out of control, and an "overburden on society." He warns of a possible Islamic conquest of Europe, of "great uncertainty" in the face of continuous terror attacks, but "we might just have to live with that fact."

He said "Europe is in danger of forfeiting our Christian heritage. People are already feeling this loss, not only economically, but above all, in human and religious matters." His answer: the Archdiocese of Vienna recently published a brochure to **ask migrants to respect Christian symbols, traditions and culture.**

The Crusades are over. Islam is irreformable. The threat of Communism/Marxism will fade one day, but the threat of Islam is permanent. There is no way out. Cardinal Schoenborn asked God to have mercy on Europe and to show mercy to its people. Jesus said to do good to those who persecute you. Be like lambs led to the slaughter. That's a "hard saying," but it's the Gospel, love of neighbor. "For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me and for the Gospel will save it." (Mk 8:35)

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota





Praying for souls... by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the Gospel reading Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (Matthew 4:18-

20).

A blessed New Year to all!

Being "fishers of people" can take many forms. One does not have to be a vowed religious to be a fisher of people. We are all called to be evangelizers. We can evangelize with our words, our actions, and our prayers. We can evangelize the living, but we can also work for the salvation of those who have already passed, the holy souls in purgatory, or for those who will die suddenly and unprepared.

For a long time now, I have felt called to pray for those who will die unprepared. In 2007 I had a dream in which I was in a car by the seashore. Suddenly the sea started to rise very quickly. Many people were unprepared. I saw that many of the unprepared were famous people. They were trapped by the rising water and drowned. Then a great tsunami rose and rushed towards us. We could not escape it but I felt that we had a better chance of surviving if we stayed in our car, thinking that the car could take the pounding better than we could and we might escape with our lives.

I felt afterwards that this dream was a call to pray for those whose hearts are spiritually unprepared and who are in grave spiritual danger. Our "vehicle of safety" is the Church. It will be battered by upcoming events, but we are far safer within it than we would be outside of it.

The week before Christmas 2016 I had another dream. I was looking out over the harbor and saw a large cruise ship being towed into port by a tug. I thought, "That's unusual. We don't usually get cruise ships here." After it docked I went to see it. There was absolutely no sign of life on it or around it. After waking I felt the ship represented death.

I feel that both dreams are calls to pray for those who may die suddenly and unprepared. Certainly, the times we are in has seemed to make this more urgent than ever, as sporadic and unpredictable outbreaks of terrorism threaten people everywhere.

I believe these dreams may be related and that the events of the first (the death of many famous people) may be a sign for the timing of the second. We have just come off a year where an

unprecedented number of famous people have died, probably many of them unprepared spiritually. In Canada we are also in mourning for all those who have taken their own lives through government approved physician-assisted suicide. Ever since I had the first dream, I have been praying for those who will die unprepared. I believe the second dream is in turn an encouragement to pray even harder for those poor souls.

This seems a dire message given that we are celebrating the gift of a New Year. But please remember that God would not send me these dreams and this message if there was no hope attached. Do not let this message fill you with dread—world events will do that without the help of dreams! Instead, be filled with the firm belief that God will hear your prayers for souls and use your sacrifices to save many who may be lost without them. Death is hard for those left behind, but the real tragedy occurs when souls are lost to eternity. Offering prayers for souls is one way that we can be a sure sign of hope for others. I encourage all of us to step up our efforts. Here is the prayer I pray daily at the end of my Divine Mercy chaplet:

"Merciful Jesus, lover of souls, we beseech you by the agony of your most Sacred Heart and by the sorrows of your Immaculate Mother, to wash clean in your blood the sinners of the whole world who are now in their final agony, but especially those on their way to eternal damnation and who are to die this day. Heart of Jesus, who suffered death's agony, have mercy on these poor souls. Amen."

We are a people of hope and our God of hope has given us powerful weapons against the culture of death, one of the greatest of which is the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. We know we can trust Jesus and believe in the promise he made to St. Faustina:

"At the hour of their death, I defend as My own glory every soul that will say this chaplet; or when others say it for a dying person, the indulgence is the same." (Diary, 811)

"My daughter, encourage souls to say the chaplet which I have given to you. It pleases

Me to grant everything they ask of Me by saying the chaplet. ... Write that when they say this chaplet in the presence of the dying, I will stand between My Father and the dying person, not as the just Judge but as the merciful Savior.” (Diary, 1541).

God’s mercy is unimaginable! Even more so in that he uses weak sinners as his instruments of mercy on earth. Just as St. Faustina was often taken in spirit to the side of dying souls so she could pray the chaplet in their presence, in the Divine Will we can ask for the same grace, for nothing is impossible for God. “Jesus, in the Divine Will, take me into the

presence of those in most dire need of your mercy as I pray this chaplet...”

God is calling us to participate in his ministry of salvation. May our Blessed Mother guide us and help us in the battle for the souls of her beloved children.

O my Jesus, I love you, I trust you, I surrender myself to you. Please take care of everything and everyone in my spiritual territory. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, I love you. Save souls!

(For related reading you may appreciate this article titled, “Praying for Grandma’s Soul” by June Klins: <http://tinyurl.com/jax45na>)

From www.pelianitoblog.wordpress.com

Ezekiel 2:9-10 I looked, and a hand was stretched out to me, and a written scroll was in it. He spread it before me; it had writing on the front and on the back, and written on it were words of lamentation and mourning and woe.

"My children, do not fear what is to come and what is already here. I have been warning you, calling all to repentance. Now the time is at hand when all will know the awesome power of God. Their idols will be smashed one by one. There will be a loneliness on earth that has never before been felt on such a grand scale. This will be the loneliness of a soul bereft of its idols. But it is in that loneliness that I will act to show each soul the futility of life apart from me. When they have nothing left, it will be their final opportunity to turn to me. Many will do so, but there are also many who will be lost. Do not let up on your prayers. Your sacrifices mean so much right now that I will multiply their effect on the souls you are praying for. Do not take this gift lightly my children. Offer your prayers and sacrifices with great confidence for I mean to use you in new ways to conquer the immense territory of souls in need of conversion. Children pray!"

Beloved Father of my heart, your unimaginable mercy is such a gift to us. In the Divine Will accept all my prayers and sacrifices, especially my Flame of Love prayers, to advance the cause you have mentioned—the salvation of souls. I offer all to you in the Holy Name of Jesus, the Beloved, through the Flame of Love. Holy Mary, Mother of God, spread the effect of grace of thy Flame of Love over all of humanity now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Acts 3:19-21 Repent, therefore and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration, that God announced long ago through his holy prophets.

"Beloved, how I long to restore what is mine! To take back what the enemy, the thief and the liar, has taken by subterfuge, unlawfully, with stealth, cunning, and pure malice. So many souls have been seduced, tricked, stolen. Others, many others, have gone willingly, rejecting the Lord of Love, though they knew of his works of mercy and compassion. My children, pray for these souls most of all. Your prayers can make all the difference for the lost. For your sake, I will continue to shower graces upon them, breaking down their stony hearts one grain at a time. Believe in my mercy. Believe that I can use you. I do this through no merit of your own, but through your willingness to be an instrument of mercy, through the Blood of Christ. Souls, my children! Give me souls!"

O my Jesus, I praise your infinite mercy and ask you to use me as you wish to win souls for the kingdom through your most Precious Blood. Jesus, beloved, I trust in you and not in myself. I enter into the holy wound at your side and bring with me all those you have given me to pray for, most especially the most hardened sinners. Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada



Acedia

By Christopher G. O'Donnell, BSP

Pax et bonum—'peace and all good'! As I do from time to time, I felt inspired to set forth on some reflection of a topic connected to the spiritual journey that I have been studying and share those reflections with you. This time **I want to speak on one of the great obstacles to our spiritual growth: that of ACEDIA.**

If you are unfamiliar with the term, don't worry, you are in good company for many people are unaware of it. **In the beginnings of Christian spirituality, the desert fathers experienced (what they referred to as) 'the Eight Wicked Thoughts.'** These "thoughts" (= *logismoi*) would influence a person's decisions eventually causing to sin and, over time, to develop a vice. It was Evagrius of Ponticus who first systematized them as follows: gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vain glory, and pride. Eventually these would become the 'Seven Deadly Sins,' made so popular by Pope Saint Gregory the Great, but the Eight Wicked Thoughts remain important in our spiritual direction.

Although some people define (or replace) acedia with sloth this is not correct for the meaning of acedia has far greater depths than that of sloth and sloth itself is often misunderstood as being simply 'lazy.' Instead, **the Greek term *akedia* means 'lack of care' and it refers to an indifference and/or carelessness (= *incuria*) about one's spiritual life and their own salvation. It is defined as being a "relaxation of the soul" (= *atonia*) or lack of spiritual energy.** Being a spiritual malaise, it not affects us interiorly but has an external aspect as well in that it is **both temporal, feeling as if time were standing still; and spatial, feeling as if one were being stifled.** The desert fathers and subsequent Catholic spirituality teach us that **there are are five (5) main ways in which acedia manifests itself in our lives:**

1. **Interior instability:** One is restless, moving from devotion to devotion, or unable to focus on a rule of life. It incites a person to do some other thing that is perceived as 'better' such as works of charity and devotions to God but it is all a pretext for a restlessness of spirit.

2. **An exaggerated concern for one's health:** Acedia causes a person to develop a fear for their physical well-being, based upon a fantastical view of physical penances and practices. To avoid injuring their health they either eat whatever and whenever they wish—thus also falling into gluttony—but also can be seen as excessive physical dieting and exercising far beyond what is necessary for one's vocation and state in life.
3. **An aversion to manual work:** It causes a person to abstain from physical labors out of laziness, under the pretext that they were doing something better and more spiritual or the person may instead because excessively active but doing things that enable one to avoid the physical labors that they are bound to do. Such avoidance or activism also lead one to bitterness and anger.
4. **A neglect of observing one's state in life:** One becomes negligent in carrying out the duties of their state in life and vocation—marriage for most of us—doing only the minimal effort necessary to 'get by.' Often times, at the same time, they also do a maximum amount of effort directed at things that help them to avoid the rule of life they live under. So a person may neglect the fasting precepts but, at the same time, practice prayer to a maximum effort (as if trying to 'make up' for their deficiency by exaggerating another practice to excess).
5. **General feelings of doubt and discouragement:** Finally, one develops a state of discouragement regarding their vocation, religious commitments, and spiritual practices and, if they see it as inescapable, they become depressed at which point one will either attempt to flee such commitments or remain doing them but regress to a less spiritual state.

A person suffering from acedia is a runaway, that is, they are a deserter who has fled the spiritual battle field. The restlessness characterizes the acedic person and results in a lack of imbalance thus perpetuating their restlessness more and more. One must strive to be balanced in their life for, as the Church teaches *in media stat virtus*—'in the middle stands virtue,' meaning true Christian life is to

be found in the middle between the vices caused by excess and deficiency. The same desert fathers who reflected so perfectly on this thought and vice also discovered the **practices that weaken and ultimately eliminate it from one's life. These five (5) remedies** are as follows:

- **Tears:** Lift up your troubles and hardness of heart to God so that He make break it and give you a heart of flesh. When you feel like weeping, do so, for such tears gradually wear down the rocks of your soul and are a sign that you recognize that you need and desire God's mercy and salvation. God's mercy then can get in and dissolve that indifference to spiritual things.
- **Prayer and work:** In order to fight the tedium that acedia thrives on we must alternate between our work and times that we set aside to pray. We should also have some leisure each day. Whenever work is becoming redundant, take it to short prayer immediately and know God is present. Then, strengthened, you can return to your labors.
- **Antirrhetic method:** This term simply means 'contradiction' in Greek and refers to the practice of Jesus when tempted in the desert. Whenever the world, the flesh, or the devil speaks a word that seeks to drag you down you respond by quoting a verse from Sacred Scripture that rejects such a word and restores your mind to balance.
- **Meditating upon one's own death:** This is not

done to be morbid but it enables one to focus upon two important facets of our spiritual journey: First, one keeps the goal in mind which is the resurrected body living in the glory of God, which puts all worries, desires, and concerns into their proper perspective for all the sufferings of this world are not equal to the joy and glory that awaits us. Second, it helps to kill the ego by reminding ourselves of our mortality—proof that we are not God but creatures doomed to death who can do nothing apart from Him.

- **Perseverance:** Finally, we practice active fidelity to one's daily routine, including the duties incumbent upon us as part of our state in life/vocation and our relationship with God. We do not need to add more, we simply mean to do the little things with faithfulness and dedication.

Acedia is a real problem, especially in the modern world. The French Benedictine Jean-Charles Nault, abbot of Saint-Wandrille Abbey, calls it "the unnamed evil of our times." It characterizes the lives of most secular people in the West and sadly affects even many within the Church. **Knowing its characteristics, however, and the tried and true methods of crushing it, all of us with true discernment and surrender to God's grace can overcome this vice to become people zealous and on fire for Christ** with the burning love of the Spirit!

God bless you, one and all!

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

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
- † **Francis 1221** <https://francis1221.wordpress.com>

THE ST. FRANCIS CHALLENGE

Name _____

By a friend of Francis named Jim

Year _____

I call this the St Francis Challenge, and the challenge is what you discover about St. Francis or being a Franciscan or some insight you discovered about yourself through your studies of St. Francis or the BSP.

Each month spend 15-20 minutes reflecting on your St. Francis insights, your Franciscan thoughts or BSP experiences, and write your ideas on the space for the corresponding month.

January _____

February _____

March _____

April _____

May _____

June _____

July _____

August _____

September _____

October _____

November _____

December _____

At the end of the year review all months and you will be surprised how much God, St. Francis, and the BSP has added to your life.

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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