



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

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter XVI—Francis’ Patient Endurance and His Death

6. At last, when all God’s mysteries had been accomplished in him, his holy soul was freed from his body and assumed into the abyss of God’s glory, and Francis fell asleep in God. One of the friars, a disciple of his, saw his soul being borne on a white cloud over many waters to heaven, under the appearance of a radiant star. It shone with the brightness of sublime sanctity, full of the abundance of divine wisdom and grace which had earned for him the right to enter the home of light and peace, where he rests with Christ for ever.

The provincial minister of the friars in the Terra di Lavoro, Brother Augustine, a holy and upright man, was at death’s door at that time. He had been unable to speak for some time, but now those who were with him suddenly heard him crying out, “Wait for me, father. Wait! I am coming with you.” The friars were amazed and asked him to whom he was speaking. He replied, “Can’t you see our father Francis.

He is going to heaven.” There and then his holy soul left his body and followed his father.



The bishop of Assisi was on a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Michael on Monte Gargano at that time, and St. Francis appeared to him on the night of his death, saying, “See I am leaving the world and going to heaven.” When he got up in the morning, the bishop told his companions what had happened. On his return to Assisi, he investigated the matter carefully and came to the conclusion that St. Francis left the world at the time he appeared to him in his vision.

At the time of St. Francis’ death, when it was already dusk, a great flock of larks gathered over the building, although they normally prefer the light of day and avoid the shades of night. There they remained, flying about and singing with unusual joy, clearly testifying by the sweetness of their song to the glory of the saint who had so often called upon them to praise God.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

Reading (1 Samuel 1:24-28) Gospel (St. Luke 1:46-56)

In the Gospel reading today, we hear the glorious song of our Blessed Lady at the time that she visited her cousin Elizabeth; it is the hymn known as the “Magnificat.” It is Our Lady’s hymn in response to Elizabeth who called our Blessed Mother truly blessed among women.

Our Lady, you notice, immediately removes any focus from herself. She says, *My soul proclaims the greatness*

of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior. So it is not about her. It is easy, of course, for Elizabeth to see what the Lord has done for Our Lady and to call Our Lady blessed, and indeed she is. Yet, at the same time, if we just put ourselves into a similar situation, if somebody were to say to you, “Look at how blessed you are! You are just the best! You are the greatest!” we would have to say, “Wait, wait, wait. Anything good that you see, God has to get the credit. It isn’t about me; it’s about Him. If He has done something in me



that deserves some kind of praise, then He is the one who deserves the praise, not me.” We can all understand why we should do that—unfortunately, we do not always do it so well—but that is the reality of what needs to happen. Our Lady’s humility is such that she did not even hesitate. She did not seek one ounce of glory for herself; she gave it all to God.

Then she lays out for us exactly the way that we too can be blessed the way she is; obviously, not to be able to conceive Christ and bear Him, but rather to have the grace of God and to walk according to His way. And so she goes on, after stating in her humility that all generations will call her blessed, and she says, first of all, that *God has mercy on those who fear Him*. That is not being afraid of Him; it is that filial fear, that is, the fear of offending God, that we would love Him so much that we would not want to offend Him even in the slightest way, to have that proper kind of reverence in the Lord’s presence.

Then she says, *He has shown the strength of His arm and scattered the proud in their conceit*. The proud think that they do not need God, so God shows His strength. And He shows His strength in ways that seem so hidden. In this particular case, He showed His strength through the conception of a baby. It is hidden; you cannot even see it at this point. Yet, at the same time, this child was conceived of a virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit. You see the power of God. And through the most humble of means, that is, through a baby and a mother, God has completely scattered all the proud.

But if we want to be able to do the Will of God, we need to get rid of the pride. Just as Our Lady would say that *God has looked upon his lowly servant*, that is the opposite of those who think they are something important. God cannot do anything with somebody who thinks they are important because they will get in the way. They do not think that they need God, so He cannot do anything with them anyway. We need to get out of the way. We need to be humble, to see ourselves as lowly. Saint Paul says that each one of us should think humbly of ourselves as being lower than everyone else, thinking everyone else to be greater than we. So here we have Our Lady, the most perfect human person

to ever live, and that is exactly what she did; she made herself less than everyone else. She was the most humble human person ever to live. Our Lord, Who is God, took the form of a slave and made Himself less than a slave. Again, here we have the two greatest persons ever to live and what did they do? Made themselves little, humble, and nothing. It is kind of the opposite of what most of us tend to do.

And she says that *God has cast down the mighty from their thrones, but He has lifted up the lowly*. Again, we see what happens. If we are willing to make ourselves humble, He will exalt us, which is exactly what He said He would do. God will always humble those who exalt themselves, but He will exalt those who humble themselves. *He has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich He has sent away empty*. The rich do not need God; they can rely on their money, as far as they are concerned. They think that they have it made. But when things get difficult, they are going to find out exactly how much their wealth has gotten in the way and how much it has led them astray from God. But those who are poor, those who have always relied on God, He will continue to bless them and fill them. He has not made their lives easy, but He will always provide. That is a lesson most of us need to learn.

And then, *He has come to the help of His servant Israel because He has remembered His promise of mercy*. God’s promises are forever. They never stop, they never go away, and they never change. When God speaks a promise, it is perfect and it will be fulfilled exactly as He spoke it. Now that does not mean that the way we understood it is the way it will be fulfilled, but the way that He spoke it will be fulfilled perfectly.

So if we can learn, like our Blessed Lady, to simply trust God, to be humble, to be charitable, and to get out of the way, then God can raise up, He can do great things in us, and we will be blessed. But that requires our cooperation with His grace to become humble, to become lowly, to become small. These are not things that we do naturally and they are not things that come easily. We need to pray for that grace, and when the grace is given we need to try to cooperate with it, and in this way to learn from our Blessed Lady exactly the best way for our souls to magnify the Lord....

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

The Spirit of Things

All that is really important is spiritual. Faith, hope, charity, temperance, moderation, simplicity and humility, worship, adoration, beauty, and love. All are spiritual. So, it is not difficult to understand

why the Lord called us in His gospel to concentrate on spiritual things. These things are not passing away.

When you contrast them to rocks, and trees, and apples, grapes, or footballs, and even our physical bodies, you see the difference in a heartbeat. These physical things are all passing away and any focus we make on them will eventually be completely lost when



they end. And they will all end when we die, or sooner, including, no less, elusive wealth and even great riches.

So, if we examine this theorem that the important things in life are primarily spiritual there are some interesting implications for those of us who are striving to live holy and penitential lives. We wish to live this way because our Lord said that if we wish to be his servants we need to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow him. These things are spiritual. Denial of self is spiritual. Taking up our crosses is too. Most of the crosses we carry, for the love of the Lord, are spiritual. Even physical ailments that cause us pain become spiritual when we take them up and offer them to the Lord. And to follow Jesus is certainly a spiritual call for us. We cannot follow Him physically anymore like the Apostles did!

Scripture says that God created man in His image and likeness. God is pure Spirit. So, the souls he gave us are also pure spirit, and they constitute our eternal side. Our souls consist of three things primarily, our memory, our intellect, and our will. All three of these things are spiritual. So, you see, we human beings are eminently spiritual. It is who we are.

So, when the people of the medieval ages came to St. Francis and asked him to show them the way to heaven they were asking for spiritual assistance. They asked Francis how they could be holy, and how they could save their souls. So they wanted assistance with their spiritual side. And so do we.

Isn't it interesting that our world just does not, and will not, get the point that spiritual things are important! The world frames everything in terms of physical things. Money, jobs, careers, toys, and gadgets, medicines and electronics now, along with homes and businesses, and furniture and food, of course. And, somewhere in there are people. But, all these things are passing away. Like we will pass away too, at least

our bodies will, as they still bear the curse that Adam and Eve brought us, 'dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return.' (Gen. 3:19)

But, fortunately for us, God is trying to bring us to our senses and help us to realize the spiritual beings that we are. Christ came to draw us away from the world and into the spiritual, like love, compassion, tenderness, meekness, simplicity, and humility. The gospel tells us we should seek to be spiritual. So in living our Rule, which calls us to what is completely spiritual by the way, we penetrate the gospel's mystery. If we live our Rule with dedication and move into what it calls us to be we will become servants of the Lord.

The things of this world do their part at keeping us alive and well but usually not rich in terms of worldly wealth. Let's be rich in virtue, and dedication to our Faith, and diligent in seeking out the poor and lonely and lost around us and bringing them peace and happiness and love. Let's be more spiritual, for all spiritual things are important, and the things to come are eminently spiritual. Life in heaven will be primarily spiritual and our bodies then will be peacefully and fully governed by our spirits, not as now where the demands of the body often override the good of our souls and we do things, and sin, often against our own consciences.

Especially in this Christmas season, when the Little Child Jesus comes to us, let us keep our minds and hearts on spiritual things, and on the beautiful Christmas message: Peace on earth to men of good will! Peace is spiritual, and peace in our souls will bring peace on earth! Let us keep our souls focused on God, His goodness and beauty and mercy, and everything beautiful in our faith and family. The true Spirit of this season! May the Lord bless and lead us all!

Merry Christmas to all, and may we all share and enjoy a beautiful and holy Christmas season!

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



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than for one to lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you." (John 15:12-14)

This is a final tribute to Fr. Robert Young, R.I.P. Combining the beauty of the Franciscan life with the charisma of the Divine Will Movement, he epitomized the love of Christ, and spread that love to others, literally laying down his life for his friends. Joanne McLaughlin will tell the story. I received the following e-mail in early November:

"Dear Attendees of the Divine Will 3-Day October 2017 Conference in Burnsville, MN.

"This is to let those of you who haven't already heard the very sad news of the passing (Nov. 5 auto accident) of Father Robert Young, O.F.M. We are all in a state of mourning over such a great loss, both for ourselves and for the propagation of the Divine Will.

"Our conference was the last one he had scheduled before his mini sabbatical planned for the next couple of months to rest and restore his energy from



his demanding schedule.

"I wanted to pass on to you a couple of his thoughts about our conference. Following is an excerpt from one of the emails I sent to him...

"--I just wanted to pass on to you that everyone I've talked to is raving about the weekend, and can't say enough about how much they loved it, how they didn't want it to end, and how much they appreciate you coming here and teaching the Divine Will with so much peace, humility and in such an understandable manner....in short, they all think the world of you and what you're doing!

"Everyone was so very grateful for this opportunity.

"Several of Father Young's responses:

"I continue to be amazed at how well the weekend went. It truly was one of the most enjoyable for me ever... I'm so happy to hear our wonderful weekend bore so much fruit.

God truly blessed us. I don't know when I've enjoyed myself so much. Never without a few trials to sweeten the fruit! I'm certainly open to another retreat just not sure about next year or not. It might be early 2019 but let's see how things develop.'

"God rest the beautiful soul of Father Robert Young in His Holy and Eternal Divine Will. Joanne M."

"The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord." I had the privilege of working with Fr. Young for the 2016 BSP Retreat. He was so easy to get along with. I especially appreciated his desire to not only participate in the Liturgy of the Hours, but to lead it. Everything went so smoothly under his direction. He even did his Saturday morning radio program in the Marian Conference Room with us as his live audience. All seemed to flow according to the Divine Will. He will be missed. But he has left us the following Points for Living, which will last a lifetime!

The Kingdom of the Divine Will

POINTS for LIVING

We must pray fervently and often for the grace to live and put into practice what we come to learn about this way of life from Luisa and from others. It is a great grace to know the Gift, but an even greater one to put it into real life every day.

1. Our day begins by making an offering of the whole day to the Divine Will. We call it the "Prevenient Act." We think about the specific things we will do that day, from the smallest to the greatest, and we want to unite them before-hand with God's Eternal Willing. This intention covers the whole day and all of our acts, and is one of the most important ways we show our desire to live continuously in the unity of God's Will
2. Throughout the day we want to renew this short morning offering by making 'Current Acts' to renew and strengthen our desire to make of our daily life one continuous "fusing" of our will with God's Will. We invite the Divine Will to do with us whatever we are doing at that moment.
3. We also want to end our day with a prayer to "cover" the day, by reaffirming our intention and desire that all the acts of that day be in the Will of God and that God pardon and restore to His Will any failures to be faithful and attentive during the day. With this prayer we also want to make a Prevenient Act for the night time, placing all our sleep, motions, dreaming, in the Divine Will.
4. The most important acts of our day, such as attending Holy Mass or receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, going to Adoration or praying, should be done with a special understanding of their great benefit to all souls and to glorify God more perfectly for these gifts.
5. At the same time, every heartbeat, breath, step and movement are ways that God wants to unite with us and make our acts also HIS acts to have greater benefit for souls and to glorify the Father. And when we can make these simplest of acts more deliberate and purposefully united with God's Will we help sanctify the world and make the Reign of God more present.
6. We need to try to read something of Luisa's writings every day. By reading these works, especially the Book of Heaven, we grow in the knowledge and the desire to live this way of life. We can read even a few sentences and benefit greatly if we are open to what the Holy Spirit wishes to give us. It is good to set aside time each day for this reading, especially in the morning and evening, but anytime is good.
7. We should try to set aside some time during the day for personal prayer in the Divine Will. We can use Divine Will prayer books or pray spontaneously, but always with the universal intention of helping all souls and giving God the glory as if all souls had prayed. One of the ways we learn to pray is the "Rounds" where we thank and love and glorify God for all His works in Creating, Redeeming, and Sanctifying the world.

8. We want to make little acts of sacrifice of our human will to God's Will during the day also. These little acts can be as simple as giving up our preferences in favour of others' or sacrificing innocent pleasures, or overcoming our natural inclinations for the glory of God. Any and all acts can be the "raw material" for God to use to make His Will reign on earth again, provided they are good acts and we desire God's Will to reign in them.
9. We need to learn to see everything that happens to us, good or bad, as a way to unite more lovingly with God's Will. Everything we experience has that "Divine potentiality" to be united with the acts of Jesus and Mary. Not only OUR acts but also the things that happen to us.
10. We should make special efforts to grow in the virtues and dispositions that help us to live more fully in God's Will. Patience, humility, docility to the working of the Holy Spirit, detachment from material and spiritual gifts, loving service of others, and simplicity, are among the dispositions we must pray for and try to practice.

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



Fiat! by Janet Klasson, BSP



From the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

“Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’” (Luke 1:38)

Who in the Divine Will community was not shocked to learn of the passing of Fr. Robert Young OFM on November 5? So many of us relied on the clarity of his teachings on the Divine Will writings of Luisa Piccarreta. To the news of the passing of Fr. Robert to his eternal reward, a beautiful response was posted on a video tribute to Fr. Robert from his website <https://divinewilllife.org/26106-2>:

“It broke our hearts to lose you, but we know God chose to take you home, and although we don’t understand, we say, Fiat, my Lord!”

From the perspective of the BSP, There is much to ponder. In the Divine Will, Fr. Robert was the final retreat master at the final BSP retreat, which was held at Prior Lake MN in 2016. In the Divine Will, that retreat was attended by many members of the Divine Will community of the Minneapolis area, who immediately booked Fr. Robert for a three-day conference on the Kingdom of the Divine Will, which was held in Burnsville MN this past October. In the Divine Will, the conference was attended by several BSP members. In the Divine Will, a scant two weeks later, Fr. Robert was taken to his eternal reward. Again, we can only say, “Fiat!” God’s plans are mysterious indeed!

There is much to ponder in this series of events. Nothing happens by chance, especially when one is striving to grow in the Divine Will. Everything must be pondered, as our Mother taught us.

The more I learn about the teachings of Luisa, the more in awe I am that such a profound grace is being made available to us. So, what does it mean to us penitents? I gained some important insights through a ten-minute sample video on teachings Fr. Iannuzzi gave at a retreat

talk in Texas in 2014 (<https://vimeo.com/112207362>), based on Vol 16 of the *Book of Heaven*, from August 20, 1923. (My own thoughts are interspersed here. Please see the video for his actual wording.)

The saints before Luisa were perfect in the virtues. Before now, (and even still) individual sanctities are given for a certain period in human history, for a specific time and place only. Our beloved Fr. Francis was filled with many of these sanctities. But while he was on earth, he did not possess the gift of living in the Divine Will as it was not yet available (except in our Mother who alone lived perfectly in It). The gift of the sanctity living in the Divine Will is one that **produces benefits for the people of all times and in all places**. It is invisible and works in a hidden way on the interior of the soul, but is still the most fruitful of all the sanctities. As the sun enlightens all things while remaining speechless, so the soul, living in the Divine Will has effects in all times and places. Fr. Iannuzzi explained that a soul who is fully ordered in the Divine Will is greater than an army in battle.

It follows then that as one strives to learn about and live in the Divine Will, one’s actions become as “suns” generating light, heat, warmth, and fecundity over all creation. In the Divine Will, Christ himself is acting in our actions in all times and places. A penitent living in their own will accomplishes what they can, but only in the time and place in which they live and for whom they offer their sacrifices. This is good. Living in our own will, our sacrifices are like plants and flowers that grace the earth, but are only visible in that time and place. However, a penitent who lives in the Divine Will, and strives daily to grow in it, offers sacrifices that “generate suns” in all times and in all places with each act it accomplishes in the Divine Will.

Now if you're thinking this "new and divine holiness" sounds far too sublime for the likes of us—be assured that it IS far too sublime. If we are uncomfortable with receiving a Gift that not even our Seraphic Father had access to, he himself would likely echo the words of Moses in Numbers 11:29, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit on them!" This is not about us or our efforts, or what we deserve—it is about God and his unfathomable plan. Are we weak? God always uses the weak to shame the strong. Think of Gideon. God used the weakest man he could find, with only a few companions armed with clay pots, torches and trumpets to slay an army "as numerous as locusts", crying out, "**for the Lord and for Gideon!**" (Judges 7)

Small, insignificant David slew the giant Goliath, proclaiming, "**I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head...so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand.**" (1 Sam 17:46-47)

If God will do this much to defeat Amalekites, Midianites, and Philistines, how much more will he do to defeat the "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places," who are likely more numerous than all the locusts of all time, and infinitely more furious. St. Paul tells us, "**our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**" (Eph 6:12) Who are we then, to discount the weapons God is giving to the lowly? St. Paul tells us that God's strength is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor 12:8-9) Then let us not despise even our most meagre effort done in the Divine Will. The blink of an eye accomplished in the Divine Will has repercussions in eternity!

St. Hannibal di Francia, Luisa's spiritual director, taught



FROM THE 'SPARROW' This Cold Christmas Night

This cold Christmas night, as we all walked along the winding trail in the woods outside the Italian town of Greccio, and as we followed Francis in the torch-light, I was lost in deep thought of how it had all come about that I was even here. It all seemed so dream-like and improbable to

that the gift's intended effect is to enable the virtues. But that we receive the gift even before we are displaying the virtues to the heroic degree expected. Indeed, **with an upright intention and a firm desire for this grace we will begin to live in it, and may immediately participate in the ability to impact all times and places.**

The above Scripture passage from the Fourth Sunday of Advent highlights Our Lady's glorious "Fiat," the fiat that caused the lowly maid to conquer the Almighty God and take her place as Queen of the Divine Will. The confluence of dates this year providentially has the Fourth Sunday of Advent falling on the same date as Christmas Eve, which means that before the echo of Mary's fiat has died in the church building on the morning of December 24, the First Reading for Christmas Eve Mass will be proclaimed:

Isaiah 9:2,6,7

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.*

*For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;*

*authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named*

*Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.*

*He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.*

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

After the Fiat, comes the triumph—the triumph of the Divine Will over the human will. Now is the time to imitate our lowly and exalted Queen, not to question God's plan or those he has called to act as his broken instruments, but to say with her, in her, and through her Flame of Love in the Divine Will: "FIAT! FIAT! FIAT! May your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!"



have happened to me, and two other robbers that were also following close behind me in the shadows.

Thinking back of how my life had turned out on the wrong path so early in the beginning years of the thirteenth century and which had led me to a life of crime just to survive. Being alone and poor and still with needs to eat and live, left one with few choices. If

one was not born into money and wealth or at least knew someone who would share with them the advantage of their wealth or position, then the future, at best, was dim. There were a thousand other reasons that crushed them and caused them to lose hope...in God...in others...in themselves. With hope gone it created a dark reality where sin could easily take root, and without faith and love it was almost certain that I would become heartless, cold, and ruthless—three of the main elements of a criminal life that led me to robbery, to becoming a highwayman, with little or no remorse. The world did not care about us and seemingly we didn't care about the world.

My thoughts led me further back to that cold winter day a year or so back when I and my cohorts in crime fell on a particularly bad few months where there were few pickings to be had on the roads in the countryside. One day we had come close to Francis speaking in a field outside of town to a crowd of poor people. He was speaking about the love and compassion of God and about how He loved us so much that He had sent His Son to die for all men's sins. As he was speaking to them he cast a sideways look at the tree line where we stood watching and listening and for a moment he smiled...a smile of acceptance and warmth. This made all three of us uncomfortable for we were outcasts and the feelings were alien to us. We looked at each other and shook our heads with a sense of how naive this fellow Francis was...it was absurd to even think that God would have anything to do with us.

Later that night as we sat around the campfire we talked about the things we had heard Francis saying. Did we really have a chance to be accepted by Francis...by God and His Son? We decided to go and speak with Francis the next day. His words that day had set a fire within me that burned like the campfire...was there really a possibility that God's love could reach inside my cold and ruthless outlaw heart? I slept lightly as I kept pondering and wondering where it would all lead.

The next day as we approached the meager building that Francis and his followers stayed in and as we approached it there was a small donkey tethered outside and sparrows spread out upon the snow covered ground pecking on small morsels that fell from where the cook stood outside the door cleaning a cooking pan. Because we were so hungry instead of asking for Francis who was not there at the time, we instead we asked Brother Angelo first for something to eat. Surely the followers of Christ wouldn't turn us down and the followers of Francis were known for their hospitality. That was not to be the case for Brother Angelo became irate and scolded us for having the nerve to ask for some of their food and called us robbers and murderers. We left in anger at his rebuff and went back in the woods in a sullen mood.

Sometime later we were surprised to see Brother Angelo coming to us begging for our forgiveness and bringing with him some food, for he had been admonished by Francis for his brash treatment of us, even though we rightly deserved it. He invited us to come back with him to where Francis was for he wanted to talk with us and share with us what God had been doing in his life. When we returned we met Francis who was quite solicitous and treated us with the utmost cordiality. There was a way about Francis that made you feel like he was talking about the Lord from personal experience...which made you feel he really did know Him! His infectious talk had a fire about it that sunk deep within his listeners that made them want to have that same relationship with the Lord. We wanted to stay close to this man who projected such a divine fire within himself. After talking among ourselves and then with Francis, he agreed that we could stay within his community. The seeming scandal of robbers becoming Franciscans was overcome by Francis' understanding of Christ's love for "all" men...even sinners like us...truly the depths of the Lord's pardon and mercy was unfathomable.

My thoughts now came back to Francis and where he could be leading us in the torch lit night. When we broke into a clearing and there stood a small open fronted shed. Around the opening was an ox, goat, lamb and a donkey and they seemed to be in attendance to a small manger which had a life like image of a small baby. Francis' demeanor seemed other worldly as he displayed the scene for us all. We were spellbound at the intimacy and belief which was now before us in such a tangible way. I marveled at the depth of Francis' faith and the small flame of faith, that up to now, had been slightly kindled ignited into a warmth that spread within me as I mirrored the belief and faith of Francis. If only this mystical moment could last for other BROTHERS AND SISTERS throughout the years...but really who would remember such a night?

Above all other solemnities, (Francis) habitually celebrated with ineffable care the Birth of the Child Jesus, and used to call the day in which Godmade-little-infant, had suckled from a human breast "feast of feasts." [...]One day, the friars were arguing amongst themselves as to whether the obligation to not eat meat remained, seeing as Christmas that year fell on a Friday. Francis responded to Friar Morico" "You sin, my brother, incalling 'Friday' the day in which a Child is born unto us. I want that on a day such as this, even the walls eat meat, and if this is not possible, that they at least be smeared with it." -2 Celano, 199

Nos cum Prole pia, benedicat Virgo Maria!

(May the Virgin Mary, Mother mild, bless us with her Holy Child!)

pax et bonum, Bro. Sparrow

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, N. Carolina





WAITING FOR TRUE JOY!

We are now in Advent preparing and waiting for our Lord Jesus Christ and Savior to be born into our world and deep in our hearts. For some He is already there, while for others He has been forgotten or simply pushed aside for a time. Now, is the time to bring Jesus back into our lives, renew our faith and love and we do this in a Penitential manner of prayer, meditation, fasting and sacrifice.

The third Sunday of Advent is called "Gaudete Sunday" meaning Joy! As our Penitential commitment continues,

it also brings forth Joy in our hearts in the expectation of Jesus' birth as the time draws nearer. The Kingdom of God is evident to those who listen to Jesus and truly hear Him!

The choice is ours—to be obedient to the faith so we will grow in holiness and truly become Saints; to be Brothers and Sisters of Penance living Rule 1221, following St Francis' footsteps; to trust God in all things, even when it seems impossible.

WAIT HOPE JOY PEACE – LOVE!

Submitted by "Penitent"



Perseverance

By Theresa Wallace

"O that I might be firm in the ways of keeping your statutes!" (Psalm 119: 1-32)

Psalm 119 seems to be a hymn dedicated to perseverance, and a timely meditation during our Advent fast. The New Oxford American Dictionary says perseverance is "steadfastness in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success." Our faith and catechism teach us to continue in a state of grace to the end, leading to eternal salvation, despite difficulty, failure or opposition.

Ok! I can do that! Easy-peasy! We are filled with zeal in the beginning....until temptation and sin re-enter.

That's where Psalm 119 teaches us to persevere. It's as if the psalmist was describing our journey of faith, from baby steps to full run. Early in our journey we're full of confidence and "know" what to do (I can do it!) "Happy are they whose way is blameless, who walk in by the law of the Lord. Happy are they who observe his decrees, who seek him with all their heart, and do no wrong but walk in his ways." How many of us start our journey with this confidence, full of the Spirit of God?!

But wait. We are all sinners and tend to fall into temptation. "You have commanded that your precepts be diligently kept. Oh, that I might be firm in the ways of keeping your statutes! (By the way, this sentence is the only one with an exclamation point...hmmmm) It's as if we start to doubt ourselves or the meaning of the Rule or the commandments. The world is so tempting to follow, vs God's precepts. The Rule and God's commandments are too hard, we reason, and not meant for today's society. For instance, it's a Friday and there is the Christmas office party and those beef cheese puffs look soo good vs the shrimp cocktail or cheese and crackers.... persevere despite difficulty.

As we read on, the psalmist continues to persevere and seeks God's counsel, likely reading Scripture and maybe even receiving good counsel from like-minded

friends and teachers. We need each other, too, don't we, to help us stay on the path of salvation?

But as sinners, we do fall into temptation; yet the psalmist knows that. So even as he is rising to the heights: "In the way of your decrees I rejoice, as much as in all riches," he is also brought low after a fall because he is a humble servant of God. "You rebuke the accursed proud (yes, he realized the sin of pride bucking its head), who turn away from your commands. Take away from me your reproach and contempt, for I observe your decrees." Or "My soul weeps for sorrow." Because we know that we offend God by our sins. This leads us to contrition, and hopefully the Sacrament of Penance. It is daily conversion—a lifetime of daily conversion no matter our duty in life. Do not succumb to the temptation to give up, that God's precepts are too hard, or St. Francis' Rule is only for the monks, nuns, or retired people.

How can a good and loving God permit us to keep falling into temptation despite our prayers and good intentions? Perhaps God allows us to discover our weaknesses or impediments to our journey to Him. By keeping his precepts and decrees in front of us daily, perhaps we will start to see the stumbling blocks before we trip and fall. Perhaps by letting go of pride and self-will and turning our lives entirely over to God, we can freely say "I lie prostrate in the dust; give me life according to your word. I declared my ways, and you answered me, teach me your statutes. Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous deeds." Persevering in our prayers, reading Scripture, attending daily Mass (if we can), practice meditation (especially the rosary), and being in the presence of God (contemplation). Don't allow the world to take it away, even in dryness.

Persistently beg from God to "Remove from me the way

of falsehood, and favor me with your law." And "O Lord, let me not be put to shame." We are almost at the summit when we recognize that we cannot do this in our own will, as in the beginning of our journey. It is God's strength acting in us, and we are open to His Will, come what may. We are no longer taking baby steps or

prideful steps toward God.

We cannot fly to God until we have let out the air of our own wind, and, instead, allow His Spirit to fill our sails.

Then we can cry with joy, "I will run in the way of your commands when you give me a docile heart."

Theresa Wallace, Novice 2, Berryville, Virginia

BOOK REVIEW

TITLE: **THE LOVE OF JESUS TO PENITENTS**

BY: HENRY EDWARD MANNING (1808-1892)

(ANGLICAN CLERGY CONVERTED TO CATHOLICISM, ORDAINED BECOMING CARDINAL)

Advent seems a very appropriate time for us to consider having a Book Review in our Newsletter. I was reading the book named above, asked to submit the review, then prayer and inspiration told me to go ahead. (Hopefully others will be inspired to share and submit reviews on books they are reading in future too!)

For several years now, I have been going to the Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation at times every two weeks or once per month. This is not a duty or obligation to simply follow the law of the Church, but something I truly feel inspired by the Holy Spirit to do. However, when I read **THE LOVE OF JESUS TO PENITENTS**, I can clearly see how much I am not understanding about the Sacrament, and being a Penitent, think I need to educate myself and put it more effectively into daily practice.

The author being from the 1800's is clearly traditional in his teaching and refers to Scripture throughout the whole book. He doesn't mince words but leaves one feeling and knowing how to be more contrite and the purpose of it, if one is seriously trying to cleanse their soul while praying for self and others as we journey to



the Kingdom of God for all eternity.

The points made for the necessity of repentance and forgiveness while emptying our conscience to allow the Light of Christ to dwell within, increases brighter and brighter, bringing us to understand and believe that a **PENITENT HEART IS A GIFT FROM GOD**. This is not "our" doing at all! It is a gift from God who showers us with His grace – but we must be truly sorrowful and contrite, united with Christ on the Cross. This, is why so many of the Saints suffered with Christ and were very aware and concerned about their own sinful actions. Just having the will not to sin, is the least we can do to make amends, says the author. He also says to be "justified by faith alone" was invented by later ages – we need full pardon by admission and repentance.

Soon, our Baby Jesus will come into the world to become our Savior gracing us with His love and sacraments; we can start now to make better use of them and become Penitents with humble contrite hearts. Have a Blessed and Holy Christmas!

Submitted by: Margaret-Marie

MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

STAY CONNECTED...PLEASE!

If you wish to connect with your Brothers and Sisters in the BSP, please remember that the **BSP Forums** on our website are set up specifically for that purpose. Remember too that there is also a prayer forum. Don't underestimate the prayers of a few poor penitents under the patronage of Father Francis and St. Clare!

Hope to see you on the Forums! <http://bspenance.org/forum/>

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

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, Administrators



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)



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PENANCE



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