

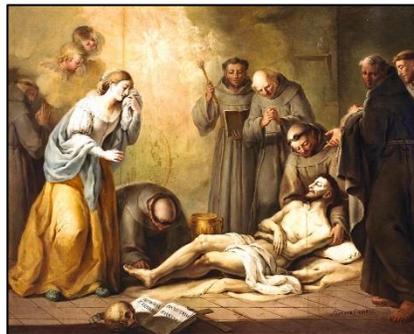


...IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT, FOR CHRIST!

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter XV—The Canonization of St. Francis and the Solemn Transfer of His Remains

3. His limbs were relaxed, soft to touch; they seemed to have regained the tenderness of childhood, bearing clear marks of his childlike innocence. The nails showed up black against his shining skin and the wound in his side looked like a rose in full flower, so that it is no wonder the onlookers were amazed and overjoyed at the varied beauty of the miracle. His sons mourned the loss of such a loving father, but they were filled with gladness when they kissed the marks of the supreme King in his body. The extraordinary miracle turned their sorrow to joy and the realization of what it meant turned their curiosity into amazement. The sight was so unusual and so sublime that those who saw it were confimed in their faith and inspired to greater love, while those who heard about it were lost in amazement and longed to see for themselves.



4. When the townspeople heard that the saint was dead and learned about the stigmata, they came in crowds

to the place, all anxious to see with their own eyes; that would banish all doubt from their minds and add joy to the affection they felt for the saint. A large number of people from Assisi were admitted to see the stigmata and kiss them.

One of those who was allowed to see the body of St. Francis was a knight called Jerome who was an educated and prudent man. He was a very well known person, but he was unbelieving like the Apostle St. Thomas and he doubted the reality of the stigmata. In his eagerness he did not hesitate to move the nails in full sight of the friars and all the people, and he felt the saint's hands and feet and side with his fingers. As he felt the marks of Christ's wounds under his touch, the doubt vanished from his heart and from the hearts of others. As a result he and many others afterwards bore witness to the truth which he had verified so carefully, and swore to it on the Gospel.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

Sunday January 1, 2006 Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
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 then 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... Some History, and Our Butterfly...



The call to form the BSP actually came slowly, over several years, though it began in 1988, with both of us. We were both in the Secular Franciscan Order,

and active in leadership at that time. Yet, the SFO was not the call, and did not support it at all. It was something more. With the approval of Father Valerius Messerich O.F.M., who was our spiritual director, Bruce, who was in the national leadership chain in the SFO, had been sharing the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis, the Rule of 1221, with members of the SFO in the Queen of Peace Region of the Secular Franciscan Order. Bruce was then the Regional Minister to all of the SFO fraternities in the States of South Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, which constituted the Queen of Peace Region. When the SFO told Bruce he could not do that any longer Father Valerius told Bruce to stop doing it, and he named this movement towards the original Rule Stella Matutina, which is Italian for Morning Star. Hence the first name of the BSP was

Stella Matutina, or Morning Star. This movement later became the Private Association of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. Unofficially this happened shortly after Fr. Valerius named it, with the approval of the movement by Archbishop Harry J. Flynn. The BSP did not become an official family in the Church, a Private Association that is, until 2003.

So, the Private Association of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, i.e. the BSP, was officially formed with the first professions of its founding members on January 11, 2003. These professions were given to Archbishop Harry J. Flynn at the chancery office in St. Paul, Minnesota, and the bishop even sponsored a wonderful reception for family and friends of those professed. This all occurred with the permission of Father Valerius Messerich O.F.M. after these first members had completed a formation program for the BSP which Fr. Valerius had authorized. The butterfly of the BSP came in to being many years before this, in 1994 actually, and this is how it happened. This is shared with the permission of Father Valerius.

At the beginning of my hour of contemplative prayer

one morning in 1994, I (Bruce) asked the Lord how fast the Association would form and how large it would become. (That morning hour of prayer has been part of my life since 1978 and still is today.) At the end of that hour of prayer I saw a vision. The vision was of a beautiful hovering butterfly, which I later identified as the Microsoft butterfly when I went in to my computer to find butterflies sometime after the vision had occurred, and there it was! The butterfly of my vision! No naturally occurring butterfly has these colors. There is probably significance in that too, since so much of the work of the BSP now and for as long as it has existed has been on the computer, and using Microsoft technology no less.

As I gazed at the hovering butterfly it became a faucet, sitting on top of a wall. Naturally I watched the faucet to see if water would come out of it. And, it did. A drop of water formed slowly at the mouth of the faucet. Then the drop fell VERY SLOWLY until it hit a rock on the flat surface below the wall. When it hit, it VERY SLOWLY split into two droplets, that went right and left and hit the ground again, and then each droplet shattered into numerous droplets. Each of these droplets became a beautiful, full colored butterfly of the same variety and color as the first one except that one of the butterflies, amidst them all, in one of the two groups of butterflies, had a bright diamond heart that pulsed as it flew

away. So, one group of butterflies had the diamond heart butterfly in it. The other did not.

After the vision ended and my prayer ended I pondered the dream. I understood the vision to mean several things. I had already been informed, earlier, at prayer, by a different vision, that the group we formed would be an Association, not an Order, in the Church. Now, from this vision, I felt that the Association would form slowly, like the drops of water did in falling, and that those who pursued the lifestyle of the BSP, which is that of the First Rule of the original Third Order of St. Francis of 1221 would all become beautifully converted to the Lord, i.e. beautiful butterflies, and some of these would be attain great holiness, i.e. have diamond hearts. Praise God! The one droplet became two and then many droplets and so many will come to the Association, become butterflies, and who knows, perhaps more faucets? Like those among us who have taken up leadership in the BSP, or formed Chapters.

In any event, that is a little history and the story of the butterfly and why it is displayed on letterhead and in other ways in the BSP. It is a beautiful part of our history, and who doesn't like butterflies?



May the Lord bless and lead us all!

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



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven." (Ecclesiasticus 3:1)

The season of Lent is almost upon us. The Rule of our holy father Francis will become a major focus. More on that later.

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of probably the most prophetic encyclical in history, *Humanae Vitae*, by Pope Paul VI in 1968. I was fortunate to grow up in the best decade of the twentieth century, the fifties. God granted those of my age the privilege of living at a time that we would now call "normal," before the baby boomers and their sexual revolution of the sixties brought absolute chaos, a horrible time of disdain for God and traditional moral standards.

Donna and I are reading a book on the life of Paul VI to better understand the man behind the prophecy. In the course of his earlier years, then Monsignor Montini worked closely with the future Pope Pius XII, Cardinal Pacelli, in the Vatican Secretary of State office. Both assisted Pope Pius XI on at least some of his encyclicals, which I have discovered is a treasure trove.

Much is made of how Pius XII dealt with Hitler during WWII and his alleged lack of outright condemnation of

the Third Reich. No such problem with Pius XI. His encyclical "Mit Brennender Sorge" ("With Anxious Concern"), issued in March of 1937, caused an immediate and negative reaction from the German authorities, bringing much grief to the faithful. I wish to share another part of this encyclical for its power and clarity, inspiring for every disciple of Jesus Christ in every age. Following is a wonderful description of our God, and His Will for mankind.

*9. Beware, Venerable Brethren, of that growing abuse, in speech as in writing, of the name of God as though it were a meaningless label, to be affixed to any creation, more or less arbitrary, of human speculation. Use your influence on the Faithful, that they refuse to yield to this aberration. **Our God is the Personal God, supernatural, omnipotent, infinitely perfect, one in the Trinity of Persons, tri-personal in the unity of divine essence, the Creator of all existence. Lord, King and ultimate Consummator of the history of the world, who will not, and cannot, tolerate a rival God by His side.***

10. *This God, this Sovereign Master, has issued commandments whose value is independent of time and space, country and race. As God's sun shines on every human face so His law knows neither privilege nor exception. Rulers and subjects, crowned and uncrowned, rich and poor are equally subject to His word. From the fullness of the Creators' right there naturally arises the fullness of His right to be obeyed by individuals and communities, whoever they are. This obedience permeates all branches of activity in which moral values claim harmony with the law of God, and pervades all integration of the ever-changing laws of man into the immutable laws of God.*

After a short paragraph on a "national God and national religion," Pius XI launched into the role of shepherds of the Catholic Church:

12. *The Bishops of the Church of Christ, "ordained in the things that appertain to God (Heb. v, 1) must watch that pernicious errors of this sort, and consequent practices more pernicious still, shall not gain a footing among their flock. It is part of their sacred obligations to do whatever is in their power to enforce respect for, and obedience to, the commandments of God, as these are the necessary foundation of all private life and public morality; to see that the rights of His Divine Majesty, His name and His word be not profaned; to put a stop to the blasphemies, which, in words and pictures, are multiplying like the sands of the desert; to encounter the obstinacy and provocations of those who deny, despise and hate God, by the never-failing reparatory prayers of the Faithful, hourly rising like incense to the All-Highest and staying His vengeance.*

Here is our task, especially this Lent, to fully participate in "the never failing reparatory prayers of the Faithful." I have a love/hate relationship with Lent, and the penance that is an integral part of it. Francis is very clear in his prescriptions for fasting and abstinence, which for the most part have always been very difficult to perfectly fulfill. It's hard to not expect another imperfect response. That's more difficult to take than

stumbling on daily details, the fact that a sometimes pitiful response to the love of God is so utterly lacking compared to what He deserves, and what we wish we could accomplish. Always falling short of the goal.

In addition to fasting, another special penance that has slowly crept up is the process of aging. I always used to laugh at comedians who portrayed old folks as bumbling, feeble old codgers. It feels very strange now that it is happening to me. It's difficult to accept the fact that one can no longer do simple things that were once a snap. Or it takes an hour to do what used to take ten minutes. Aches and pains appear from nowhere, some to remain for life. Nowhere is this penance prescribed, but it is a fact of daily life. At some point we will become care-needers instead of care-givers. We wonder about the timing of this inevitable progression, the effect it will have on our loved ones.

Lent also gives inspiration: somehow by the grace of God I can do it! I can fast and abstain after all. We can also fast from distractions and feast on the Presence of God. We can fast from material goods and give alms. It is good to need help from our Savior Jesus Christ, be dependent on Him. I read recently that God is less concerned with making us perfect, than to make us attached to Him. Growing old is a perfect recipe for learning this attachment. Reparatory prayer is a bonus, as in the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. "Jesus I trust in You!"

I love how Pius XI capitalized the word "Faithful," as in the "never-failing reparatory prayers of the Faithful." We have such a sublime mission on earth, to make the Blessed Trinity known and loved. And to do reparation for those who do not know, or say no. The pope provides a fitting ending for those of us who have been called by God to be "Faithful."

13. *We thank you, Venerable Brethren, your priests and Faithful, who have persisted in their Christian duty and in the defense of God's rights in the teeth of an aggressive paganism. Our gratitude, warmer still and admiring, goes out to those who, in fulfillment of their duty, have been deemed worthy of sacrifice and suffering for the love of God.*

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



It is All Grace by Janet Klasson, BSP

From From the Second Reading, Second Sunday of Lent

"If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?" (Romans 8:31-32)



Once again, the forty-day Lenten fast looms, practically nipping at the heels of the Advent fast. If you are new

to the BSP, or are still in formation, you may be wondering if this practice is something you are capable of committing to on an ongoing basis. I am here to tell you that you most certainly are **not**—outside of grace that is!

Just between you and me...the last person who is capable of two forty-day fasts per year is yours truly! For most of my life, food was my go-to, my bosom buddy, guest of honor at every emotional feast. If I was sad, I ate, if I was bored I ate, if I was happy, you bet I ate! Food got me out of bed in the morning. Only God would think to call someone like me to a life of fasting and penance!

Ah, but that is God's wisdom! He has only ever called unlikely sorts to be his workers. In his wisdom he knows that if there is any measure of success in what we do, we will never be able to take credit, but will recognize the miracle of grace at work in us.

But that grace does not come in a flash. Oh no! It is portioned out by Him just so, when needed, as needed. Often, when we first feel called to the BSP, we want to do it all on day one. That never works out, I have found, because as long as we are trying to do it ourselves, no graces will be given. However it would be a mistake to give up after that initial failure. God's grace will come when we get out of the way, when we need it, and not before!

Formation is meant to last four years. That is wise and prudent. In Postulancy, we discern, just getting our feet wet. In Novice 1 we learn how to swim a few strokes, immersing ourselves in the ocean of prayer. Without that immersion, we will never leave the shallows, as the graces only begin to flow in that fundamental year. In Novice 2 we begin to use those graces to adjust to a life of fast and abstinence, learning to synchronize movement and breath, sacrificing speed in favor of endurance. We sputter and go under at times, but if we just keep paddling, we will get stronger stroke by stroke. By the time we reach our Novice 3 year, we have hit our stride and begin to realize we are in it for the

long haul. It is time to simplify, to reduce distractions. By the end of our fourth year of formation we find we have become water babies, more at home in penance than out of it.

Bruce often uses the example of being in a marathon. We don't have to win, just stay in the race. That is how we receive the graces of discipline, endurance, and perseverance.

Blogger Anthony Mullen had this to say in his recent blog post titled "The Reality of How We Grow in Union with God":

"While it is easy just to throw up our hands and say this is impossible for me, this temptation comes from Satan. It is precisely in recognizing that we cannot do these things that we begin the journey in earnest. If we simply keep trying and trusting in God, He sees the little bit of good will He requires, and He then sets out to do the work for us! It is in the continual trying and striving and never giving up, accompanied by the Faith and Trust that God can indeed do what is impossible for us, that we finally see progress....and He will do the impossible if we continue to persevere. Trust obtains all spiritual things!" <https://divineantidote.wordpress.com>

The longer I have been a member of this BSP, the more I realize it is all grace, not just in the ability to live a life of penance, but in the ability to do anything good at all. The more I die to self, the more I get out of God's way, the more good flows through me and the more room there is for the infinite graces God has in mind for me.

We are a small band of souls doing what we can by God's merciful grace. The more we surrender to that, and the more room we make for grace, the more we will fly. Then, by God's holy Will, the graces we gain through this way of life will bear fruit we cannot even imagine.

"I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (Philippians 1:6).

From <https://pelianitoblog.wordpress.com>

Matthew 4:22 Immediately [James and John] left the boat and their father, and followed [Jesus].

"Oh my child, the cost of discipleship is very dear! It is the same with anything of great value. If it can be gotten cheaply, can it really be so great a prize? I do not say this to frighten you but to give you an idea of what it means to attain this pearl of great price. Do you want to follow me? Then hold nothing back. Search out your heart. What is it that keeps you from a complete self-giving? Discern carefully. Each call is unique. Some are called to follow me in the mundane chores of daily life, dying to self every day, giving up their own dreams in an act of continual sacrifice. This is following me. Some are asked to radically give up everything earthly and live a life of contemplation. The important thing is to discern your call. Do not covet another's call. Do not denigrate your call by thinking it is too small a thing to offer God. The important thing, the essence of a call, is faithfulness and total self-giving in whatever station you have in life. Wherever you are, act with love for God and other, and you will accomplish more than you can imagine. Offer all you can to me. Believe me when I say that I can use it all. Link your gifts to the cross, your daily joys and pains—everything. This is how you leave everything behind to follow

me, by bringing me into each moment and living only for me. The Divine Will makes this possible. Love, be faithful, and be at peace. I am with you, my beloved."

O my Jesus, help me to know and discern correctly your perfect plan for my life. Help me to let go of my dreams, that I might live the life of your dreams for me. In the Divine Will, O Lord, redo everything I have done in my life that was not part of your plan. Jesus, I repent of my self-will and ask for the grace to always be faithful to your glorious plan for me. Here I am Lord, I come to live in your most holy will. Amen.

Matthew 1:17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

"My beloved, do you see how intricately the plan of salvation has been drawn up? No detail has been left out. My plans are perfect and are in perfect balance; the end result will be perfection. Then do not doubt and do not fear, but hasten its fulfillment by making more fervent prayers and sacrifices. Within the perfect plan of God stands the imperfect human soul. Just as in the genealogy of the Messiah there were a multitude of imperfect human souls, yet they did not spoil the plan of God. So too, the imperfection of all humans from the time of the Messiah to now are not capable of derailing the perfect plan of God. All the imperfections of all humans put together are but a drop in the infinite ocean of my perfection. Do not despair, but the darker the days become, remember that infinite ocean of perfection and be consoled. My children—pray! I am near and where I am, perfection also dwells. Shalom, my children. Be consoled in the perfection of my birth."

O my Jesus, in the Divine Will I place my I love you and I thank you and I praise you in your perfections. Your mercy is beyond imagining. May this Christmas bring many souls back to your perfect embrace. Infant King, may you reign on earth as in heaven. Fiat! Amen.

(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' Truth

Peace my dear sparrows! I am in a quandary...or so I think. Looking at TV news reports that deal with the leadership of this country and whether the veracity of these of these people can be verified is somewhat up in the air. Basically the issue is truth. This caused me introspection that can be only adequately addressed in light of the Bible. (Only a sparrow would understand that surmise!)

"What is truth?" Pilate asked Jesus. If this question has ever been relevant, it surely is today. Some years ago a person wrote, "It is necessary to be sure that it is true truth." Sounds strange, doesn't it?

The world today seems to have lost the concept of what truth is. In courts across the land, people swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth--yet this does not deter some from blatantly lying. Someone recently coined an expression that refers to lying as using "alternate facts." Today there are multitudes of half truths, watered down truths, deceptive claims, and misleading statements. So what, pray tell, is truth?



As Christians, and humble sparrows, we can be deeply thankful that "the truth" has been revealed to us through the Word of God. Jesus said in His prayer to the Father, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). And so it is. Jesus also declared Himself to be "the way, the truth, and the life." He was and still is truth embodied, walking in truth and demonstrating truth. In John 1:17, the Bible declares that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The Greek word for "came" indicates that truth originated with Christ!

The truth of the matter is that we can actually know what real truth is. Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." A wonderful example of someone who met truth head-on is the apostle Paul. Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus, and from that time forth he committed himself to obeying that truth. Paul became the messenger of truth to the nations, and his message of truth still sounds forth today.

In closing below is a sparrow truth...

"There is only one thing to do here below—love Jesus and save souls for Him, so that He may more loved."
—St. Therese, the Little Flower

Take up your cross

Peace my little sparrows! I read a quote today that said: "Jesus has many lovers of a crown but few bearers of a cross!" This underscores the message that most penitents should, if true sparrows, be fully aware of.

Then said Jesus unto His disciples, **"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."** Matthew 16:24. What is meant by "take up his cross"? To go through a literal Roman crucifixion is not feasible (this, of course, does not include stigmatics like St. Francis), nor is it God's desire for us. To impose excessive severities that are outside regular penance as proscribed for penitents by their respective orders, is not God's will for us either.

Jesus bore His own cross, and the sin-bearing, darkness, and rejection He felt with His cross were unique to His experience. His cross means that the world can have life; our cross means we die to the world. All crosses are alike in some ways, but no two are identical. Though everyone's cross is an instrument of death, you CANNOT die on someone else's cross. This is why Jesus said, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Taking up our cross means that we choose to pick up and accept the will of God for our life instead of what our carnal nature would choose to do. It is a matter of crucifying our desires for things we would like to have, jobs we would like to hold, places we would like to go, and time we would like to spend as we please.

Taking up our cross means seeking God's will. Therefore, we need to ask God to show us His will and trust that He will show us. Then we must choose to bear our cross just as Jesus bore His. Jesus' cross-bearing was not an accident or a random happening; it was a choice. Our cross also must be a deliberate choice to deny our own will and do the will of God.

A follower of Christ, in full knowledge of His terrible salvific suffering, nonetheless felt that the cross (life suffering) that Jesus had permitted him to endure was a bit much and rather hard to bear. But had not ever voiced his complaint keeping the matter hidden away in his heart. One night after some thought on that matter he fell asleep. He dreamed he was standing in front of the Lord and he finally brought his complaint to the board of how hard a cross he had been given and he wanted the Lord to take that cross away and give him another kind of cross. The Lord smiled and said He would take him to the heavenly warehouse of crosses and let him choose one for himself...thus exchanging the old for the new.

When they arrived at the imposing heavenly structure he left Jesus at the entrance and started going up and down the various rows of large and fierce looking crosses that Jesus' followers carried. There were steel ones, large wooden ones, many with spikes that would cause spiritual pains, glass ones with razor sharpness that would cause spiritual suffering. The man could easily visualize how one of these had been his own and now he was looking for something less painful...something he could handle. When finally he came to the back of the warehouse and he saw a glass case that had small gold and silver crosses of just a few inches! "Jesus," he called, "Here I've found the one I want. Let me have this small gold cross of suffering to carry through life." The Lord looked down at the one he wanted and smiled and said, "That's the one you've been carrying!"

"How merciful is the way by which the Divine Master has always led me! He has never made me wish for anything without giving it to me; that is why His bitter chalice seems delightful to me."

—St. Therese, the Little Flower



BOOK REVIEW

TITLE: **OPUS SANCTORUM ANGELORUM** (The Word of the Holy Angels)

AUTHOR: FR. ROBERT J. FOX & FR ALFRED BOEDEKKER, OFM

ARE YOU FORGETTING YOUR GUARDIAN ANGEL?



Apparently, we are forgetting more and more about our Guardian Angels and perhaps all the Heavenly Angels. We are forgetting to remember to pray to them for guidance and protection, but also it is said, we are not mentioning them very often at Masses.

It would seem right and holy, since God our Father assigned each of us a Guardian

Angel when we came into being, that we would reverence that in remembrance of their presence and love and turn to them in prayer. Ex 23:20 says - So speaks the Lord God: "I send my Angel before thee to guard as you go and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Give him reverence and listen to all that he says. Offer him no defiance; he would not pardon such a fault, for My Name is in him."

Keeping in mind our vocations in life, youth need to

know that their Guardian Angel will assist them in finding their vocation in the eternal plan of God. Adults also have their vocation and should remain open to their angel, knowing he will supply all the graces needed to live that vocation successfully.

It was an angel who announced the birth to Mary. It was an angel who told Joseph not to put Mary aside. It was an angel with a Chalice who comforted Jesus in the Garden of Olives. An angel kept guard at the empty tomb upon the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus reminded Peter – “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father who would promptly send more than twelve legions of angels to my defense?” “Behold an angel of the Lord appeared and told Peter to get dressed quickly and the chains fell from his hands” when he was in prison. Even our dear Seraphic Father St Francis of Assisi was visited by an angel when he received the Stigmata. It was not

that long ago, Padre Pio who often spoke with his guardian angel, told us to keep our relationship with them. There are many more visits from angels in both the Old & New Testaments that confirm their presence, warnings, guidance and protection.

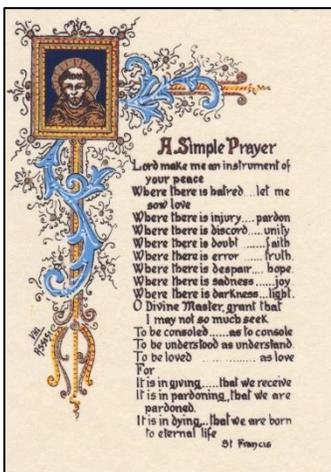
Several good books are available about our Holy Angels and our personal Guardian Angel, including prayers and litanies done privately or in a group, so as the author Fr Robert Fox encourages, “We should rejoice to have such dear friends, full of love and praise of God, His perfect images, reflecting His beauty and power in marvelous ways. These mighty Princes of Heaven are at our beck and call!



ANGEL OF GOD MY GUARDIAN DEAR, TO WHOM HIS LOVE COMMITS ME HERE
EVER THIS DAY BE AT MY SIDE, TO LIGHT AND GUARD AND RULE AND GUIDE. AMEN

Submitted by: Margaret-Marie

HUMBLE PENITENTS



Many of us know what can transpire when we are putting our efforts of prayer and deeds into accomplishing God’s work. In these most difficult times in or world and Church, there can be even more of an increase of those who seemingly want to deface and destroy good intentions and goodness itself.

Well, St Francis had the same difficulties during his life in the 1200’s where God called upon him to “Help rebuild my Church.” This was a time too when there was war, political pressures and communities of poor and lepers. Nevertheless, Francis humbly marches along for the Lord simply blending in while bringing love, peace and encouragement to others.

Here is a small excerpt from a story in Francis’ life and we see how he dealt with these problems and why he was able to handle them the way he did.

DIFFICULT BEGINNINGS

According to St Thomas of Celano, the first follower of St Francis, there were many who plotted to destroy the new planting of the Order at the beginning. There were many trying to suffocate the “chosen vineyard” which the Lord’s hand had so kindly planted anew in the world. There were so many trying to steal and eat its first fresh fruit, but all these opponents were “slain with the sword” of the venerable father and lord “and their efforts came to naught.”

For he was a river of eloquence, a wall of the Church, a spokesman for the Truth, and a lover of the humble.

—Francis of Assisi, Saint, Early Documents Vol 1

Submitted by “Penitent”

From the Desert Fathers

The Abbot Nilas said,

“Invulnerable from the arrows of the enemy is he who loves quiet; but he who mixes with the crowd, often has wounds.”



MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

FROM BILL CROWE, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS PROFESSION TO LIVE THE RULE OF THE BSP...

1/12/18

My name is Bill Crowe, and I am 68 years old. I was born, and raised in St. Louis, Missouri. When I was a kid my mom and I were of the Baptist faith. Then my mom, with the help of a very good Catholic neighbor, decided to send my brother and I to a Catholic School.

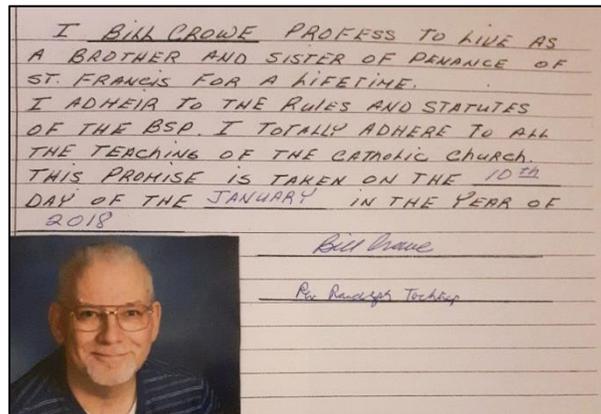
At age 13 I knew I had some calling in the Church. I was simply fascinated about everything about the Church. In the summer time I walked to Mass every day while the other kids were riding bikes and playing baseball.

Then my bubble burst. I had terrible grades in school and could not go any further in my vocation. So, as a teenager and young adult I totally left the Church. For many years. Way too long. I started working in food service. I enjoyed the work, and the people I worked with. I also dated many girls, but that was not the answer either.

When I was age 13, and taking instructions to become Catholic, I knew what I wanted to do. I was simply fascinated by the priests, nuns, and brothers.

Then, in 1993, my mom and I moved to Advance, Missouri. There I met a nun who taught me the Divine Office. She said that 'If you learn this you are a genius!' Well, I did learn it.

Then I became a Eucharistic Minister. I remember telling a priest that the first time I gave out the precious cup that my knees were shaking, so much that I could hardly stand up. The priest remarked to me that I took my job very seriously.



I want to thank God, Bruce, and all the people who encouraged me in my vocation. I am about to profess in the BSP and I am overwhelmed. I do encourage people to consider this vocation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance as something wonderful. When you live this lifestyle you will indeed be happy always.

Bill Crowe

(Administrator's note: Bill started formation, by postal mail as he does not own a computer, in July of 2013. He did his last lesson in January. All of his lessons were done by postal mail with Bruce Fahey. He professed to his parish priest in Advance, Missouri. His address is: P.O. Box 790, Advance, MO. 63730 Please pray for Bill.)

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)



The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF
PENANCE



of St. Francis

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