



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

## BLESSED TRANSITUS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS!

### Celano, Second Life: Chapter XVI—Francis’ Patient Endurance and His Death



3. For two years after he had received the stigmata—that is twenty years after the beginning of his religious life—Francis endured the purifying blows of various illnesses which formed him like a stone ready to be fitted into the heavenly Jerusalem and raised him to the height of perfection, like ductile metal under the blows of a hammer. Then he asked to be brought to St. Mary of the Portiuncula, so that he might yield up his spirit where he had first received the spirit of grace. When he arrived there, he was anxious to show that he had no longer anything in common with the world, after the example of Eternal Truth. In his last serious illness, which was destined to put an end to all his suffering, he had himself laid naked on the bare earth, so that with all the fervor of his spirit he might struggle naked with

his naked enemy in that last hour which is given him to vent his wrath.

As he lay there on the ground, stripped of his poor habit, he raised his eyes to heaven, as his custom was, and was lost in the contemplation of its glory. He covered the wound in his right side with his left hand, to prevent it being seen, and he said to the friars, “I have done what was mine to do. May Christ teach you what is yours.”

## BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

### Some of the miracles which took place after St. Francis’ death

#### V. Prisoners Who Were Set Free

1. In Greece a man-servant was wrongfully accused of theft before his master. His master had him loaded with chains and kept in close captivity, but the woman of the house had pity on him; she was convinced that he was innocent of the charge laid against him and she pleaded with her husband to set him free. However, he was obdurate and refused to agree, so that his wife had recourse to St. Francis and recommended the innocent man to his intercession. Francis, the protector of the poor, responded immediately and came to visit the prisoner. He loosed his bonds and forced open his cell. Then, taking him by the hand, he led him out, telling him, “I am St. Francis. Your mistress entrusted you to me.” The prisoner was terrified and

he wandered about the top of a cliff, trying to find a way down, when he suddenly found himself on level ground, thanks to the power of his rescuer. He went back to his employer’s wife and told her all about the miracle, so that she became more fervent than ever in her love for Christ and her devotion to St. Francis.

2. A poor man from Massa Trabaria owed a knight a sum of money. In his poverty he had no means of paying him and so he was arrested by his creditor who wanted the money. He implored him to have pity on him and give him another chance, for love of St. Francis. But the nobleman proudly scorned his entreaties and made light of the saint and his love, as if it were worth nothing. “I will lock you up where neither St. Francis nor anyone else will be of any use

to you," he exclaimed. He tried to do just that, and prepared a dungeon where he bound his prisoner with chains and threw him in. Shortly afterwards St. Francis came there and broke open the cell; then he loosed the prisoner's bonds and led him home unharmed. His power prevailed over the proud nobleman and rescued the prisoner who had committed himself to him; and he changed the knights' self-assertiveness into gentleness by the miracle.

3. A man called Albert from Arezzo was thrown into prison for debts which he had never contracted and he commended himself to St. Francis in his innocence with all humility; he was very attached to the Order and he

had a special veneration for St. Francis above all the other saints. His creditor declared blasphemously that neither God nor St. Francis would be able to free him from his hands. However, on the vigil of the saint's feast Albert kept a strict fast and gave his ration of food to a poor beggar for love of St. Francis. That night, as he lay awake, St. Francis appeared to him. As he entered the cell, the chains fell from the prisoner's hands and feet and the door opened of its own accord, while a number of flagstones came tumbling down from the roof. Albert went home a free man. Ever afterwards he continued his devotion to St. Francis and fasted on the vigil of his feastday. Each year he offered a candle in his honor and every year he added an extra ounce to it, as a sign of his increasing devotion.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



## VISITOR'S MESSAGE

### Homily by Fr. Robert Altier, July 7, 2019

(Readings: Ex 32:7-11, 13-14; 1 Tim 1:12-17; Lk 15:1-32)

In the Gospel reading we are told that tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to listen to Jesus. This did not sit

well with the Pharisees who complained, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Many things could be said in response to this, but my response is always one of gratitude because we are all sinners. A healthy doctor welcomes sick patients, a well-educated teacher welcomes students who lack knowledge, and the Lord, Who came to save us from our sins, welcomes sinners. If He did not, He would be alone in Heaven with His Mother.

God is perfectly happy; if no one was in heaven God would perfectly happy; if every person who ever lived made it to heaven, He would not be any happier. In other words, we do not add anything to God nor do we subtract anything from Him. His desire is not His own happiness, but ours. He wants us to be completely fulfilled which can only happen when we are filled absolutely with truth and love.

Getting back to the Pharisees and their response to our Lord, there is certainly comfort in being with good people who are striving for holiness. However, it is probable that most of these people were, at some point in their lives, not so good. In other words, they needed a conversion somewhere along the line. Even if they had always believed, most people get themselves into some unfortunate situations from which they must remove themselves.

If everyone abandoned us because we had fallen in some way, there would be no hope for anyone. It

may even be that some people reading this were abandoned by the people who called themselves friends; perhaps these "friends" never returned, even after we had turned around. Thankfully, other good people were there to help us get turned around and back on the right path.

For people like the Pharisees in today's Gospel story there seems to be not only an attitude of superiority, but a disposition completely void of any compassion. Perhaps they had forgotten their ancestors are the ones we read about in the first reading: the people who made and worshipped a golden calf. If this had been the only gaffe the people of Israel made it might be easier to forgive, but the Old Testament is filled with examples of the disobedience and infidelity of the people from one generation to the next.

Contrast the attitude of the Pharisees with that of the Saints. St. Paul, in the second reading expresses his gratitude to Jesus Who called him even though he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and arrogant (his words, not mine). Even with his sins, St. Paul was treated mercifully and, thereby, understood what it means that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. St. Paul proclaims himself to be the foremost among sinners. It is because he recognized his own sinfulness that St. Paul could be so compassionate to those who did not know the Lord and to those who had fallen into sin after accepting the Faith.

Prior to his conversion, St. Paul was a Pharisee. Although nothing suggests he was among the group



we hear about in the Gospel, he was cut from that same cloth. What is interesting to note is that St. Paul needed a conversion. Of course, we recognize his conversion to Christianity, but I mean that even though he was living a righteous life according to the Law, something needed to happen to change his heart. This remains the same for anyone who believes he or she is better than others, holier than others, in a word, above sinners.

If we are not sinners, we do not need Jesus; He will not welcome us and eat with us. Not because He is unwilling, but because we are unwilling. I find it interesting that every Saint believes himself or herself the worst sinner ever. Some of us who are

not Saints, on the other hand, do not think we are too bad. When we think this way, we try to justify ourselves. If we recognize ourselves as sinners, we allow Jesus to justify us.

If we are among those who believe we are doing pretty well, we need to pray for a conversion of heart, not a conversion to the Faith. When that conversion takes place, then we will be the cause of rejoicing for the Shepherd Who finds His lost sheep and places us on His shoulders with great joy. Such a conversion will allow us to see ourselves as Christ sees us: as sinners who need our Good Shepherd. This, in turn, will make us humble, grateful, and compassionate to sinners who, like us, need Jesus.

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## **ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... PENANCE, PRAYER, AND THE WORKS OF MERCY**



How do we live this life we follow? The first friars bound themselves to absolute and very real poverty. Lady Poverty Francis called poverty, yet our Rule does not mention poverty. Now why is that?

We need to find the resolution to this question in the Rule. So it is a good practice to read and meditate on the Rule often. Consider what Article 21 says to us.

### **RULE: ARTICLE 21**

**21. And, if it be convenient at the time, they are to have some religious who is informed in the words of God to exhort them and strengthen them to persevere in their penance and in performing the works of mercy. And except for the officers, they are to remain quiet during the Mass and sermon, intent on the Office, on prayer, and on the sermon.**

Penance of course is addressed in the Rule as it is the Rule that tells us how we are to persevere in penance.

Prayer comes in Article 12.

### **RULE: ARTICLE 12**

**12. All are daily to say the seven canonical Hours, that is: Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. The clerics are to say them after the manner of the clergy. Those who know the Psalter are to say the Deus in nomine tuo (Psalm 54) and the Beati**

***Immaculati (Psalm 119) up to the Legem pone (Verse 33) for Prime, and the other psalms of the Hours, with the Glory Be to the Father; but when they do not attend church, they are to say for Matins the psalms the Church says or any eighteen psalms; or at least to say the Our Father as do the unlettered at any of the Hours. The others say twelve Our Fathers for Matins and for every one of the other Hours seven Our Fathers with the Glory Be to the Father after each one. And those who know the Creed and the Miserere mei Deus (Ps. 51) should say it at Prime and Compline. If they do not say that at the Hours indicated, they shall say three Our Fathers.***

### **STATUTES: ARTICLE 12**

a. *Prayer is the core of growth in a life with God. Penitents must be committed to a life of prayer as outlined in this Rule. More prayer than what is listed, including daily mental prayer, meditation, and contemplation, is encouraged.*

So, prayer and penance, and the works of mercy, are the marks of our Association as lay people. Francis wanted more from his friars and so the life of the friars was exactly the life that Jesus led. In fact St. Francis found the way of life he wanted for his friars by opening the Gospel and randomly taking three readings. These readings were: "Take nothing for the journey," "Sell what you own and give to the poor," and "Deny yourselves, take up your crosses, and follow me." So the Rule for his friars embraced these three things and they quite literally sold what they had and gave it to the poor. The embraced

absolute total poverty, and so did the Sisters under St. Clare, and begged their food each day. They worked, either among the poor, or to earn their daily bread. And they lived in houses made of straw and mud and their churches were generally of straw and mud.

Once the friars built a beautiful church of stone and St. Francis began to tear it down before he realized he did not own it simply because it was too nice for a Franciscan friar. So he didn't tear it down but he sent a message to his friars for sure.

So, where were the laity in all of this? Well, they came to him some years after he had acquired quite

a following of friars and asked how they could get to heaven. So, he went to the pope and a Rule was written for them. The Rule we now live. That Rule says nothing about poverty. We cannot live in poverty and provide bread for the friars. We cannot live in poverty and take care of the poor. The fact is we cannot live in poverty and take care of our families. So, we do need to live what the Rule calls us to as that is our way to heaven. We do need to live lives of prayer, penance, and the works of mercy. Praised be Jesus forever.

May the Lord bless and lead us all.

Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,

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



## Unity of Wills...

by Janet Klasson, BSP

Jesus' prayer to the Father at the Last Supper: **"(May they) all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have**

**sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."** (John 17: 21-23)

Jesus spoke these words as part of the Last Supper discourse, a heart-wrenching prayer to his Father. It was his final hour, and every word he spoke bore the weight of eternity. Even in this short Scripture passage, we sense the tremendous longing in the heart of Jesus for unity among his followers. The words themselves seem to tremble on the page.

It is of cosmic importance that on his last night on earth, Jesus bequeathed to his followers the inner life of the Trinity—a unity of wills in perfect love—praying **"that they may be one, as we are one...so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."** This is the life of heaven and we are called to live it now as a sign to the world that God sent his only Son to die out of pure love for us. We need to ponder this deeply. Sins against unity, that is unity with the will of God, cause great damage to the Church and consequently to the world.

Lately we have heard of a serious disagreement between the bishops of Germany, and the Vatican. Too often these days, the word "schism" is heard in Catholic circles. My friends, if the Church herself cannot maintain unity, what hope is there for those who do not

believe in God? Unity is critical, now more than ever, a unity born in the humility of the manger.

In the Liturgy of the Hours is a reading from a letter to Diognetus which contains this line: "...it is by the Christians, detained in the world as in a prison, that the world is held together." Unity with the will of God and each other is a sacred and necessary duty for Christians.

*"Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others." —Philippians 2:2-4*

Several years ago our parish ladies group visited a Carmelite monastery in our diocese. We were blessed with a brief audience—through a grate—with the saintly prioress, Mother Teresa of Jesus (may she rest in peace). She spoke about life in a closed community. She did not sugar-coat it, emphasizing more than once the challenges of living

day in and day out with "the same 10 people." Yet, in spite of the challenges, they were a true community modeling a common unity. Did they always agree? Certainly not. Did they sometimes argue? Most likely. Were they living in unity? Absolutely! Their unity did not depend on agreement in earthly matters, but on loving obedience to the will of God in the bond of charity.

Those of us who try to live in the will of God know that



His will is not always easy to discern. That is why it is good to have a spiritual director, or priest, or someone spiritually mature enough to help with discernment. When in doubt, we cannot err in being obedient to those God has placed over us in authority.

Someone once asked St. Mother Theresa of Calcutta how we can know what the will of God is in any given situation. She gave a little smile and replied, "Wait and see what happens." That is the reply of one who lives in the fiat of the Blessed Virgin Mary, always docile to the movement of the Spirit.

Unity with the Will of God is what we must aspire to at all times. This has never been easy for us, for the shadow of the evil one is never far away. He loves to sow confusion and chaos, misunderstanding and the pride of self-righteousness, a righteousness that divides and seeks to conquer. There is no peace in this approach, only division. Therefore, we need to look carefully at the attitudes we hold—and especially the ones that hold us! Let us not be slaves to them, but always act out of love for those God sends us. Let our

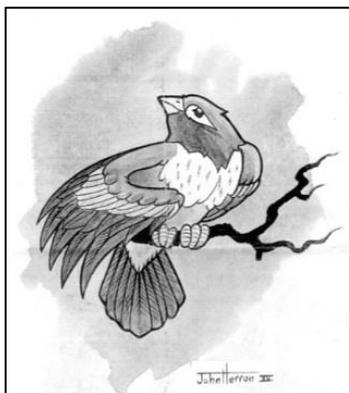
own thoughts and feelings take a back seat to the true inspiration of the Spirit in the bond of charity. Then we will be working for peace, not division.

Never has it been more urgent that we learn to live in God's will, to desire it above all else. It is the only way to peace and unity in families, in the Church, and in the world. God has given us many unimaginable graces in our day. We must re-double our efforts to be faithful, attentive, and docile to the Spirit. No one is safe outside of grace. Humility is key; pride will be our undoing. And when we fail, let us place all our trust in God who can, by his merciful grace, make what is bitter, sweet.

Peace has its source in the heart of God, which is perfect unity. Since prayer is communion with God, the more one prays, the more the fruits of peace and unity will flow.

We are children of light! We must not give in to the shadows. Light always dispels shadows. Let us stay firmly rooted in the truth of our faith. And in all things—charity.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada



## FROM THE 'SPARROW' Needs Met

Peace dear sparrows! The Holy Spirit leads in diversified ways. I am often taken by Him in my writings on courses that were not in my plans. Usually these unexpected courses turn out to make not only for good writing substance but also bring

a smile when I see the finished piece. This is one of those times.

When I was in my hospital bed this morning I was looking for a topic I could utilize. At the same instant I had on my mind some needs that I had to get met...notice I said, "I had to get met." The Spirit then unexpectedly had me do a word search for meeting those needs via Scripture. My search then provided me with about twenty (20) places in the Old and New Testaments to get started with (just to name a few). To make a long story short let me give you a couple of them:

**The LORD is my shepherd I shall not want.**  
(Psalm 23:1)

**And my God will supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.** (Philippians 4:19)



These two short excerpts, which are a synopsis of the collected twenty readings, state clearly and concisely that God will meet all of our needs because He is our protector and provider and that, of course, is a good thing! With my needs seemingly having been met with His reassurance I then turned to my initial task at hand—what to write?

OK now a little sparrow imagination. Imagine that we sparrows are on a hillside in Galilee. It is a sunny afternoon, and fishing boats dot the lake below. We are surrounded by crowds of jostling people, all intent on getting a few feet closer to the speaker. He is none other than Jesus of Nazareth, the miracle worker whose fame has spread throughout the land. Ah, there He is, sitting on a rock. Listen—He is speaking! "So I'm telling you, do not be anxious or worried about life—whether you will have enough food, or drink, or clothes to wear." He points to some sparrows flying overhead. "Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food, for your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you more valuable to Him than they?"

Jesus gestures toward some pale yellow lilies in the field. "Just look at those flowers. They don't work or clothe themselves, yet even Solomon with all his finery wasn't dressed as beautifully as they! And so," Jesus concludes, "don't worry about the future. Your heavenly Father knows you need these things. Trust

Him, and don't spoil today by worrying about tomorrow." What a powerful message for this sparrow and all sparrows! Its message rings clear for all times and is no less true today than when it was spoken many years ago. When will we sparrows learn to stop worrying and to trust in God? He's never failed us yet! This little poem says it well:

Said the Robin to the Sparrow, " I should really like to know

Why those anxious human beings rush about and worry so!"

Said the Sparrow to the Robin, "Friend, I think that it must be

that they have NO heavenly Father, such as cares for you and me."

Now we close with some words of wisdom from a 17th century Franciscan Saint that direct us with the spirit we need to focus on:

*"Consider the birds of the air (oh! my...), they come down to the ground to get food but fly*

## Deeper Insights

Peace my friends the little sparrows! Pondering over the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus and as Franciscans I believe that therein is a truth that is foundational to us who wish and strive to live a Gospel life. Let us begin our search for this Gospel truth.

First, we have no name for the rich man, although Catholics have traditionally named him "Dives," and we know from the Scriptures that he dressed and fared luxuriously every day. He had a good mind, made merry, rejoiced, and received good things in life. Presumably his house was elegant, and he drove the finest horses and carriages.

Eventually the rich man "died and was buried." We can assume that his funeral was a grand affair, with huge attendance and with eminent rabbis presiding and extolling his riches and good deeds done for other affluent people. But "in hell he lifted up his eyes"--how terrible! We sparrows can hardly comprehend the depths of what this means and shudder at such a plight befalling one of us. "Being in torments" suggests the ultimate in grief and misery. The formerly rich man was now utterly alone, with no company or comfort.

Let's consider why this man was lost. It was NOT because he was rich or because he could not have known how to prepare for death. He had access to the writings of Moses and the prophets. Nor was it because this man had good things on earth; God

*swiftly back into the air. Similarly the servants of God must stay on the earth only as long as is necessary and soar up quickly to heaven in spirit to praise and glorify God. Note too how careful birds are not to land in muddy places and how they avoid tumbling into the dirt. In like manner men must not violate themselves in things that defile the soul but soar aloft again in spirit to glorify the Most High God by their holy deeds."* (circa 1659)

—Sayings of Saint Joseph of Cupertino  
(G. Parisiani, Osimo, 1963)

The Spirit has led this wounded sparrow nicely and has given me these wonderful spiritual insights to share with all my dear sparrow friends and with that I can say by the grace of God...NEEDS MET! (SMILE!)

"In spite of my littleness, I can give to God my most tender affection."

—St. Therese, the Little Flower

doesn't give evil things in the afterlife just because people enjoy good things in this present life. He apparently trusted in his own righteousness and had his own selfish, covetous agenda. It was due to the pride of life that he dressed luxuriously and "fared sumptuously every day." He had respect of persons and despised the poor ("you lie there in in wretched poverty while I enjoy my wealth" is probably a thought that was not too far from the rich man's mind), and he showed no mercy or compassion on the suffering. The rich man was lost because he lived for himself instead of serving God and his fellow man.

The rich man might have profited from the below quote had he not been so self-involved in his pride-filled world and way of living:

"It is one thing to be lost, having no hope and without God in this world. But it's another thing to be that way in eternity. Prepare today for tomorrow!"

For all Christians, especially Franciscans worldwide, the directives we are to follow are found in the words of Jesus spoke to us in the Gospel. That these words give a clear and concise course of action we are to follow and that they are laid in stone. If we take the Divine concept of our treatment of our neighbor there are only two outcomes to "I was hungry...I was thirsty...etc." and whether we do or do not conform to His commandment to love are both acts of our

will. We sparrows know the outcome of each of those responses...let us choose wisely.

nothing.”

St. Francis of Assisi

“Let us begin again for up till now we have done

*pax et bonum*, Bro. Sparrow  
Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, N. Carolina

(Note: The bird image above was drawn by one of Bob Hall’s friends and fellow converts to the Lord. Used with permission.)



## 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** at <http://bspenance.org/forum/>. Hope to see you there!

### HANDBOOK OF THE ASSOCIATION...

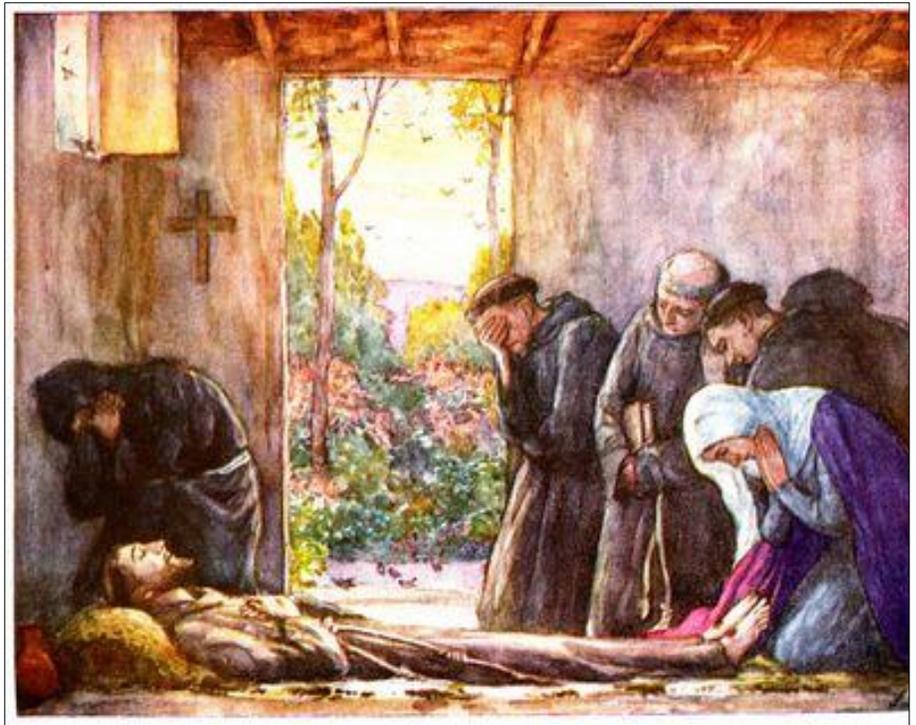
The BSP Handbook, titled *Stella Matutina: Handbook of The Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis* is now available for order. There is a link to the ordering page on our BSP homepage. You will need a credit card or a Paypal account to order. Cost is \$10.00 plus shipping.

## FEAST DAY OF ST. FRANCIS OCTOBER 4

As we approach the Feast of the Transitus of St. Francis on October 4, it is wonderful to consider this beautiful promise of Jesus to St. Francis, found in the “Little Flowers of St. Francis”.

***“I grant to you that every year on the day of your death you may go to Purgatory and by virtue of your Stigmata you may take from there and lead to Paradise all the souls of your Three Orders, that is, who have been very devoted to you, whom you may find there, so that you may be conformed to Me in death as you are in life.”***

If we are not yet convinced of our call to the Franciscan orders, perhaps this will assist with discernment! We add a prayer here that by God's mercy and through the intercession of St. Francis, all BSP members will die shortly *before* the feast of St. Francis and not shortly *after*, so that their time in Purgatory will be lessened through the mercy of God and the intercession of Father Francis. Amen!



# 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 [minncc03@gmail.com](mailto:minncc03@gmail.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*  
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**Welcome to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance!**

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



The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF  
PENANCE



of St. Francis

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