

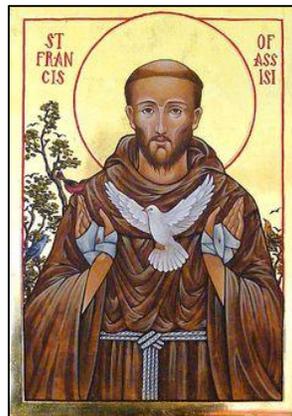


...IN THE WORLD, BUT NOT OF IT, FOR CHRIST!

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

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

3. St. Francis possessed the spirit of prophecy to such a degree that he could foretell the future and read the secrets of men’s hearts. He saw what went on in his absence as if it were present, and he often appeared to those who were far away. He was present when the Christian army was besieging Damietta, bearing the armor of faith, not that of war; and when he heard that they were preparing to attack, he was very upset and told his companion, “If they go into action today, God has revealed to me that it will be bad for the Christians. But if I say that, they will say I am a fool. And if I do not say it, my conscience will give me no rest. What do you think I should do?” His companions replied, “Brother, do not worry about being criticized. This will not be the first time you were called a fool. Obey your conscience and have more regard for God



than for human beings.” When he heard that, the saint jumped to his feet and brought his advice to the Christian army, telling them that they should not go into battle and that they would lose. True as his prophecy was, they made a joke of it and obstinately refused to turn back. They advanced and engaged in combat with the enemy, but the entire Christian army was routed, so that the action ended in disgrace, not in victory. Such havoc was wreaked on the Christian ranks that about six thousand men were killed or taken prisoners, and it was clear that the wisdom of a beggar was not to be scorned. As we read in Sacred Scripture, “There are times when a man of piety sees truth more clearly than seven sentinels high in a watch-tower” (Sir 37:18).

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier... Full of Grace

Reading I (Isaiah 7:10-14) Gospel (Luke 1:26-38)

In the Gospel reading today, we hear about the angel Gabriel coming to our Blessed Lady, and there are a couple of important things in this exchange with the angel. First of all, the greeting of the angel as he says to Our Lady, *Hail, full of grace*. We note that he does not call her “Mary” but rather he refers to her as though her name was simply *Full of Grace*. In other words, knowing that in ancient times a person’s name was thought to say something of the very essence of the person, who the person was and what it was that they were about, for the angel to greet Our Lady in this manner tells us the very essence of our Blessed Lady, that she is full of grace.

As she pondered what sort of greeting this might be, it is interesting that the angel then says to her, *Do not be afraid*. Not that she needed to be afraid because she was full of grace, and certainly not that she had to be afraid because there was an angel there (because the angel did not come for any sort of bad purpose), so the question would be why she would be afraid. It was merely a matter, once again, of that proper kind of filial fear. The filial fear, rather than the servile fear, is the one we have to have toward God. There are some people who are afraid of God, and so in servile fear they quake, if you will, when they think about coming close to God. Filial fear is the fear that we would offend God by one of our actions because we love Him so much we



would never want to do anything that would be offensive to Him. That is the kind of fear our Blessed Lady would have had, the proper kind of fear, knowing that here was someone who was sent from God to ask her something that she does not yet know what it is going to be, and the proper kind of fear that by her decision she might offend God, that she might in some way fail to do His Will. Of course, the grace was there to be able to do the Will of God perfectly, but Our Lady, knowing human weakness, realized that by her own self she certainly could choose the wrong thing. Now we know that Our Lady, because of grace, could not choose the wrong thing; it was not even possible for her. But she did have free will and she knew that if it was left to herself that she could choose the wrong thing. So that is where the fear is.

But then there is the next point: *You have found favor with God*, the angel says to her. Well, when we look at what God has done for each one of us, He has forgiven our sins (assuming we have availed ourselves of the beautiful sacrament of Confession) and therefore we are now filled with grace. We have not the fullness of grace, of course, that Our Lady had because she never had Original Sin and never once sinned in her entire life; but with our sins forgiven, our souls are in the state of grace and we have found favor with God.

So we need not be afraid, but it is precisely the problem that many of us face. Unfortunately, for most of us, it is not a filial fear but a servile fear. We are afraid to let go of our attachments. We are afraid to change our lives. We are afraid to stop sinning. That sounds absolutely ludicrous, but if you just take it to prayer and think about it for a minute you will understand it. We are afraid to stop sinning. It is a tragic thing, but we are not afraid of the devil and we are terrified of God.

The devil who hates us, we are not afraid of. God Who loves us, we are afraid of – in the wrong way. It makes no sense, and that is what we need to get turned around. We need to recognize that the evil one who hates our guts is the one who is lying to us and trying to get us to go away from God. He needs to be rejected. But instead it is all too often God Whom we reject because He calls us to greater holiness and we tell Him “no” because we like our things too much. “I don’t want to give up the TV. I don’t want to stop doing the things that I’m doing. I don’t want to give up all of my pleasures and all of my ease and all of my comfort. I don’t want to have to suffer at all.” Therefore, we tell God “no.” Yet when Satan comes along and says, “This will feel good! This will be pleasurable for you! This will make you happy!” tragically, we jump right into it and we do not fear him at all.

What we have to do is have Our Lady’s attitude: *Be it done unto me according to Your word*. The Word of God is Jesus Christ, and we need to allow God’s Word to be accomplished in us because we have been incorporated into that Word, that Word Who was obedient to God *even unto death*. All we have to do is be obedient, but we are afraid. So we need to listen once again to the angel’s words: *Do not be afraid*. There is nothing to fear because God does not want anything bad for us. We simply need to trust Him. We need to let go of our own self, and we need to put ourselves in His hands. There is nothing at all to fear from God because He loves us and we have found favor with Him. When we come to truly accept that and to believe it, then we can have Our Lady’s attitude; we can come before the Blessed Sacrament, and with no fear and no trepidation and no hesitation, we will actually be able to look right at the Lord and say, *Be it done unto me according to Your word*.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

Joy!

As we write this we are already filled with Christmas joy! Christmas isn’t here yet but the first Sunday in Advent opens the season of waiting. The Church calls us to wait, in joy, for the birth of the Lord. We wait for so many things in our life. The birth of a child. The coming of a vacation. For our families on so many occasions and for so many things. Now we wait on the coming of the Lord, and our hearts should be filled with joy. How can we not be filled with joy at the coming of our Lord?

Joy really starts there, and it should overflow into the rest of our lives. It might be worth reflecting on that for a moment in this special Season. This joy we feel at Christmas is important, and if we are faithful to the Lord it becomes a dominant theme in our lives, and we take it through the whole year. In this way we renew our focus on our faith in God at Christmas, and this faith is our joy. It inspires us to strive to be holy and upright, joyful, servants of the Lord.

Perhaps this is why St. Francis said his followers should always be joyful. It was this joy of faith that they were to reflect. Since we are fundamentally Franciscans and in the family of Francis just by reason of following the Rule he gave us we should all be joyful. We should cling



to our faith and let this joy in our faith overflow into every aspect of our lives. Especially in our adoration of the Lord, and our praise of God.

Scripture speaks often of this joy.

"I will sing your praises with the harp, O Holy One of Israel! My lips shall shout for joy as I sing your praises..." (Ps 71:22,23)

"For he remembered his holy word to his servant Abraham. And he led forth his people with joy; with shouts of joy, his chosen ones." (Ps 105:42,43)

This joy we carry makes life easier for us, and should make our death easier. St. Cyril of Alexandria says we should not leave this world spouting and pouting and concerned about staying here. We should be joyful to come to our end, and look forward to leaving this life with joy, because we are going to heaven! This is an easy thing to say but not so easy to conceive of for most of us, yet this message of St. Cyril is worth holding in our hearts.

This Christmas, joy in Our Lord and our faith, is also what makes living the Rule of 1221 a joy. Who would ever believe it? Joyful over what? Fasting? Abstinence? Simple living and simple dress? Over being a penitent? Yet that is what we should be as we know we are on the path to heaven. We have chosen to enter a narrow gate to heaven, and the gospel speaks of it. Our Lord said:

"Strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough." (Lk 13:24)

And this is so true even among those who come to the BSP. The vast majority of those who investigate this life decide against living it. So, blessed are we who persist, and what a joy that should be for us as this is the way that St. Francis gave the laity to attain their salvation. Prayerfully, we are on the way to heaven!

So, let us live the joy of our faith in our life, and Rule, and let this joy overflow to others in our lives. In closing we share some thoughts for you on Christmas Joy!

C - The birth of **C**hrist is here!

H - **H**old on to the things of God!

R - **R**eflect on the beauty of this season! Live the **R**ule with joy!

I - Be **I**nspired to know, love, and serve God in all things at all times!

S - Find **S**trength in the gospel and the call of the Lord, and living our Rule!

T - **T**ell everyone about Jesus!

M - **M**ary is our mother, a great joy, and Queen of heaven and earth!

A - **A**dvent calls us to wait on the Lord! Wait in joy!

S - **S**ing to God with a joyful **S**ong!

J - **J**esus is King of kings, and Lord of lords! Praise Him! Rejoice!

O - **O**pen your hearts to God!

Y - **Y**ou are precious to God, and a light to the world! Rejoice!

Merry Christmas to all!

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



NO GREATER LOVE by Paul Beery, BSP

"Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, for such was your good pleasure.'" (Luke 10:21)

"Tell me what is pleasing to God, and I will do it." Wow! If all God's children had that attitude, think what this world would be like! Those are the words of Kateri Tekakwitha, first American Indian saint who asked that question of the Jesuit "Blackrobes."

Our holy father St. Francis also had this attitude. I was thinking of him for I had a very Franciscan moment this morning. We feed the birds over winter, as God through Mother Nature provides for them the rest of the year. I guess He provides for them through us as well... Almost all are English sparrows, very street smart for they live in the inner city. The first bad snowfall usually triggers a response. I didn't wish to start feeding them today,

as the snow was not that heavy, and I was feeling lazy. I happened to walk by the window just in time to see a flock fly into their winter quarters. The sparrows remembered. There they sat on the bushes near the feeder looking hungrily at it and me, as though to fill me with guilt. It worked.

God our Father watches over all His creation. If He takes care of lowly sparrows, just think of what He does for us! When we try to live a life pleasing to Him, He is pleased with us. What a splendid reception we will have in heaven if we carry this childlike attitude to the end of our life! We too are like the lowly sparrow, and enjoy associating with the lowly of our own flock.

As the Incarnation draws near, I ponder on how this all came about. How God decided to become one of His lowly creatures after they had strayed, to show them the Way back. And what would it take? Humility and poverty. "Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." Francis understood like no one else the place of poverty in God's plan for mankind. When Jesus was born in a stable instead of the palace of a king, that's a pretty good clue.

I turned to the "Sacrum Commercium," a "charming allegory which tells of the search by St. Francis for Lady Poverty and of his espousal to her, the beloved of his heart." It was written in 1227, authorship uncertain, most likely John of Parma. It touches intimately on the Incarnation, and the role of humility and poverty in that great event. Here is a very different Christmas!

Blessed Francis, in the beginning of his conversion, as the true imitator and disciple of the Savior, threw himself, with all his zeal and desire, with firm determination, into the search for holy Poverty. Enthusiastically, blessed Francis strode through the village streets and the town market place, intently seeking her whom his heart loved. "Have you seen her whom my heart loves?" The people did not understand Francis. "Sir, we cannot understand a word you are saying." In those days the sons of Adam had neither the ability nor the desire either to converse with themselves or tell others about Poverty. They spoke as though they were ignorant of Poverty, and swore they knew her not.

Then blessed Francis said, "I will go to the wise and the great and speak with them." But when he had spoken to them, they replied even more roughly, saying, "What is this new doctrine that you bring to our ears? Our pleasure is to enjoy good things and abound in riches. That is the sensible attitude, for our lifetime is brief and troublesome, and death offers no refreshment. Better to eat, drink and be merry while yet we live."

When blessed Francis heard this, his soul was stunned. With gratitude to God he said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, for such was your good pleasure. O Lord, the Father and Ruler of my life, do not abandon me to the company of men who tempt me to fall into such a corrupt life. Rather, grant your grace that I may find what I seek, for I am your servant, the son of your handmaid."

Leaving the city with haste, blessed Francis beheld two serious old men, deep sorrow furrowing their brows. One was saying to the other, "To whom should I look if not to one who is little and poor, of a contrite spirit, hearing my words with reverence?" And the other said, "We brought nothing into the world when we entered it, and it is absolutely certain

that we can take nothing out when we leave it. Let us be content with sufficient food and clothing."

When blessed Francis drew near, he asked them, "Please show me where Lady Poverty dwells, for I am faint with love of her." They answered, "Good brother, we have sat here since time immemorial, and often have we seen her pass by, for many have sought her, many courted her. But too often she returns alone, weeping bitterly. Our only reply was, 'Have patience; the righteous love you.' To think upon her, brother, is to attain peace of soul."

With such wonderful advice, blessed Francis went forth and chose some companions who would be faithful to him. He said to them, "Come. Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the home of Lady Poverty." She met them saying, "Tell me why you have come, brothers, and what prompted you to abandon so quickly the valley of miseries and come to the mountain of purity. As you can see, I am little and poor, without comfort."

They replied, "We desire to be made servants of the Lord of Might, who is the King of Glory. We have learned that you are the Queen of the virtues. Be with us as we follow the Way to the King of Glory as you were with Him when He deigned to visit those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death. Grant that we may be at peace with you, and our salvation is assured; for in this way will we be accepted by Him who redeemed us through you. The King abandoned His house and cast off His heritage, and thus did He descend from His royal throne, bent on finding you. He left all the choirs of angels, the noble powers of heaven, and descended to the earth below in search of you. For you He fell prostrate in the mire of the streets and dwelt in the land of darkness, a subject of death. Yet all living things shudder to think of you. But the Lord and Master has taken you to Himself, and honored you as His spouse. Though countless millions hate you still, it matters not, for you live freely in the firm dwelling place of the glory of Christ."

Blessed Francis praised her further saying, "The Incarnate Son of the Most High Father consorted with you alone upon the earth and proved Himself most faithful to you in all things. Before He had even left the home of glory, you were preparing a fitting place for Him, a throne upon which He could sit, a bed-chamber for His rest, namely, the poorest of virgins. From Mary's womb He came forth into the world. You attended him faithfully at His birth, offering Him not delights but a place well pleasing to Him. The Evangelist says He was laid in a manger, since there was no room at the inn. And this it always was."

"Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in piercing cold. In that hour

vouchsafe, O my God, to hear my prayer and grant my desires, through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ,

and of His Blessed Mother. Amen." (Christmas Anticipation Prayer)

Paul Beery BSP, Morning Star Chapter, Minnesota



Mary's Army by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the Gospel Reading, Nativity

So (the shepherds) went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. (Luke 2:16)

By God's design, Mary remained largely hidden in Scripture. In our day, the expectation of many is that the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart is near and will usher in the Kingdom of the Divine Will, the Sabbath rest, the Era of Peace. Oh Mother! How we long for peace! May God grant it!

Providentially, a few Marian graces have lined up for me recently. December 12, feast of Our Lady of Tepeyac (Guadalupe) will mark the 10th anniversary of my total consecration to Mary. For the last nine years I have used St. Louis de Montfort's consecration preparation to renew my consecration annually. This year, as I missed my regular start date, I decided to use the simpler format of "33 Days to Morning Glory". This book had been recommended to me numerous times over the years, but I always went back to de Montfort. This year, am I ever glad I missed my start date! "33 Days" is a jewel that cites the superb teachings of St. Louis de Montfort, St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Mother Teresa, and St. John Paul II to lead us to Jesus through the bosom of our Mother.

A second grace I received that dovetails quite beautifully with it is another book that was recommended to me, which I began reading at about the same time I started "33 Days". It is Fr. Emil Neubert's "My Ideal: Jesus, Son of Mary". I must say I am stunned at the parallels as I go along. Fr. Neubert's book goes even further and has Jesus speaking about his Mother in terms so loving that the reader soon realizes that they can never love Mary enough to please Jesus. The more we love her, the more pleased he is. I even got the feeling as I read, that the reason he spent his first 30 years with her in a hidden life is that he was reluctant to leave the little sanctuary of her presence, that oasis of perfect love. He says in the book that he was completely docile to her wishes during that whole time. It gave me an inkling into what is not said in Scripture about the events of the wedding at Cana. I felt that Jesus was waiting for her go-ahead to launch his public mission, and he got it that night at the wedding.

These two books come to me on the heels of being introduced to the Flame of Love devotion as given to



Elizabeth Kindelmann (which has an Imprimatur), as well as a renewal of my interest in the Divine Will writings of Luisa Piccarreta (which also have an Imprimatur). I see Mary's golden thread leading me gently forward.

All this has occurred while we are on the cusp of the Year of Mercy. Certainly this is no coincidence. The words of Jesus to St. Faustina have been coming back to me often: "He who refuses to pass through the door of My mercy must pass through the door of My justice." (Diary 1146). The fact that "doors of mercy" are opening in every diocese in the world on December 8, feast of the Immaculate Conception could be likened to a providential earthquake launching a tsunami of mercy. I believe this Year of Mercy may be precisely what Jesus is referring to in his words to St. Faustina.

Each one of these graces alone would be remarkable. The fact that each one has come to me one after the other is quite astounding. I can't help but think of the Scripture verse from Romans 5:20: "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more." Yes, the times are dark and sin has increased unimaginably. But God has not left us orphaned. He has reserved graces specifically for this time. We are at war with the principalities and powers, as you well know, dear friends. But God has taken out the big guns and lots of 'em! All he needs are faithful, obedient soldiers willing to take up the arms. What a tragedy if these powerful weapons are left to lie on the ground unused and trampled underfoot. Let us not be afraid, under the leadership and protection of our General, the Blessed Virgin, to pick them up and use them to crush the head of the enemy.

Before I expand on this list of weapons I want to counsel you not to be intimidated by the demands of these graces. We are not necessarily called to do each one perfectly, but to discern our calling and live that grace as best we can. Many of us are already living some of these graces. Then let's live them better. If you can add more, then do, but be comforted knowing that God knows our limitations. Ask for more grace at every Communion and you will be amazed at how much you can do.

- Certainly the fasting and prayer of the Rule are tremendous graces for the age, having been our boot camp, training us in the ways of discipline over the years. An army must, of course, be disciplined.
- The rosary is an absolute necessity, daily recitation of at least 5 decades. Strength and endurance.
- The chaplet of Divine Mercy is another necessity especially in this Year of Mercy. Compassion. A soldier without compassion is a danger to all.
- Frequent Confession and Communion are presupposed in the group reading this article, but again, God knows our limitations of job, family, health. But all of us can make a daily examination of conscience and act of spiritual communion. God will honor us for our efforts. Purification and good nourishment.
- If we are serious about being in Mary's army, then the weapon of Total Consecration is a must, either through St. Louis de Montfort's program or the "33 Days" book. In the BSP we renew our consecration daily. The daily consecration is the way we live our daily relationship with our Mother, but once a year—kind of like a birthday—we really show her (and ourselves) what she means to us by renewing our consecration in a more formal way. The Consecration is the soldier's armor and shield, and puts us in our Mother's little sanctuary of love and safety.
- If you only pick up one of the other weapons, let it be adding to your Hail Mary's the Flame of Love prayer. "...Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, **spread the effect of grace of thy Flame of Love over all of humanity**, now and at the hour of our death. Amen." I often pray just this phrase in the night if I can't sleep. Our Lady told Elizabeth Kindelmann that this prayer "blinds satan". That is a powerful promise. And it only adds about five minutes to the rosary, a small price for so great a promise. Sniper training.
- If you still need to be convinced how critical Mary is to God's plan for the salvation of the world, "My Ideal..." is the book to read. But even if you think you already know that, read it anyway. You will be amazed and delighted. Loyalty to your commanding officer.
- The Divine Will teachings are an unbelievable grace for our age, they are the source of a new and divine holiness. I cannot do justice to it in one line, so I am including links and resources further on in this article. Special forces training.

As I said these weapons are available and are meant to be picked up. We can become proficient in any or all of them, depending on how much damage we want to inflict on the enemy. The beauty of the Divine Will

teachings is that we bring Mary and Jesus into each moment and so our whole day becomes a prayer and a weapon. I am sure there are many more graces and weapons, but this is the program I feel I have been put on so that is the one I am sharing. Quite likely many of you are already on a plan, having been given orders from your General, and that's wonderful, but I really feel these are the Big Guns!

Here are some links to jump-start your training:

- Free Montfortian consecration materials: <http://www.myconsecration.org>
- "33 Days to Morning Glory" book or ebook: <http://tinyurl.com/qf3bhfe>
- Flame of Love resources: <http://www.theflameoflove.org/> out of Montreal has a 96 page booklet that has all the essential points for under \$1 USD. Or you may visit the US site at <https://www.flameoflove.us/order/> and request a free copy of the full diary of Elizabeth Kindelmann. Both sites have a lot of information on the Flame of Love devotion.
- "My Ideal: Jesus Son of Mary" book or ebook: <http://tinyurl.com/nbwu4yw>
- Anthony Mullen's summary of God's plan as outlined in "My Ideal": <http://tinyurl.com/jlhgw17>
- Finally, the Divine Will. For a really good overview please see Daniel O'Connor's free pdf book, *The Crown and Completion of All Sanctity*: <http://tinyurl.com/hv7cq8>. For unsurpassed teachings on Luisa's writings, Fr. Robert Young has offered Saturday morning podcasts on the Divine Will for several years on <http://radiomaria.us/>. Not to be missed is his *Introduction to the Divine Will* at <http://tinyurl.com/zxbf57d> in which he explains his own journey and gives proofs of the orthodoxy of the devotion. Fr. Robert Young's other podcasts on the Divine Will may be accessed on Radio Maria or on <http://www.divinewilltallahassee.com/radio-archives>, which also includes older podcasts. If you find there are too many and you despair of ever getting to all of them, Fr. Young refers to the Twelfth Volume of Luisa's writings as the critical piece. If you only listen to one group of podcasts let it be those. The Volume number is referenced in the title. One of the most powerful prayers given to Luisa is the *24 Hour of the Passion* at <http://tinyurl.com/gtq86np> which have been prayed by many souls over the last century and I believe should be prayed by everyone at least once. Fr. Iannuzzi explains their efficacy here <http://tinyurl.com/h7cgj6o>.

Dear friends we are in the time of times, and we have been purposed by God for these times. Let us pray not to "flee for fear of the wolves" but to raise our arms in

prayer using all the powerful weapons our General is pleased to extend to us. Let the wolves flee from us for we are under the leadership and protection of Jesus and Mary, and completely surrendered to them. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

I will end with an excerpt from "My Ideal":

*(Mary) "You are beginning to understand by what means you may carry on your Apostolate, but you are far from understanding with what **confidence** you should go about it...What can you do? By yourself, nothing. With me, wonderful things. Was it not because He who is mighty looked upon the nothingness of His handmaid that He accomplished great things in her? Have you never read that 'the foolish things of the world, God has chosen to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world God has chosen to confound the strong?' Listen to my words and meditate upon them. I want you to understand two truths, which will give you an invincible Faith in the success of your mission, a Faith which will move mountains.*

"To begin with, remember that your Apostolate is my Apostolate, and that your interests are mine. It was to me, not to you, that God confided the mission of crushing the serpent's head and of establishing the Kingdom of my Son in the world; you only participate in my mission. I am the Commandress-

in-Chief of the Army of Christ; you are merely my soldier. It is my children not yours, who must be saved. Does not a mother desire the salvation of her children much more ardently than a stranger would? Does not the General wish for victory much more intensely than a private? Are not the interests of Jesus infinitely more precious to me than to you?

..."Offer your prayers and sufferings to Jesus through my hands so that my intentions for your Apostolate may be realized. Before starting anything, pray to me and see what my intentions may be, so that you may act as my instrument. (Then) begin with supreme confidence in your success, because it is I who am working through you. Be careful not to let your ideas take the place of mine...You will be certain of success only if you persist in the disposition of acting according to my intentions."

Finally, dear friends, remember that we have nothing to fear. The Mother of Mercy is leading this ragtag band of Eucharistic warriors! As Marino Restrepo said in one of his talks, we are not on the *defensive*, we are on the *offensive*. Mary's army wins. She crushes the head of the serpent with her heel. It's go-time Brothers and Sisters! Let's roll!

Holy Mary, Mother of God, spread the effect of grace of Thy Flame of Love over all of humanity, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

From www.pelianitoblog.wordpress.com

(Note: this web address changed in October. Please update your bookmark.)

Ezekiel 9:3-6 The Lord called to the man clothed in linen, who had the writing-case at his side, and said to him, 'Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it.' To the others he said in my hearing, 'Pass through the city after him, and kill; your eye shall not spare, and you shall show no pity. Cut down old men, young men and young women, little children and women, but touch no one who has the mark. And begin at my sanctuary.

"My child, weep and wail, sigh and groan over what sin has purchased for the world. For it has purchased annihilation many times over. Yet I tell you, do not despair; remain in hope. Pray for all, but especially those who will die suddenly. The greatest tragedy of all is a lost soul, and so many have no one to pray for them. My little warriors, you have much work to do. Do not let one of my little ones be lost for lack of prayer. I am granting many graces. Ask and you shall receive—grace upon grace—so that your work for souls will bear abundant fruit. Children, PRAY, and offer sacrifices. Multiply them in the Divine Will and you will see miracles. The floodgates have been opened. Give me everything and I will give you more than you can imagine!"

O my beloved Father, grace upon grace! In the divine will grant us all we need to complete the task set before us. We praise you and thank you for calling us and equipping us for this important work. Jesus we trust in you—save souls! Amen.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada

(The messages on the Pelianito Journal blog are the fruit of Janet's lectio divina. She submits all messages to her spiritual director, a Catholic priest. You may read his remarks here: <https://pelianitoblog.wordpress.com/about-2/on-private-revelation/>.)





FROM THE 'SPARROW'

St. Therese & the Christmas Sparrows...

The winter storm with gusts of wind filled snow was falling outside of his house.. The windows looked over the small valley from atop of the hill. With the curtains pulled open he had a long look at the night view of this rural setting with the houses scattered about the valley with a Catholic Church set in the middle. Cars were coming to the Church and people were making their way into the Church on this Christmas Eve. It was already drawing close to the start of the midnight Mass. For years it had been a delight of his to prepare to go to the midnight Mass with his wife. But for some time he had withdrawn himself from the spiritual world. It was the problem he had when he tried to equate how the Glorious Son of God would lower himself to become as one of His lowly creatures? The Incarnation did not fit seemingly into reality as he saw it. He could hear his wife getting ready to leave on the short drive down to the Church. She stopped in the doorway with a look of invitation on her face but he shook his head no and she quietly went out the door without him. He sat quietly alone in the living room.

Upon the fireplace mantle sat three pictures that his wife deeply loved and at one time he himself had such a fervor for them. On the left of the mantle sat the picture of St. Michael the Archangel, in the middle was St. Therese of Lisieux, and to the right was St. Francis of Assisi. He stared at the pictures, there was a deep feeling of how he wished that the three powerful Saints could answer him and give solution to this problem that so surely blocked his faith.

He focused on the picture of St. Therese. As he stared he remembered her words in *The Story of a Soul*, from Psalm 101:8 "I have watched, and am become as a sparrow all alone on the housetop." Yes, that was how he felt "...a sparrow all alone..." with the Lord far away...it didn't matter...he had lost faith...it was just one stormy night in his troubled soul.

There came a plop, plop, plop against the picture window. He could see little wings flashing against the window and falling backwards into the snow as more sparrows flew against the window. The poor little sparrows had seen the bright lights and fire coming through the night to them. In their flight through the storm they had headed directly towards the light and warm shelter not realizing in their haste that there was glass between the sought after sanctuary and themselves. They kept getting up on their legs and trying again and again to penetrate the unseen barrier to the place of their survival, inside, where the light was.

The man, wanting to help, ran and opened the garage door and then went to the fallen and flaying sparrows as he tried with his outstretched arms to wave and herd them towards the open garage and the waiting warmth. But try as he might the more he urged the sparrows the more frightened of him they became and scattered from the man. In their little minds they could not fathom that this huge man was really trying to help them.

The man, who was turning cold himself, wanted so much to help these defenseless creatures and in his desperation he thought to himself, "If only I could become a little sparrow, then I could speak to them as one of them, then they'd understand that I was there only to help them. Then they could follow me in to the safety of the inviting garage and be saved from the storm." At that moment the Church bells began to ring out down in the valley the man looked he realized that he'd found the truth at that moment. That was the answer of why the Son of God left His throne in heaven and became one of us "little sparrows" so as He could lead us all into the Kingdom of God the Father, and without this gift from the Holy Spirit we'd have stayed lost in our sins. The man slowly sank to his knees in the snow in total submission to the faith that God had showed to him this Christmas Eve. After praying to the Lord in gratitude he looked up and noticed all the sparrows but one had flown away into the night. The remaining lone sparrow was moving into the dark, dragging his crippled wing from where he'd flown into the window and could no longer fly.

The man started to rise to help the "lone sparrow" but his eyes tried to focus in the blinding and swirling snow. There were figures shrouded at the edge of darkness. One figure leaned down and cupped the sparrow in her right hand and he saw the face of St. Therese as she stood and showed the little wounded sparrow to St. Francis who made the Sign of the Cross over the little bird. Both turned to follow St. Joseph who was leading sister donkey down the side of the hill with the Virgin Mary riding atop. It was hard to focus in the swirling and blinding snow but it seemed like he was seeing a vision of a huge multitude of Angels and Saints that followed the pair of lowly travelers and sister donkey as they made their way towards the Church below. Then St. Michael appeared and with a firm, yet fierce gaze, pointed back at his house.

The man turned and looked back though the window of his house and he could clearly see the three Saints pictures on the mantle but his gaze was drawn to the far wall where the picture of the Divine Mercy hung. The rays that symbolized Jesus' blood and water, seemed to come out through the window and pass through him and continued on down through the valley where they

came to rest on the Church. In that instant the vision ended. The man knew fully what the vision meant. It was his, and everyone else's, embracing of the Incarnation and Virgin Birth that would lead us to know that He is "BROTHER SPARROW" and the Christ Child who would lead us into the safety of His Father's kingdom. He rose from the snow and hurriedly went to his car and with great anticipation drove down to the Church to join in that throng of Brothers and Sisters

who would greet the Christ Child this grace-filled night.
"The Lord Jesus said, 'Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? ...Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows.'" (Luke 12:6-7)

Pax et bonum

"a little Franciscan wounded sparrow"

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, N. Carolina

MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

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



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.



*Come let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord!*

*"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."
(Luke 2:7)*

May the gentle peace of the Holy Family and the blessings of Father Francis be with you and yours this holy Christmas and throughout the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE OF ST. FRANCIS

A.k.a. BSP, is a non-profit Private Association of the Faithful, which is dedicated to renewing the ancient way of penance as contained in the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of 1221 for lay people in our modern world. We have the blessing of the Catholic Church to do this through several of its Archbishops, Bishops, and priests. If you are bound by another Rule of life in another profession of the way of St. Francis that does not permit you to enter other religious families you are nonetheless invited to add the elements of this beautiful way of life that Saint Francis of Assisi gave us to the lifestyle of your profession.

All members, and Franciscans, are welcome to submit articles for consideration for inclusion in this newsletter if they are directed towards the spiritual formation of members or are the outgrowth of the lifestyle of the Association. Just send them to the BSP at minncc@aol.com. Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends or neighbors. It is intended to be the primary monthly communication of the Association, and ongoing formation for all members and friends. And if you can find it in your heart and in your budget remember that donations to the BSP are used strictly to promote the lifestyle and are tax deductible.

We remain, always, sincerely yours in the love of Jesus Christ!

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP, Editors



Welcome to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance!

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

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