



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

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

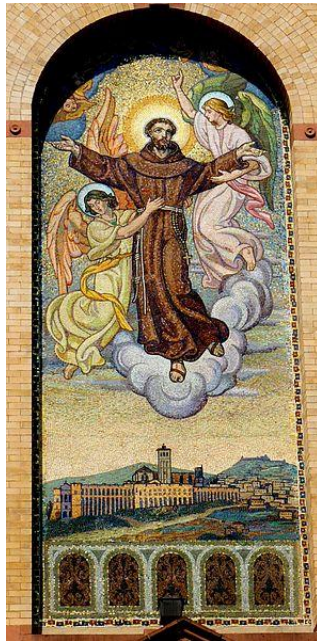
Some of the miracles which took place after St. Francis' death

III. Those Whom Francis Saved from the Danger of Death

1. Near Rome a nobleman named Radulfo and his wife who was a very devout woman gave hospitality to some of the friars out of reverence and love for St. Francis. That night one of the sentries fell asleep at the top of a tower where he was resting on a bundle of wood which had been left in a niche in the wall. Suddenly the bundle went to pieces and the sentry fell on the roof of the palace and from there to the ground. The whole household was roused at the sound of the crash and when they realized that the sentry had fallen, the owner of the castle and his wife came running with the friars. The man who had fallen was so fast asleep that he did not wake up even at the second fall or when they all gathered round him shouting. Eventually he woke up as they tried to drag him along, and he complained that he had lost some sleep, because he had been resting peacefully in St. Francis' embrace. When they told him how he had fallen and he realized that he was on the ground, not where he had been resting at the top of the tower, he was dumbfounded. He had no recollection of anything having happened, yet he could not deny it. Then he made a promise before them all to do penance out of reverence for God and St. Francis.

2. At Pofi in Campania a priest whose name was Thomas went out to fix the mill which belonged to his church. As he walked by the canal, where there was a strong current and the water was deep, he fell in accidentally and was caught in the water-wheel. He lay there face upwards, imprisoned by the timbers, with the water streaming over his mouth. He could not say a word, but he invoked St. Francis mournfully with all his heart. He was there for a long time and his companions had given up hope for him, when they

managed to force the mill backwards, so that he was thrown clear and floundered about in the water, beating his arms. Then a Friar Minor dressed in a white habit, tied with a cord, gently took him by the arm and led him out of the water, telling him, "I am St. Francis, to whom you appealed." The priest was stupefied at his escape and he tried to kiss the saint's footprints. He ran about anxiously, asking his companions, "Where is he? Where did the saint go? Which way?" They were all terrified and fell to the ground, acclaiming God's glorious deeds and the merits of his lowly servant.



3. A number of young boys from Celano went out to gather herbs in a field where there was an abandoned well with about twelve feet of water which was surrounded by a thick growth of herbs at the top. The boys separated and were running about the field, when without warning one of them stumbled into the well. As he fell into the depths, he had recourse to St. Francis in his heart, calling to him with complete confidence, "St. Francis, help me." The others looked all over the place for him and ran about shouting and crying in search of him. When they discovered that he had fallen into the well, they ran back to the town for help and explained what had happened. They returned with a crowd of people and one of the men went down the well on a rope; there he found the boy quite unharmed, resting on the surface of the water. When they pulled him out, he told them all, "When I fell in, I invoked the protection of St. Francis and he was there immediately to help me. He put out his hands and caught me gently and never left me until he brought me out of the well, with your help."

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

Reading (1 Kings 10:1-10) Gospel (St. Mark 7:14-23)

Our Lord tells us today that it is from within the heart that come the things which will defile us. And so it is all the evil things that we have stored up within. This is why it is so critically important that we are willing to open our hearts and allow Our Lord into our hearts in prayer, so that these things can be purified, so that they can be removed from within us. But, of course, the problem we all face is that we are afraid to look at these things. They are not pleasant. We do not like to think of ourselves in ways that are not good, and we do not like to have to deal with this stuff. Yet, at the same time, if we realize that this is really there, why would we want to keep it there?

Sometimes people like to keep it there because they like the sin, but that is not a good reason if we are going to claim to be Christian people. If we are going to be followers of the Lord, we have to get rid of everything that is not of God. We realize that to open our hearts means that all of those wounds in there are going to be exposed, but those need to be healed also, because if they are not, what we do is keep Jesus at an arm's distance. We do not allow Him into our hearts and we do not love Him with our hearts because we are afraid to let Him in, we are afraid we are going to get hurt, and we are afraid He is going to tell us that we have to change our lives.

Well, He is not going to hurt us; we can be guaranteed of that. He will tell us to change our lives; we can be guaranteed of that too. But it does not necessarily mean external changes, because many of us are pretty good at hiding these ugly things that are inside and so the external parts seem to be pretty good. But it is what is on the inside that needs to change. The dispositions, the desires, the attitudes, all of these sorts of things need to change. In doing so, of course, the external things will change to some degree. We will be far more peaceful, we will be more gentle, we will be more charitable, and all these different virtues that we need to work on.

The fact of the matter is that if any of these ugly things are inside, they are going to be causing us problems. Even if we do not act on them externally, they are still there. For instance, Our Lord talks about unchastity. If there is an individual that has an unchaste spirit inside, what happens? It does not mean that he is going to commit adultery, but it means that he may be looking

at persons of the opposite sex in an inappropriate way. It may mean that he is desiring somebody in an inappropriate way. It does not mean he is actually going to do something physically, but you can see the disposition. It is playing with fire. It is not good because if we are going to allow those things to be there, number one, there is a possibility that we might act on it; and, number two, we have to recognize that these things are sins in and of themselves. It may not be as big of a sin as if we actually carried out what the desire might be, but the fact is that these things are in and of themselves sinful – and they need to go.

We are called to be holy. We are not called to look holy. We are not called to act holy. We are called to be holy. That is what God wants from us. We need to get rid of everything that will defile us, everything that strips us of holiness, and that is what comes from the heart. That is why we need to be willing to open our hearts in prayer. We need to face the painful things and the ugly things that are in there because Our Lord wants to make our hearts similar to His and there is nothing ugly in His heart. There is nothing there that is painful, so we have to work on the wounds so they can heal. We need to get rid of these things that defile us, so that we can be truly holy, so that the things which come from within are things of Christ. In this way, we will not only act holy, but we will truly be holy. Then we will have true freedom.

If we do not allow the Lord into our hearts and we keep all of these things in, we are slaves to all of these things. We do not have control over them. The dispositions and the attitudes and the desires, they are going to pop up whether you want them to be there or not. But if we can work on them and get rid of them, then we are free. We are no longer slaves to these ugly things that are within. So it is all to our benefit. Not only do we get rid of the things that defile us, but it gives us a more pure heart so that we can love God and love neighbor more perfectly, so that we can be at peace, and so that we can have the fulfillment for which we were created, so that we can be the persons God made us to be.

That is what occurs if we are willing to let Him in. That is why we need to come before Him every single day and sit ourselves down before Him in prayer and open our hearts and let Him in, so that He can heal us and purify us so that we can love more perfectly.

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... THE PILOT



Dear members,

Years ago Linda Curtiss, a beloved member who lives in Mississippi, gave us this story. As we were considering what we might put in the newsletter this month we found it and it is

worth reading. It is a cute story with a very major message for all of us.

The Pilot

Years ago, I was enthralled as I listened to a pastor who for several years had faithfully served the church. His responsibilities had taken him all over this country. As he concluded his message, he told one of the most frightening yet thought-provoking stories I have ever heard. I assumed it was a true story but even if it wasn't it was terrific.

He said he was on a long flight from one place to another. His first warning of approaching problems came when the sign on the airplane flashed on: "Fasten your seat belts." Then, after a while, a calm voice said, "We shall not be serving the beverages at this time as we are expecting a little turbulence. Please be sure your seat belt is fastened."

As he looked around the aircraft, it became obvious that many of the passengers were becoming apprehensive. Later, the voice of the announcer said, "We are so sorry that we are unable to serve the meal at this time. The turbulence is still ahead of us." And then the storm broke. The ominous cracks of thunder could be heard even above the roar of the engines. Lightning lit up the darkening skies, and within moments that great plane was like a cork tossed around on a celestial ocean. One moment the airplane was lifted on terrific currents of air; the next, it dropped as if it were about to crash.

The pastor confessed that he shared the discomfort and fear of those around him. He said, "As I looked around the plane, I could see that nearly all the passengers were upset and alarmed. Some were praying. The future was ominous and many were wondering if the plane would make it through the storm.

And then, he saw a little girl. Apparently the storm meant nothing to her. She had tucked her feet beneath her as she sat on her seat; she was reading a book and everything within her small world was calm and orderly. Sometimes she closed her eyes, then she would read again; then she would straighten her legs, but worry and fear were not in her world. When the plane was being buffeted by the terrible storm, when it lurched this way and that, as it rose and fell with frightening severity, when all the adults were scared half to death, that marvelous child was completely composed and unafraid. The pastor could hardly believe his eyes.

It was not surprising therefore, that when the plane finally reached its destination and all the passengers were hurrying to disembark, the pastor lingered to speak to the girl whom he had watched for such a long time. Having commented about the storm and behavior of the plane, he asked why she had not been afraid. The sweet child replied, "Sir, my dad is the pilot, and he is taking me home."

There are many kinds of storms that buffet all of us. On top of that we struggle day to day to live our Rule with dedication. Much is demanded of us and the Lord said that those to whom much is given much is expected. So, much is expected of us. Physical, mental, financial, domestic, and many other storms can easily and quickly darken our skies and throw our plane into uncontrollable movement. We have all known such times, and let us be honest and confess, it is much easier to be at rest when our feet are on the ground than when we are being tossed about a darkened sky.

So, we need to remember: God is the Pilot. He is in control of everything, and he is taking us home. Don't worry.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him and he will make straight your paths." Proverbs 3:4-5

May the Lord bless and lead us all! He surely will if we strive to serve Him and love Him as He deserves.

Thank you Linda! 😊

Yours in Christ, now and always!

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





Pray for the Church... by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First reading, Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

**'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.'** (Isaiah 6:1-3)

Our Novice 2 lessons include this assignment, meant to be carried through to profession and for the rest of our lives: *"Pray daily for the Holy Father, our bishops, spiritual assistants, your spiritual director, your pastor(s), all Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis, all sinners, and yourself."*

Indeed, God is counting on our daily prayers for the Church, and for all those in leadership. I realize I am preaching to the choir, but it doesn't hurt to highlight this critical duty of ours every so often. There is no end of crises in the Church and in society these days. The recent abominable, murderous law passed in New York allowing for abortion up to birth and potentially beyond is just one example. The UN itself has factions that threaten to make Church teachings "crimes against humanity" using terms like, "forced pregnancy" to justify abortion on demand at any stage. That is just to mention one issue. There are many others, of course.

Within the Church itself, there is no end to the need for prayer as we are reminded constantly. This month, there will be an "anti-abuse" meeting at the Vatican from Feb. 21-24. We penitents should consider how we can support this meeting with our prayers and sacrifices. In addition, Pope Francis is endeavoring to reshape the Roman Curia and the College of Cardinals. May the Holy Spirit lead and guide him! Again, let us support him with our prayers. As Franciscans we can never fail when we echo the exhortation of St. Francis that as of yet we have done little or nothing. Yes, we can always do more!

But more does not always mean spending more time praying. Perhaps it just means doing the things we

already do better and with the firm intention of uniting our paltry efforts with the Divine Will.

For instance, one of the little prayers we BSP members pray so often that we may be in danger of taking it for granted, is the Glory Be. I recently listened to one of Fr. Robert Young's talks on the life and writings of Luisa Piccarreta recently (found at <https://divinewilllife.org>). She once had a vision of the whole heavenly court as they praised God by intoning the first part of that prayer: "Glory Be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit..." She then felt a strong call to respond: "...as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen." Jesus then explained to her that by participating in the Divine Will with the angels and saints in the ongoing praise of God in heaven, she was able to connect heaven to earth and earth to heaven in the eternal act of praise that all creatures owe to their Creator-God.

This is certainly worth pondering. Since hearing that, I have found it brings new life and an ever-more glorious mission to this little, eternally powerful, often-repeated prayer. This little prayer in the Divine Will, is a bridge of praise connecting the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant for the glory of God and serves to hasten the coming of His kingdom.

In addition, praise of the Lord poisons the air for demons. Let us pray this little but mighty prayer with renewed fervor, in concert with the Church Triumphant, that evil may be defeated in our broken world. May His kingdom come and come quickly.

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada

"Character building should not be based solely on the eradication of evil, for it should stress even more the cultivation of virtue. Mere asceticism without love of God is pride; it is possible to concentrate so hard on humiliating ourselves that we become proud of our humility, and to concentrate so intently on eradicating evil as to make our purity nothing but a condemnation of others."

—Archbishop Fulton Sheen (On Being Human)



FROM THE 'SPARROW' St. Francis and the Glory of Grace



Peace to all the little sparrows! St. Francis saw clearly God's saving plan for us through our collective faith in Christ and that it should cause in us an overwhelming sense of heartfelt thanks. Ah, but to receive thanks is not the only reason that God saves us. In Christ, God receives children to the praise of the glory of His grace.

A clear and concise mind that St. Francis had of this concept is found in one of his prayers: "Most High and glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart. Give me a right faith, certain hope, and perfect charity, good sense and knowledge, O Lord, that I may fulfill Thy holy and true command." Francis used the phrase, "Most High and glorious God" because this is how he understood God to be...the glorious One! He left no room for any other deity with his declaration of the Most High One. We would do well to follow the Poverello's lead on this matter.

The grace of God is glorious and NOT cheap. It is costly in that it demands obedience to Christ. In costly grace we heed the call of Christ to follow Him. It requires the forsaking the nets with which we caught fish, and taking up the nets of discipleship wherein we will catch men for Christ. Grace is costly because Christ gave His

life to secure it for us, and because we must surrender our lives daily to its claim on us. It is costly because it teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Titus 2:11-12). Grace makes this possible for all men (and sparrows too)!

We receive a real sense of purpose by reflecting the glory of God. We can actually be the praise of His glory. A right response to His kindness in grace will strengthen the praise of the glory of God. Of course, He does NOT need our contribution; God is glorious without us. But the fact that He includes us should inspire in us a full commitment and heartfelt worship of God. We can glorify that grace through incessant praise. Our worship will stir others to do the same.

Let's live daily for the praise of the glory of God grace. Let's also pray that God will use our lives, as He did with the life of St. Francis, in some way to attract other people to His glorious grace.

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

(Ephesians 1:6)

God is Able

Peace my sparrow friends! Reading in the Book of Daniel today was one of the favorite stories of three young men who refused to bow before the king's idol. Their verbal response to the king in Chapter 3 at verses 17-18 is one of the most blatant displays of ironclad faith in God to be found in Scripture. In effect they said, "We know our God is able to save us from anything you can do. But whether or not He chooses to save us from the fire, we will not let Him down." There are many other Bible verses that also tell us what God can do.

If a friend comes to any of us with a great problem he is facing, we may say, "I'll see what I can do for you." That's the best we can offer, our resources are limited. But God **"is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."** (Ephesians 3:20)

Suppose one our friend's house burns down or his wife becomes seriously ill. We, then, would want to encourage him, but depending on what we say, he in turn could reply, "But you DON'T understand!" And he'd

be right, because we've never gone through that. Ah, but Jesus understands every time. He is **"touched with the feeling of our infirmities"** because He **"was in all points tempted like as we are."** (Hebrews 4:15) Jesus always knows and understands our personal struggles, even though no other person seems to.

Realizing that God the Father and Jesus the Son are all-powerful and all-knowing, **"let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."** (Hebrews 4:16) This, my dear little sparrows, should give us full confidence to move forward in life, let come what may! God will guide us and help us as we, like St. Francis, yield our lives to Him.

"To be little is to recognize one's nothingness, to expect everything from God as a little child expects everything of its father."

—St. Therese, the Little Flower

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



"We Are Little Lights Carrying the Gospels..."

...is an expression I use frequently when speaking or writing and today it came into the conversation again with a friend. We had been sharing on the difficulties of life and family that can arise, along with the difficulties of our world and Church.

Every time we came to a dead end or stumbling block, we thought right away of our recourse to God and the Blessed Mother and how we continue to pray fervently. We mentioned this several times as being our only way to continue in faith, hope and love. Our weapon is the rosary and our trust in God alone! We prayed for those who don't have this recourse.

It suddenly occurred to me how we Penitents offer our daily life of prayer and penance for all the same difficulties not only for ourselves, but for our Brothers and Sisters of Penance. St. Francis showed us the way to prayer and penance and the purpose of it too!

We, like St. Francis, fill ourselves up with the Gospels and by praying and living the Gospels, we become "Little Lights Carrying the Gospels."

This means with or without spoken words, our whole being is transformed—body, mind and soul/heart into a prayer. How beautiful an offering to our dear Lord Jesus who will receive us with so much love and mercy! How beautiful an offering for others in our world and Church!

Each day, by our words, deeds and prayers, *we become prayer*; a prayer like St Francis was, to be so closely united with the Father and all of creation. As we read the Canticle of Creatures by St Francis, we too can see in our heart of prayer, the love he had for God and His creation/creatures.

*MOST High, all-powerful, good Lord
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honor, and
all blessing.
To You alone Most High, do they belong,*

*and no human is worthy to mention Your name.
Praised be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,
Especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day and through whom You give us light,
and he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the
stars
In heaven You formed them clear and precious and
beautiful.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene, and every
kind of weather,
through whom You give sustenance to Your creatures.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
who is very useful and humble and precious and
chaste.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night,
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother
Earth,
who sustains and governs us,
and who produces various fruit with colored flowers
and herbs.
Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give
pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.
Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily
Death,
from whom no one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most
holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.*

Submitted by: Penitent

From the Desert Fathers

*Abba Nilas: "Do not be always wanting everything to turn out as you think it should,
but rather as God pleases,
then you will be undisturbed and thankful in your prayer."*

Submitted by: Penitent



MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

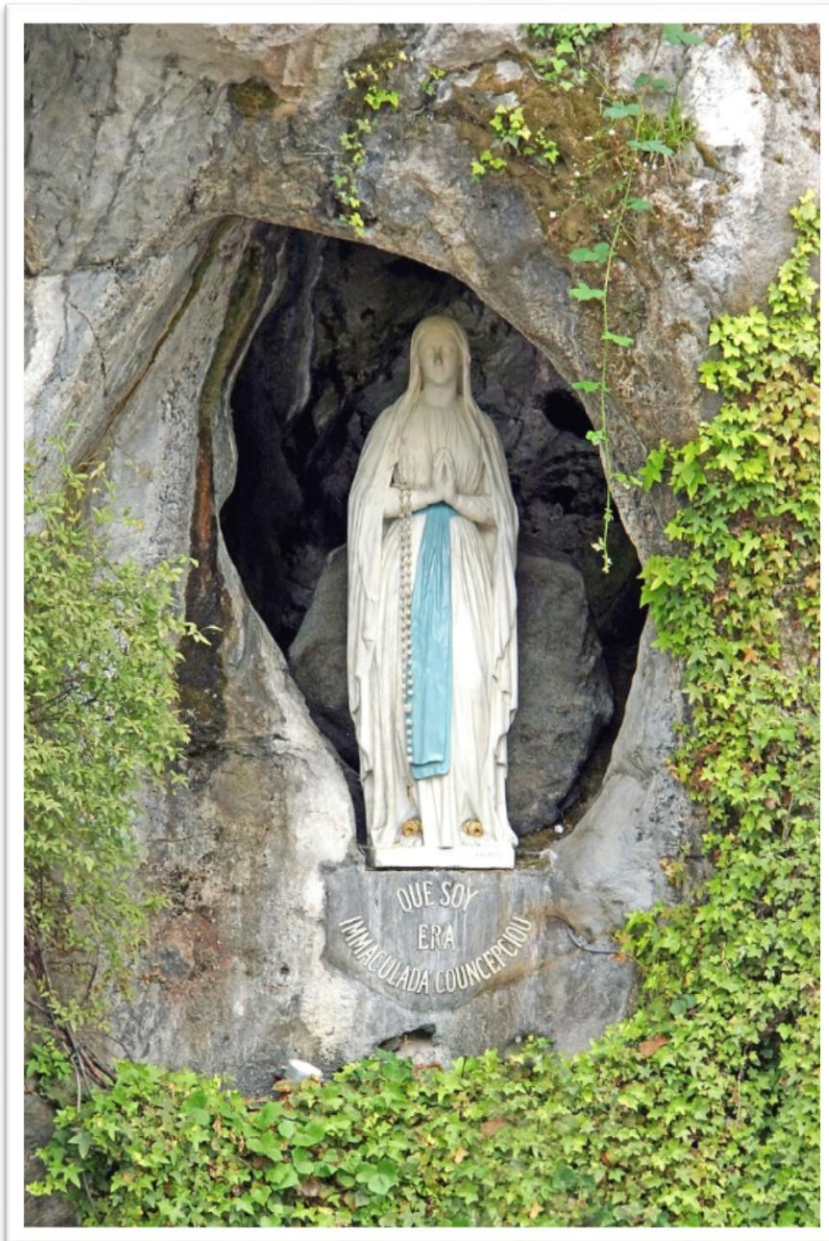
STAY CONNECTED...PLEASE!

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
Our Lady of Lourdes
February 11

Immaculate
Conception,
pray for us.

St. Bernadette,
pray for us.

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. 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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