



...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

4. When the bishop of Ostia, who was afterwards Pope Alexander IV, was preaching before the Roman Curia in the church of St. Francis at Assisi, a huge stone which had been left carelessly on a high stone cornice rolled over under its own weight and fell down, hitting a woman on the head. They were all sure that her head was crushed and that she had been killed outright, and so they covered her with the cloak she was wearing and prepared to take her outside for the funeral, when the sermon was over. But she had been laid before the altar of St. Francis and she commended herself confidently to him. When the sermon was over, she stood up safe and sound before them all and there was no trace of any injury to be seen on her. For years she had suffered from almost constant headaches, but from that moment she was completely free from them, as she afterwards testified.



5. At Tarquinia a number of men had gathered at the friary to cast a bell and an eight-year-old boy called Bartholomew brought some food to the friars for the workmen. Just then a strong gust of wind struck the house and knocked out a big heavy door, throwing it violently on top of the boy, so that they were sure he must have been crushed to death by the weight. He was completely covered by the fallen door and nothing could be seen of him. Everyone there rushed to the

spot, calling upon St. Francis' powerful intercession. His father was rooted to the ground and could not move in his grief, but he commended his son to St. Francis with his prayers and supplications. They lifted the weight from the boy and far from being dead, he seemed quite happy, just as if he had been roused from sleep. There was no sign of any injury on him. When he was fourteen years of age, he became a friar and was afterwards a learned man and a well-known preacher.

6. A number of men from Lentini had cut a huge stone in a quarry which was intended for the altar of a church in honor of St. Francis which was to be consecrated within a short time. Almost forty men were trying to maneuver it on to a cart, but after repeated efforts the stone fell on one of them and covered him as if he were in a tomb. The others were thrown into confusion and did not know what

to do and most of them went off in despair. The ten who remained turned to St. Francis, begging him tearfully not to let a man die so horribly in his service. Then they took heart and moved the stone so easily that there was no doubt St. Francis' hand was there. The man stood up, safe and sound. His sight had been bad before the accident, but now he recovered it perfectly, to prove to everyone how powerful St. Francis' intercession is in desperate cases.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier...

Reading I (Hosea 2:16b, 17b, 21-22) Reading II (2 Corinthians 3:1b-6) Gospel (Mark 2:18-22)

(NOTE: This homily was written in 2006)

In the first reading today from the Book of the Prophet Hosea, God says to His people that He will lure them out into the desert, and there He will speak to their hearts. And there they will respond, He says, as they did when He led them out of Egypt. Recall that for 40 years the people of Israel had to wander the desert. That was because of their disobedience and their lack of trust in God. God allowed the people to go out into the desert, and there in the desert He taught them that He was completely trustworthy. He taught them there in the desert how much he loved them. And there, as the people recognized the love of God, they were able to love Him in return. They were able to learn to be obedient to God because they saw that God would indeed provide for them. They recognized in His love for them that He was with them, that He would fight their battles, that He would feed them, and that He would care for them – as long as they would do His Will.

If we look around right now, we realize that the New Israel needs to be moved out into the desert as well. The New Israel is the Church, and the Church is in constant need of being reformed. Right now, perhaps more than ever, the Church needs a reformation, not the way Martin Luther attempted it 500 years ago, but rather a reform from within. Saint Peter reminds us that any time God is going to purify the world, it begins with the Church. It always starts in the household of God, Saint Peter tells us. And so the Church is being reformed right now; it is being purified.

If we look at what has gone on in the last couple of years with some of the scandals that have come out and some of the different problems that have been made public, this is part of the purification of the Church. It is a necessity, and such things are going to continue to be exposed as all the things within the Church need to be purified. Following the purification of the Church (and, of course, completing the purification of the Church) is going to be a much broader purification that is going to happen within the world. That is soon to come, but the Church needs to be purified first.

The members of the Church also need purification; consequently, we have an opportunity right now as Lent is about to begin to freely cooperate in the purification that needs to happen. The Church asks that each one of us would look at the areas in our lives that need to be changed. In the Gospel reading, Jesus tells us that a new piece of cloth is not sewn onto an old cloak, and new wine is not put into old wineskins. The reason He

is saying that is because His intent was to start something entirely new. He was not going to reform the people of Israel; He was going to start something entirely new and different. But now what He is going to do is to purify and reform us. He does not want to start something entirely new, but rather what He wants is to change our ways. He is not going to do something that is an entirely new religion, but rather He is going to change what we are doing so that we are in conformity with His Will.

Each one of us now is called to look into our hearts and to ask ourselves what needs to be changed. If the Lord is going to lead us out into the desert, we can ask ourselves: Why did He lead the people of Israel into the desert? Number one, so that the people of Israel could know that there is only one God and there is no other. Number two, so that the people of Israel could know that God was with them, that He had chosen them individually and He was truly with them. Number three, so that the people of Israel would come to trust the Lord. Number four, so that the people of Israel would respond by loving God as they had been loved. And, number five, so that the people of Israel would be obedient to the Will of God.

If we look around in our own lives, we can then ask ourselves: In what areas am I not trusting God? In what areas am I not loving God? In what areas am I not being obedient to God? In what areas do I not have faith in God? I suspect if we are honest that we are going to find all kinds of places where we can answer those questions because living in our very affluent and self-centered society, most of us in America really do not believe that God is the only God. We have lots of false gods that we can put our trust in. And while intellectually we will acknowledge that there is only one God, many of us have allowed our hearts to stray far from Him, and in essence we have given ourselves over to lots of false gods, little idols that we set up in our society and in our lives. Those need to go. Where do we fail to trust God? Many of us put more trust in money than we do in God. It needs to go. Where are we failing to love God and to be obedient to Him?

We can look at the areas of sin in our lives because most of us, when we go to Confession, usually have to confess the same thing over and over again. That is a normal problem people deal with. But in confessing the same things over and over again, we certainly have a good idea what things need to be worked on in our lives. So we know then what needs to go. Why does God need to lead us out into the desert? To strip us of all the things that stand in the way.

Remember the people of Israel when they first went out

into the desert, what did they do? They complained against God. They said, "Oh, if we could just go back to the land of Egypt where we had leeks and melons and fish and all the things that we want!" They preferred to go back to the slavery than to have the freedom of the children of God. Aren't we the same way? If things happen and we are purified, what do we do? Most of us do not rejoice that God is purifying us and taking away the things we have relied on that are not Him. We complain. We do not like it when we have to do without. We fight and grumble against God. But then as He leads us deeper into the desert of our own hearts, what we find is that all of these things were really because He loves us. And He loves us so much that He takes away the things that stand between us and Him so that we can truly love Him with our whole heart.

When we look at the second reading, Saint Paul talks about how he did not need letters of recommendation because his letter of recommendation was the people and the law that was written in their hearts. The law of God has been written in the heart of each and every one of us. He has chosen us for Himself and He loves us. He has given us His heart and He asks that we would give ours in return. He has written His law in our hearts. And what is His law? To love God and to love our neighbor. So He asks that we would respond, that as we go out into the desert we would recognize that He is completely trustworthy, that He is completely loving, that He will take care of us and provide for us. He simply asks that we would be obedient, that we would trust Him, that we would love Him, and that we would believe completely in Him.

When we look around in our society, it does not take a genius to answer the question: Why might God need to lead us out into the desert? When we look around the Church, it requires the same amount of genius to figure out why we might need to be led out into the desert. The Church is about to be purified in a most severe way, and when it is done, there will be a very poor Church rather than a very rich Church. But the Church will be rich in what it really needs to be rich in: faith, hope, and charity. Not in all kinds of materialism and affluence and opulence. But our Holy Father has told us that the remnant is going to be very small, much smaller than what most people would expect it to be. If that is the case, we realize just how much purification needs to happen in our own hearts first so that we will remain faithful, so that we will be able to continue to love God in the midst of the difficulties that are to come.

And if the Church is going to be a poor Church and a small remnant, Saint Peter says, "If the purification begins in the household of God, what is going to happen when it goes forth from the house of God?" The world is going to be purified as well. The house of God, being purified first, is then going to be the example for

everyone else. When the house of God has been purified and is poor and small, when God looks to purify the world, it is going to be even more severe because at least within the Church we still have the fullness of the truth, we still have the seven sacraments, we still have Our Lord and Our Lady. In the world, they have rejected it all. Consequently, the purification that will happen in the world is going to be much more severe than what is going to happen in the Church because ultimately the world is going to have to reflect the glory that is in the Church, and the glory that is in the Church is in Her poverty, not in Her opulence. It is in Her faith, not in Her trust in Herself. It is in Her love for God, not in Her love for the world. That is what we all need to look at.

Saint Paul tells us in the second reading today that none of us can glory in ourselves, that none of us can take credit for anything ourselves; but rather if there is anything good, it comes from God and we must give God all of the credit. Most of us do not do that very well. Therefore, we need to be purified so we will recognize that. Now the Church is asking us to look at the areas where we will choose to cooperate with God, to look at the areas of sin, to look at the areas of selfishness, and to make a choice to get rid of them. If we do not, the purification that is coming will do it without us. The choice is ours. We can choose to cooperate, we can choose to love God more perfectly, to trust Him more perfectly, to have more perfect faith in Him by looking deeply into ourselves and choosing as a Lenten penance something that is going to make a real change, a spiritual change in our lives. Or we can just go through the perfunctory things as we have in the past and give up potato chips and pop, things that really are not going to account for much of any kind of change in our lives. Then God will have to purify us because we have refused to cooperate.

Are we willing to go out into the desert? Are we willing to leave the fleshpots and the leeks and melons of Egypt behind in order to learn to trust in God and to love Him? One way or the other, the purification is about to happen. We can choose it, we can cooperate with it, and we can begin the purification now ourselves by getting rid of sin, by getting rid of selfishness, and by doing something in this season of Lent that is going to be truly substantial. Or we can let God do it. If we wait until God does it, we are not going to be very happy being out in the desert. We will grumble and we will complain, and many will fall away. That will be a tragedy. The choice is ours. The Lord is inviting us out into the desert, and there He will speak to our hearts. There He desires that we will respond to Him in love. Are we willing to do that? Are we willing to accept His invitation to open our hearts, to go out into the desert to be united with the Bridegroom of our souls, and to love Him as He has loved us?

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



ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE... A MEETING WITH OUR ARCHBISHOP



Dear friends,

Years We had a very nice meeting with Archbishop Hebda at the Chancery office for the Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis, and Father Altier, our Visitor, on Friday,

February 22nd. The meeting was held at the request of the Archbishop, and was our first meeting with Archbishop Hebda.

We were asked first to give the Archbishop some history on why the BSP was formed and how it was formed. This we did in some detail. He was very satisfied with our history and thanked us for it.

For the sake of our membership that history began this way.

Shelley and I were in the SFO. Bruce professed in the SFO in 1983 and Shelley in 1987. Some time later Bruce was asked to be the first minister of the new region of the SFO located in the Midwest as part of the national regionalization of the Secular Franciscan Order. He was asked to lead over 40 SFO fraternities into the regionalization process. He accepted the assignment and worked to create the first region of the SFO in the Midwest. Once created it was named the Queen of Peace region in a regional election process and holds that name to this day.

About this time Shelley bought Bruce an Omnibus of Sources on St. Francis which contains many of the ancient writings on the Saint. While going through it, Bruce was struck by the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis which was in it. He shared his joy over that Rule with Shelley and she loved it too. Soon after Bruce began to promote the original First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis in the Secular Franciscan Order in his visits to SFO fraternities. When the National SFO leaders became aware of this they told Bruce to stop doing that because that Rule, the actual First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis, had been abrogated by those same leaders when the SFO created its own new Rule. Bruce reluctantly agreed to do this and subsequently he resigned from leadership in the Secular Franciscan Order. However, because the First Rule of the Third Order was created by St. Francis himself Bruce and Shelley decided to promote it on their own. They created the Stella Matutina movement with permission from their spiritual guide, Father Valerius Messerich O.F.M., and that movement became the footprint of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis, aka the BSP.

The BSP started after a very mystical and powerful call from Our Lord to Bruce and Shelley in 1995 in which Our Lord made it known that Bruce and Shelley were to create a group that lived the original Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis. A spiritual director of the SFO, not Fr. Valerius, told us that we had to meet with a bishop before we started any group that was going to live the original Rule. We decided to meet with Bishop Roger Schwietz, bishop of the Duluth Diocese, to accomplish this and we did meet with him on Halloween, 1995.

We went to Bishop Schwietz as he was Bruce's confirmation sponsor when he was in the seminary and Bruce was comfortable meeting with him. As a result of that meeting Bishop Schwietz, who is now Archbishop for the Anchorage, Alaska Archdiocese, set up our first meeting with the Archbishop of our diocese, St. Paul/Minneapolis, the Most Reverend Harry J. Flynn. That meeting, in which the BSP was fully affirmed, was very positive and the launching point for the Association. As a result of that meeting Archbishop Flynn sent us a letter affirming the BSP on October 22, 1996 which is on file on our web page.

Archbishop Flynn was very supportive of the BSP. He took the first professions of our first members on January 11, 2003. These professions followed the completion of the formation program as it exists today. Father Valerius Messerich O.F.M., who was our Visitor when we started, in addition to being the spiritual director of the Secular Franciscan Order, said we needed to go through formation before we professed. There were five people that professed that day to Archbishop Flynn, including Shelley and I, and it was the beginning of Morning Star Chapter of the Association, the first Chapter formed. Archbishop Flynn retired in 2008 and when he did his successor, Archbishop John C. Nienstedt, took his place. Archbishop Nienstedt wrote a letter of support to the BSP on October 27, 2008 which is also on our web page. Both Archbishops attended the BSP retreat in those days or sent an Auxiliary Bishop to do so and both took several more professions of members.

Archbishop Hebda was very complimentary of the BSP in the meeting. He said he plans to generate a letter of support for us in the near future. This will be our third letter from the Archdiocese and we will publish it in the BSP when we get it. We took the time to brief the Archbishop and Fr. Altier on our current statistics. We covered the following subjects.

Our Brochure, Vision, and Mission Statements

The Snapshot of our Rule. The Archbishop was very impressed with that.

Copies of Archbishop Flynn's and Archbishop Nienstedt's letters of support.

The location and history of our Chapters. Right now we have eight. Seven in the United States and Canada and one in South Korea.

A history log of where we have professed members in the United States. Currently we have 43 professed members, with at least one professed member in 18 States.

A similar log of where we have inquirers in the United States. That is people who have sent in Inquirer applications. Currently we have at least one Inquirer in 49 of the 50 States. Only Wyoming has no Inquirers. We have a total of 712 Inquirer applications from the United States. Several of these people are in formation at the present time.

We have Inquirers in 49 countries too, including the United States and Canada. In total we have 939 Inquirer applications on file. Also, the

Rule and Statutes have been translated into German and Spanish and are on the Internet in those languages.

The last information we provided the Archbishop was our procedure for forming Chapters. He was affirmative on this procedure as it exists.

Fr. Altier was very attentive and positive, and he is respected by the Archbishop. Fr. Altier told us, in a private conversation, that he is happy as our Visitor and he is happy to continue in that role. Good news for us! He advised the Archbishop that the BSP is doing fine and in complete conformity to what it should be as an Association in the Archdiocese and the Church.

So, that is a summary of our meeting with Archbishop Hebda and Father Altier. It was a very good meeting. Praise God!

May the Lord bless and lead us all!

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



“In the world, but not of it, for Christ” by Janet Klasson, BSP



From the Second Reading, Second Sunday of Lent

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this

way, my beloved.” (Philippians 3:20-4:1)

“In the World, but not of it, for Christ.”

This is the BSP motto, a short sentence, but in a manner of speaking, a life sentence. Indeed, once professed, we are in it for life, come what may. We become beloved servants of Our Lord in the pattern of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis, striving to constantly die to ourselves, one desire at a time, through this holy Rule of life.

As the Scripture above says, our citizenship is in heaven, so this earthly prison in which we find ourselves binds and confines. Our BSP Brother Bob Hall, aka “The Sparrow”, lives this metaphor daily in a way we cannot begin to imagine, in a prison in North Carolina. Praise God for his conversion and the uplifting meditations that he shares.

There are other prisons, however. Some of us live in prisons of physical, emotional, mental, or economic hardship. We grieve, we hurt, we bear the pain of having those we love fall away from their faith, sometimes embracing sinful lifestyles, believing the cultural lies that pelt them continually.

We live “in the world” like a fly in the punch bowl. Our lifestyle is foreign to most of those we live with, even off-putting. They don’t know what to do with us and live in fear that we might speak what is truly in our hearts. We bear the cross of possible rejection or ridicule if we do speak. In bearing that cross, we take comfort that we are in the best of company, walking with Christ himself!

As penitents, mostly blind to the work of God in our lives, we lay each moment of our lives down like stones in a wall. Some stones are very little, some are very big. But each one is necessary and bears the weight of its own importance. Take out even a tiny stone and the wall is compromised.

We work and pray daily for growth in virtue, in ourselves and those God has given us to pray for, all for the glory of God. Our Blessed Mother guides us, she who practiced virtue even by opening an eye. With the Blessed Mother as our example, we can practice virtue in all things. She can lead and guide

our every moment on the path of virtue. She can help us to conquer our weakness through grace, that we might lead others to Jesus at all times, sometimes with our words, but more often with our prayers and sacrifices.

Here is a perfect example from Padre Pio. As you are likely aware, he suffered often from violent attacks from the devil. Here he is asking for prayer from his friend Raffaelina (my emphasis in bold).

Padre Pio Letter 60: Foggia, 30-3-1915

*Padre Pio to Raffaelina: "The attack which I mentioned to you in my last letter, Raffaelina, continues with its ups and downs. Praise be to Jesus! This too will work out for the glory of His divine majesty. I need fresh courage all the time, though, and this I await from heaven **through the intercession of yourself and of other souls that are very dear to the Divine Heart.** For this purpose I ask you in charity, by the*

*meekness of the Son of God, to begin the holy novenas to the beautiful Virgin of Pompeii in whom I have great confidence and through whom I expect all from the generosity of God. **I also want you to receive Holy Communions during this time for the same intention.** I am asking too much, but do not doubt that Jesus will know how to reward you.*

(Padre Pio of Pietrelcina, "Letters", Vol. II, San Giovanni Rotondo, Foggia, Italy, 1987, p 400).

We really have no idea what purpose this wall we are working on will serve in the heavenly drama. We don't have to know. We just need to keep adding stones of virtue, prayer, and sacrifice to the wall, in the Divine Will, in faith and trust. It is what we are "in the world" to do. Rejection, sorrow, longing, we turn them into the very stones that will defeat the enemy of souls. In every situation, in every joy and sorrow, we are victors in Christ our Savior.

Sr. Clare Crockett and the Holy Land

I recently watched a Youtube video about Sr. Clare Crockett (Servant Sisters) called "All or Nothing!" (There is a link to it here: <https://www.sisterclare.com/en/#>) It is a very inspiring story of a young Irish actress in whom God effected a dramatic conversion. She entered the order of Servant Sisters but was tragically killed 15 years later in the 2016 earthquake in Ecuador. This is a movie well worth 1 hour and 24 minutes of anyone's time. One of the reasons I mention it is that Sr. Clare goes to the Holy Land at one point in the movie. She brings with her a list of all the names of the sisters in her order and touches it to all the holy places. No coincidence that I watched that film shortly before my own trip to the Holy Land in a few days. I will be adding the BSP members and their intentions to my list along with everyone else in my spiritual territory. I just wanted you to know that. +++

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada



FROM THE 'SPARROW' Fear Not!

**FEAR NOT
BE NOT AFRAID
NO FEAR**

Peace dear
sparrows!
On my wall
across from
my hospital

bed there hangs an 8"x11" piece of paper that has printed in large block black letters the above three quotes.

In my "little way" spirituality (following St. Therese, the Little Flower's lead) I meditate and am encouraged by thinking that the sayings are representative of our Triune God. That is FEAR NOT seemingly is attributable to the Father as we internalize Him in the Old Testament. We read Jesus saying to His followers BE NOT AFRAID in the Gospels. Followed by the Holy Spirits instructions to St. Paul, St. Peter, and others to have NO FEAR throughout the Epistles. I take solace that I, being little, can trust Him, being large, and most powerful, to back up these words if I but trust Him.



We have all had times when we were worried about something or someone. Worry will take control of our thoughts and drive out the peace and joy available to us through Jesus. Fear and worry affect us in nearly the same way; it would be difficult to separate the one from another. Worrying about tomorrow hampers our efforts today. Satan wants us to doubt and worry and to mull over negative thoughts. We must remember that God "is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

It is all right to be concerned but not to worry. There is a difference. Worry wastes energy, but concern stirs to action. Planning for tomorrow is time well spent, but worrying about tomorrow is time wasted. We sparrows need to focus on God's ability to control all circumstances.

When Jesus came walking on the water, Peter joined Him. He stepped out of the boat in faith, but as soon as he focused on the waves, his faith gave way to fear and

he began to sink (Matthew 14:26-30). Does the same thing happen to us sometimes?

When the apostle John was exiled on the isle of Patmos, he chose to continue living in faith despite his circumstances. He recorded a great testimony about God when he wrote, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." (Revelation 19:6) When we walk by faith, and trust our lives to the almighty God, we can find courage to face each new tomorrow with confidence. There is no peace like the peace of knowing that our future is in God's hand.

St. Padre Pio said, "Pray, hope and don't worry." He understood that we, as sparrows, cannot have faith and fear at the same time, any more than we can be happy and angry at the same time. Padre Pio demonstrates that his confidence and trust comes in a close understanding of who he was and who the Lord was in his life with the following prayer about Communion:

STAY WITH ME, LORD

(Written by Saint Padre Pio of Pietrelcina)

Stay with me, Lord, for it is necessary to have you present so that I do not forget You. You know how easily I abandon you.

Stay with me Lord, because I am weak and I need Your strength, that I may not fall so often.

Stay with me, Lord for You are my life, and without you, I am without meaning and hope.

Stay with me, Lord, for You are light and without You I am in darkness.

Stay with me, Lord, to show me Your will.

Stay with me, Lord, so that I can hear Your voice and follow You.

Stay with me, Lord, for I desire to love You ever more, and be in Your company always.

Stay with me, Lord, if You wish me to be always faithful to You.

Stay with me, Lord, for as poor as my soul is, I wish it to be a place of consolation for You, a dwelling of Your Love.

Stay with me Jesus, for it is getting late; the days are coming to a close and life is passing. Death, judgment and eternity are drawing near. It is necessary to renew my strength, so that I will not stop along the way, and for that I need You.

It is getting late and death approaches. I fear the darkness, the temptations, the dryness, the cross, the sorrows. O how I need You, my Jesus, in this night of exile.

Stay with me, Jesus, because in the darkness of this life, with all its dangers, I need You. Help me to recognize You as Your disciples did at the Breaking of Bread, so that the Eucharistic Communion be the light which disperses the darkness, the power which sustains me, the unique joy of my heart.

Stay with me, Lord, because at the hour of my death I want to be one with You, and if not by Communion, at least by Your grace and love.

Stay with me, Jesus, I do not ask for divine consolations because I do not deserve them, but I only ask for the gift of your presence. Oh yes! I ask this of You!

Stay with me, Lord, for I seek You alone, Your Love, Your Grace, Your will, Your Heart, Your Spirit, because I love You and I ask for no other reward but to love You more and more, with a strong and active love.

Grant that I may love You with all my heart while on earth, so I can continue to love You perfectly throughout all eternity, dear Jesus. Amen!

Padre Pio's focus was NOT on his own strength or ability. Rather, he focused on the power and strength that he needed as coming from the Lord Jesus. His humility is sublime with its recognition of his needfulness that he found in himself as a human and that he contrasted with the Divine strength of the Lord....this is something we, as sparrows, should all do!

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



“Letter to All the Faithful” and Living the Gospels...

The *Letter to the Faithful* was written by St Francis of Assisi around the year 1215 and was intended for Religious, Clerics, Laity, and really everyone in the world. As one can quickly realize, there are numerous referrals to the Gospels as well as the Psalms in his Letter. Like the Rule of 1221, the Letter to All the Faithful, expresses St. Francis' message of putting the Gospels first in our life and this brings us living closer

to Christ. We not only read the Gospels with understanding, but “live” them.

Living the Gospels can be quite difficult in the year 2019, when so much has changed. We have laws preventing us from begging, from serving others in just any capacity, and at times even being a good friend and neighbor, as well as climate preventing us from dressing lightly and barefoot. So, how then can we live

the Gospels today, the way St. Francis did, but also recommends we do, especially when living Rule 1221 or taking his Letter to the Faithful seriously?

St Francis is telling us both in his Rule 1221 and Letter, that it is possible and a must. When he presented his Rule 1221 to Pope Innocent III with the clergy present, he was considered a fool. However, Pope Innocent III knew and understood the humility it took for St Francis to literally "live" the Gospels as well as draw others into living it with him in community.

We may not be able to live the Gospels as intensely as St Francis or Jesus, however we can surely strive to implement various parts into our daily life. This is where the early Rule 1221 and the Letter speak to us Penitents and brings out the Gospel life by choosing to pray, fast and do penance while also keeping humility and poverty/simplicity in our hearts and homes. From this flows the compassion and care for others in whatever way God presents the needs to us. Being

open to prayer and discernment helps us see more clearly what God is asking of us.

The Rule of Life is not a method of rules and regulations, but a sincere "Path" or "Way of Life" St. Francis left for us to follow, showing us the possibilities from one who was very poor, humble and in love with Christ. The Letter is almost a reminder or reinforcement of living the Gospels that St. Francis finally puts out to all the world, again showing the possibilities from one who was very poor, humble and in love with Christ.

It would help our journey to keep in mind that while reading several other books, it is really the Gospels (and Psalms) St. Francis encourages us to read and live!

Both Rule 1221 and the Letter to All the Faithful can be found on the BSP website by going to <https://bspenance.org>.

Submitted by: Penitent



From the Desert Fathers

*Abba Theonis: When we turn our spirit from the contemplation of God,
we become the slaves of carnal passions.*

Submitted by: Penitent

MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

NOTICE OF THE PASSING OF DOLORES BICHSEL

This is to notify you of the passing of one of our sisters in the BSP, Dolores Bichsel, a charter member of Morning Star Chapter, who died on February 4th. In accordance with Rule Statute 23, we are called to pray for our deceased brothers and sisters in the Association, and although the 8 days have already passed, we should begin the prayers as soon as is possible after notification.

Rule Statute 23:

a. If a member dies the other members of the Association in the area should gather for the funeral if distance, work and family commitments allow. They are not to leave until the Mass is celebrated and the body consigned to burial. Penitents are encouraged to designate someone they know to notify the BSP Administrators of their death so they can be prayed for.

b. Within eight days of the demise, each member shall say for the soul of the deceased: a Mass, if a priest, otherwise fifty Psalms. If a member cannot read the Psalter, he or she may say fifty Our Father's with the words "May the souls of the faithful departed through the Mercy of God rest in peace" following each Our Father.

c. Penitents may, if they wish, add the ejaculation, "Lord, have mercy on _____'s soul" or the Glory be, after praying each psalm.

Dolores' Visitation and Funeral were at Epiphany Church in Coon Rapids, Minnesota on February 20th. You may read her obituary here: <http://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/0000296851/>

STAY CONNECTED...PLEASE!

If you wish to connect with your Brothers and Sisters in the BSP, please remember that the **BSP Forums** at <http://bspence.org/forum/>. Hope to see you there!

HANDBOOK OF THE ASSOCIATION...



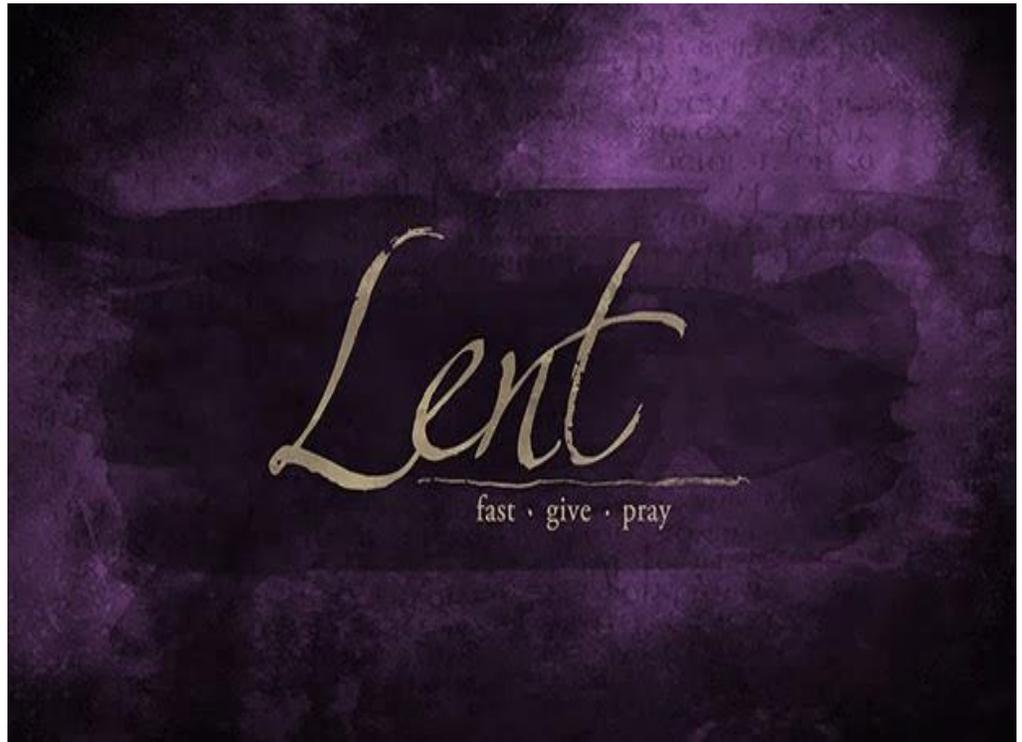
The BSP Handbook, titled *Stella Matutina: Handbook of The Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis* is now available for order. There is a link to the ordering page on our BSP homepage. You will need a credit card or a Paypal account to order. Cost is \$10.00 plus shipping.

How St Francis kept Lent on an island in the Lake of Perugia

From: *The Little Flowers of St. Francis*

The true servant of Christ, St. Francis, was in some sense as another Christ, given to the world for the salvation of the people; therefore God the Father willed to make him in many of his actions conformable to the image of His Son, Jesus Christ. This was shown in the venerable company of his twelve companions, and in the admirable mystery of the sacred stigmata, and in his continuous fast during the holy Lent, which took place in this manner.

Once on a time, St. Francis on the day of the carnival went to the Lake of Perugia, to the house of one of his disciples, where he was entertained for the night, and there he was inspired by God to pass this Lent on an island in the lake. Wherefore St Francis prayed his disciple, that for the love of Christ he would carry him across in his little boat to an island in the lake where no one inhabited, and that he would do this on the night of Ash Wednesday, so that no one might know of it. Then the other, for the great love and devotion he bore to St Francis, solicitous to grant his request, carried him to the said island, and St Francis took nothing with him but two little loaves.



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And when they had arrived at the island, and his friend was about to return to his home, St Francis earnestly besought him not to reveal to anyone what he should do, and not to come again till Holy Thursday. So his friend departed, and St. Francis remained alone; and there being no habitation into which he could retire, he entered into a thicket, where many trees and shrubs had formed a hiding-place, resembling a little hut: and in this shelter he disposed himself to prayer and to the contemplation of heavenly things.

And he remained there the whole of Lent, without eating or drinking, except the half of one of those little loaves, as was witnessed by his disciple when he returned to him on Holy Thursday, who found, of the two loaves, one entire, and the half of the other. It is believed that St Francis so refrained from eating out of reverence for the fasting of the blessed Christ, who fasted forty days and forty nights without taking any material food; and thus with that half loaf he kept from himself the poison of vainglory, and after the example of Christ he fasted forty days and forty nights.

And afterwards, in this spot, where St Francis had sustained this marvellous abstinence, God granted many miracles through his merits; for which cause men began to build houses there, arid to inhabit them; and in a short time there was built a large and prosperous village, and the house for the brothers, which is still called the House of the Island. And to this day the men and women of the village have great reverence and devotion for the spot where St Francis made this Lent.

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
minncc03@gmail.com ~ www.bspenance.org



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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