



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

THOMAS OF CELANO AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

Chapter XXX—Of the Manger Francis made on the day of the Lord's birth

84. (Francis') highest intention, greatest desire, and supreme purpose was to observe the holy gospel in and through all things. He wanted to follow the doctrine and walk in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to do so perfectly, with all vigilance, all zeal, complete desire of the mind, complete fervor of the heart. He remembered Christ's words through constant meditation and recalled his actions through wise consideration. The humility of the incarnation and the love of the passion so occupied his memory that he scarcely wished to think of anything else. Hence what he did in the third year before the day of his glorious death, in the town called Greccio, on the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ, should be reverently remembered.



There was in that place a certain man named John, of good reputation and even better life, whom the blessed Francis particularly loved. Noble and honorable in his own land, he had trodden on nobility of the flesh and pursued that of the mind. Around fifteen days before the birthday of Christ Francis sent for this man, as he often did, and said to him, "If you wish to celebrate the approaching feast of the Lord at Greccio, hurry and do what I tell you. I want to do something that will recall the memory of that child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by." Upon hearing this, the good and faithful man hurried to prepare all that the holy man had requested.

85. The day of joy drew near, the time of exultation approached. The brothers were called from their various places. With glad hearts, the men and women of that place prepared, according to their means,

candles and torches to light up that night which has illuminated all the days and years with its glittering star. Finally the holy man of God arrived and, finding everything prepared, saw it and rejoiced.

The manger is ready, hay is brought, the ox and ass are led in. Simplicity is honored there, poverty is exalted, humility is commended and a new Bethlehem, as it were, is made from Greccio. Night is illuminated like the day, delighting men and beasts. The people come and

joyfully celebrate the new mystery. The forest resounds with voices and the rocks respond to their rejoicing. The brothers sing, discharging their debt of praise to the Lord, and the whole night echoes with jubilation. The holy man of God stands

before the manger full of sighs, consumed by devotion and filled with a marvelous joy. The solemnities of the mass are performed over the manger and the priest experiences a new consolation.

86. The holy man of God wears a deacon's vestments, for he was indeed a deacon, and he sings the holy gospel with a sonorous voice. And his voice, a sweet voice, a vehement voice, a clear voice, a sonorous voice, invites all to the highest rewards. Then he preaches mellifluously to the people standing about, telling them about the birth of the poor king and the little city of Bethlehem. Often, too, when he wished to mention Jesus Christ, burning with love he called him "the child of Bethlehem," and speaking the word "Bethlehem" or "Jesus," he licked his lips with his tongue, seeming to taste the sweetness of these words.

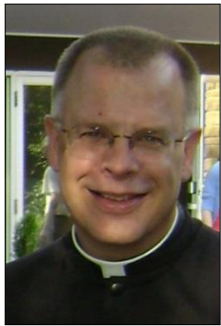
The gifts of the Almighty are multiplied here and a marvelous vision is seen by a certain virtuous man. For he saw a little child lying lifeless in the manger, and he

saw the holy man of God approach and arouse the child as if from a deep sleep. Nor was this an unfitting vision, for in the hearts of many the child Jesus really had been forgotten, but now, by his grace and through his servant Francis, he had been brought back to life and impressed here by loving recollection. Finally the celebration ended and each returned joyfully home.

87. The hay placed in the manger was kept so that the Lord, multiplying his holy mercy, might bring health to the beasts of burden and other animals. And indeed it happened that many animals throughout the surrounding area were cured of their illnesses by eating this hay. Moreover, women undergoing a long and

difficult labor gave birth safely when some of this hay was placed upon them. And a large number of people, male and female alike, with various illnesses, all received the health they desired there. At last a temple of the Lord was consecrated where the manger stood, and over the manger an altar was constructed and a church dedicated in honor of the blessed father Francis, so that, where animals once had eaten hay, henceforth men could gain health in soul and body by eating the flesh of the Lamb without spot or blemish, Jesus Christ our Lord, who through great and indescribable love gave himself to us, living and reigning with the Father and Holy Spirit, God eternally glorious forever and ever, Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Celano—First Life of St. Francis (1229)



VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier Second Sunday of Advent, December 2, 2018

Readings: Jer 33:14-16; 1 Thes 3:12-4:2; Lk 21:25-28, 34-36

In the readings today we look back to the promise of the coming of the Messiah, we learn a lesson about how to conduct our lives in

the present world, and we look forward to the second coming of our Lord at the end of the world. While this does not seem to make much sense, it is actually very practical: we learn from the first coming of our Lord so we are prepared for His second coming. This means we live in the present according to what our Lord taught us while He was in the world and what He teaches us now through His Church.

First, we look back to learn what we can about our Lord's first coming into the world. Jeremiah lived more than five hundred years before our Lord was born, but he speaks of Jesus as a "righteous shoot" who will be raised up for David. This tells us two things that were already known regarding the Messiah. The first is that He would be born of David's line which means He would be born of the tribe of Judah. The kings following David were anything but righteous; only two of the fifty two kings after David were even decent: Josiah and Hezekiah. The only thing that can be said about the others is that they were not as bad as those who came after them.

The second thing we know from this statement is that the "house of David" would be reduced to ruins. If we think of the glory of this "house" being like a tree in full bloom, then the reduction of that house to rubble is like the tree being cut down with only the stump remaining. This is actually the image being used. In Israel there are many olive trees; when an olive tree is cut down, new shoots begin to appear around the stump which will eventually grow into new olive trees. So, this is not

just a prediction that a baby would be born to be a new shoot or a new offspring, but it tells us about the condition of the house of David when the baby will be born.

Needless to say, this was important information for those looking forward to the coming of the Messiah. They knew not to look for Him among the priestly Tribe of Levi or among the Benjaminites. They also knew the Messiah would not come while there was a Davidic king on the throne in Israel; rather, the monarchy would have to be removed and the house of David cut down. The Messiah would not come into a proud and prominent family, but He would be born of a people that was lowly and humbled.

While all this is true, we already know Who the Messiah is, of what Tribe He was born, and even the humble nature of His birth, so why is this important to us now? First, we need to see that Jesus is the fulfillment of what God had promised, not just a wonder worker who people may have mistaken as the Messiah. And this is important for us as we look forward to the second coming. While the Person is the same, we need to consider the circumstances.

For many years in the Church the Pope was also the emperor. God is not going to come while the Church is in its glory. Many years passed between the last of the kings in Israel and the coming of the Messiah. It has been more than a century since the Pope was also the Emperor. The Church is being cut down and humbled, but it is certainly not there yet. We definitely want to give God our best and praise Him for His glory, but when we remember the humility of Jesus in His Incarnation and in His Passion and see the glory and prestige of the Church today, we recognize there is a

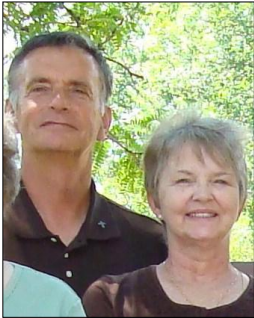


disconnect. Like the house of David, the Church needs to be cut down and humbled before our Lord will come.

In the Gospel, Our Lord tells us about the signs that will occur prior to His return, but He also warns us not to become drowsy from carousing, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life He reminds us to be vigilant and pray. The people of our Lord's time became drowsy; the

people at the end time will do the same. In our day, many have become spiritually drowsy. St. Paul prayed that we would abound in love, be blameless in holiness, and conduct ourselves in a way pleasing to God. Only by following our Lord's warning and St. Paul's advice will we avoid falling into spiritual drowsiness and be ready when the Son of Man comes in His power and glory.

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ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

The Present Moment



We recently got a book from my son, *The Screwtape Letters*, written by C.S. Lewis, a renowned Christian author of the 20th century. C.S. Lewis wrote 30 books in his life including several classics

including *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *The Screwtape Letters*. We recently heard that Pope Francis has suggested the laity read the book. Probably to see how subtly the devil tries to sneak into our lives!

In the book a devil, Uncle Screwtape, is teaching his nephew, Wormwood, how to seduce and tempt humans so to get them to hell with Their Father Below. Their Enemy, in the book, is God, of course. They abhor the luminosity and beauty of heaven, and certainly all the ways the Enemy is taking their prey away from them. They complain of the Enemy's work constantly.

There are many lessons in the book on how people can be seduced and tempted. These lessons are all good meditations for all of us but one hit us between the eyes. In one letter Screwtape mentions that the present moment is like eternity so his nephew, Wormwood, needs to capture these wretched bipeds, as he calls us, in their present moments. The closest things to eternity are these present moments that humans can experience. That is a major lesson and meditation for all of us. So, we thought we would build this letter on that lesson, in this present moment. 😊

The souls in eternity always dwell in the present moment. There is no time in eternity. Just existence. So as to justice it shows why the souls in hell remain there forever. They are always in the present moment of their punishment. So their punishment lasts forever but there is no measure of time so their punishment just is. The worm, that is their conscience, remains alive, in that present moment,

and the fire is not extinguished, as it exists in a present moment also. Such is hell.

So also the souls in heaven. Their present moment is with God and they will always live in that present moment of God's presence and beauty. Everything around them that they experience will be in the present moment, a perpetual state of NOW. A perpetual moment of joy, beauty, light, happiness, and friendship with beings, angels, Saints, and family, that are full of love. Always in love. And these very simple lessons on the present moment overflow into our lives in magnificent ways of which we need to be very much aware.

In the present moment we do everything. Some time ago we mentioned in a newsletter that we all need to make 'holy moments' in our lives. The idea came from author, Matthew Kelly, in one of his recent books. We need to do holy things one thing at a time. The moment we do them is a 'holy moment', and we need to magnify them in our lives.

I, Bruce, was a Human Resources manager with 3M in my working career. I used to tell supervisors, who I often trained, that they needed to make every encounter with an employee a good one. If they were not making them good, they were still making them something and they might not like that something. They might not like it if it affected them if it was being done to them by their supervisors. So they needed to be sure that they did not do things to others that they would not want to have done to themselves. Sound familiar? Do unto others what you would have done to yourself. Where have we heard that?

In the present moment we work, live, laugh, and sing, and, unfortunately, sin. In the present moment we can be holy, or not so holy. Happy, or not so happy. Rich, or not so rich. Everything that happens to us happens in the present moment. And we carry those moments to God. We will be judged on how we handled the 'present moments' in our lives.

In the present moment we work and fulfill our duty. People see that, and we need to do that.

In the present moment we love those around us. All whom we meet. Family, friends, and others.

In the present moment, we pray.

In the present moment we eat.

In the present moment we speak to people around us.

In the present moment we live our Rule.

So, let's make those present moments holy. Let's

make the present moments we live our Rule resound with our faith and love. In doing that, to those around us, let us be people who live the Gospel. Who judge no one, and endure among all peacefully, full of grace.

We wish everyone a holy and happy Christmas! Remember there is no mortification during the Octave of Christmas, the eight days after Christmas. Celebrate!

Praised be Jesus forever! In the present moment, and always.

Archbishop Harry J. Flynn

Retired Archbishop Harry J. Flynn of St. Paul and Minneapolis died September 22, 2019 in St. Paul. He was 86.

Harry Joseph Flynn was born May 2, 1933 in Schenectady, New York to William and Margaret Mahoney Flynn. His father died when he was 6. In September 1945, with older brothers away in military service, 12 year old Harry was living alone with his widowed mother. When he woke the day after Labor Day to begin his first day of seventh grade at St. Columba School in Schenectady he found his mother dead. He was then raised by two maiden aunts, both Sisters of St. Joseph. He developed a deep appreciation for women religious due to how he was raised.

He earned both a Bachelor of Arts and a Master's Degree in English from Siena College, a small Franciscan School in nearby Londonville, New York. Two or three classmates were joining the Franciscans at the time and they invited him to become a Franciscan since he was considering the priesthood. He declined as he wanted to stay close to home, so he joined the diocesan priesthood. He was ordained a priest for the Albany New York Diocese May 28, 1960. He became Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis on September 8, 1995.

As Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, in 2002, he served as chair for what was then the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishop's Ad Hoc committee on Sexual Abuse which developed the "Charter for the protection of Children and Young People", in response to the clergy sexual abuse crisis that rocked the Catholic Church across the country. He always considered himself a pastor and he said that as a pastor "one has the possibility of assisting and forming a community and can experience the direction a community is taking. You're with people in pain, sorrow, and joy. You become one with them." (Source: his obituary - Our Sunday Visitor)

Archbishop Flynn has supported the BSP from the beginning. When the BSP was first forming he gave us permission to live the Rule and promote it in the Church. His letter of support follows.

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL AND MINNEAPOLIS

226 Summit A venue

Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102-2197 Office of the Archbishop October 22, 1996

Bruce Fahey 20939 Quadrant Ave N. Scandia. Minnesota 55073

Dear Bruce,

First of all, let me thank you for coming to see me last May. I was delighted to have had an opportunity of visiting with you and Bishop Schwietz.

I ask your forgiveness for not responding to you sooner. However, May and June are filled with all kinds of end of the year meetings, and then to complicate things I was in Rome for a period of time, and then the Bishops had a spring meeting in Oregon. The summer months go by so quickly and I am just now catching up to some projects that had been delayed over the summer.

In response to the questions which you asked me in your letter of May 7, 1996, I would like to say that I grant you permission to live according to the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of 1221 - that given to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance by St. Francis in his day.

I grant permission to gather in support of your efforts to live the gospel more perfectly. I find this invigorating in this day and age when the gospel is taken so lightly.

I grant permission to promote this penitential lifestyle of the original Rule beyond your own families

and to build a support network within the Church and with my blessing.

I would ask that you keep in touch with Father Valerius Messerich and share any reflections that you have with him, and certainly bring to his attention any developments.

I would not mind meeting with you and Father Valerius on an annual basis so that you can keep me informed.

I send to you my blessings and good wishes and ask the Lord to be with you and with all the Brothers and Sisters of Penance.

With every good wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Harry J. Flynn, D.D.

Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Archbishop Flynn came to all of our retreats and encouraged us to live our Rule and seek personal holiness. He personally took the professions of the first five members of the BSP and set up a reception for all those who attended. In every way he helped us as an Association, and he is missed. The present Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Archbishop Hebda, still supports the BSP and we are still based in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. We need to keep Archbishop Hebda, our current Archbishop, in prayer.

So, that is a bit of history for us all. Let us all pray the prayers of our Rule for Archbishop Flynn as promulgated for us in Article 23.

RULE: ARTICLE 23

23. And if the ailing person depart from this life, it is to be published to the brothers and sisters who may be present in the city or place, so that they may gather for the funeral; and they are not to leave until the Mass has been celebrated and the body consigned to burial. Thereupon each member within eight days of the demise shall say for the soul of the deceased: a Mass, if he is a priest; fifty psalms, if he understands the Psalter,* or if not, then fifty Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at the end of each.

Thank you, and God bless you always.

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



Feet for the Journey by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading for Christmas Midnight Mass

Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. (Luke 2:4-5)

Do you ever think about feet? Maybe only when they're hurting. Our feet serve us so humbly and faithfully, we do miss them when they are out of commission. A year or so ago, I was diagnosed with plantar fasciitis in one foot and Achilles tendinopathy in the other. At the same time had a frozen hip joint. It was a perfect storm. I was quite out of commission. I remember watching people walk and marvelling at the beauty of it, at God's stunning design of our bodies that, when they are functioning normally, can travel long distances on foot. We have gotten away from that in modern times, and that's a pity. God be praised in the glory of the human body!

The Scripture passage above gives little insight into the actual journey the Holy Couple undertook to get from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census. But Mary and Joseph's 90-mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was no doubt filled with great hardship. Having been to the Holy Land in the past year, I have a new appreciation, not just for the sheer length of the journey, but also the punishing terrain along the way. Winter in the Holy Land can be cold and rainy, and the trip would have been slow, likely taking a week or more. Whether they travelled on foot or rode a donkey, it would have been gruelling, especially as Mary was heavy with child.



Perhaps it seems strange to consider their feet at this holy time of year. But Advent is a journey—a mission really. And as soldiers know, if you don't look after your feet, your mission may become compromised over something as seemingly inconsequential as a blister.

The feet of Mary and Joseph would have been cold and sore. No hot bath at the end of each day either! This too was the hidden life of Nazareth. How fascinating it will be in heaven to know much was won for us through daily trials such as these.

Some years ago, I felt led to see how many passages in Scripture mentioned the feet of Jesus, either directly or indirectly. There were more than I had considered, so I put together some little prayer meditations, which I have adapted here.

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

Mary and Joseph were specially chosen to care for Jesus in his infancy and childhood. As parents, would they not have kissed his pure little feet in homage, and would not the Holy Child whose feet would one day be nailed to the cross, have been consoled by it? *Beloved Jesus, your infant feet, cared for and adored by Mary and Joseph, were a visible sign of your innocence and purity. May we strive always to imitate your innocence and purity. As we kiss your holy feet in the Christmas manger, may you feel once more the comforting kisses of Mary and Joseph. May your kingdom come!*

John 1: 14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us.

When the Word became flesh, his holy feet served as a living bridge between heaven and earth. Each step he took on earth sanctified and cleansed the world he came to save. *Living Word of the Father, use our prayers and sacrifices as you wish to once again bridge heaven and earth. Walk in our walking, pray in our praying, love in our loving. May your kingdom come!*

Romans 10:15 As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the] good news!"

Matthew 11: 4-5 Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them."

How our Lord's holy feet must have suffered as they trod the hot and dusty roads of the Holy Land to

bring the Good News to the poor! *Humble Savior, for the sake of your holy feet so battered on account of our sin, grant us the grace to imitate your long-suffering perseverance in spreading the Gospel message to those you send us, for the glory of God the Father. May your kingdom come!*

Mark 5: 22-24 Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live." So he went with him.

The Divine Physician had mercy on Jairus who fell at his holy feet to make supplication for the life and health of his daughter. In his mercy he rewarded the man's faith and answered his prayer. *Glorious Savior, to whom nothing is impossible, grant us the humility and faith we need to work and pray for the conversion of sinners, so that all who are dead in their sins will be brought, in you, to newness of life. May your kingdom come!*

Luke 10: 38-39 Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying.

The Divine Teacher told Martha that her sister Mary had chosen the "better part" in choosing to sit at his feet and listen to him. *Beloved Lord, may we, like Mary, always choose the better part. May we sit at your holy feet and learn from you new ways to worship you and contemplate your glory. May your kingdom come!*

Luke 7: 44-47 Then turning towards the woman, he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love."

The love and gratitude this woman felt for Jesus gave her a holy audacity. She did not let human approval stop her from showing her love for her Beloved, bathing his holy feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair, from covering his feet with kisses and anointing them with costly oil. *Lord of compassion, as we sinners contemplate your*

mercy, may all that we have been given and forgiven fill us with unending gratitude, holy audacity, great confidence, and unending trust in your great love. May your kingdom come!

John 19:16 Then (Pilate) handed (Jesus) over to them to be crucified.

Our loving Savior allowed his holy feet to be nailed to the cross out of love for us, allowing every drop of his precious blood to spill to earth. Founts of mercy gushed forth from him, top to bottom. *O Lord, what love! Give us the courage we need to stand at the foot of your cross with our Blessed Mother and St. John, that we too may kiss your holy, crucified feet. May your kingdom come!*

Matthew 28: 8-9 So (the women) left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him.

Jesus, the God of surprise and delight, met the women on the road after the angels had told them that their Lord had risen from the dead. In love and unimaginable joy, they embraced his holy feet and paid him homage. *Risen Savior, may we also worship you passionately as Lord and Savior, embracing your*

holy feet with delight, as we wait in joyful hope for the fulfilment of your promise to come again in glory. May your kingdom come!

1 Corinthians 15: 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

The King of Kings must reign until he has placed all his enemies under his holy feet. *All-powerful Savior, may our humble prayers and sacrifices, perfected in the power of the Divine Will, hasten the day of your coming in glory. May your kingdom come! Fiat!*

Ephesians 6:14-15 So stand fast with your loins girded in truth, clothed with righteousness as a breastplate, and your feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace.

As Franciscan penitents, FOOTsoldiers in the Lord's army, we try hard to be lowly and useful, fulfilling our duties whether we are appreciated or not. Perhaps we are best represented as the feet in the body of Christ. *Glorious Commander, train us to become more humble, faithful, and steadfast in your service. Protect us against the tiniest blister of sin, and the most putrid fungus of pride. Lord Jesus, may your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as in heaven! Fiat!*

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada



FROM THE 'SPARROW' Roses of Christmas...

Peace and the greetings of the Season to all the little sparrows! This sparrow has reached back into the archives and dusted off this Franciscan tale to share, in a whimsical way, for all of you:

The Franciscan brother left the friary where he lived with other friars and started the short walk into town. There he was to meet up with the other friars to attend this Benediction service at the church on this Christmas Eve and later to attend the midnight Mass. As the brother walked along, he took his rosary off the side of his brown Franciscan habit and got ready

to recite the various mysteries. He thought of Our Lady and her many names, so much so, that he affectionately called her "Our Lady of the Wondrous Titles." He would select one each day in her honor. Being as it was Christmas Eve, he chose Maria Rosa Mystica or as the lay people would refer to her as the Mystical Rose.

As he started into his meditations he thought of St. Francis of Assisi and his great devotion to Our Lady and when he rounded a curve in the path and suddenly saw a little sparrow laying unconscious in the snow on the pathway where it had fallen after inadvertently flying into a closed window on this cold afternoon. Stooping down he realized it was only temporarily stunned and he whispered a small plea of help to the Mystical Rose and the Poverello for this "wounded little brother sparrow" and immediately he cupped his hands around it and blew his warm breath on the cold and frightened brother sparrow. Within a few seconds there was a flutter of wings and he opened his hands as brother sparrow launched itself into flight. With a smile the brother picked up where he'd left off in the decade of the rosary.

When he walked into the town square where the church was located, he was pleasantly surprised to see that the townspeople had copied a story from St. Francis' life and had built a small manger scene just outside the church entrance door. It was complete with real livestock. As he stopped and looked, with



rosary in hand, he spotted within the scene a man and woman dressed appropriately as Joseph and Mary, who were looking at a real child who was wrapped up in warm swaddling clothes and bedding. There was sister sheep, brother goat, brother ox, and "sister donkey" and they were stoically looking upon the Holy Family as if they understood the deeper meaning of the scene.

The pastor came out of the church and upon seeing the brother standing there at the manger came over and explained a request that he wished the brother to undertake. It seemed that a woman of the parish was recently widowed and although she had been a devout and well-loved member of the church community, she had lost her will to go on. Seemingly her faith and hope had been strained and she was now trying to make it on her own and had stopped coming to church much to the dismay of the priest and others who loved her. The brother nodded his head silently indicating that he would go right then to her home just on the outskirts of town and visit the widow. He walked off with rosary still in hand.

As he walked across the square, he saw a small boy sitting dejectedly on the curb and he had tears rolling down his face and it was obvious that something traumatic and hurtful had happened to him. When the brother stopped and looked at him the boy looked back at him forlornly but also with an expression on his face that said that at that moment, he did not want to talk about it. Brother nodded his head understandingly and without a word he gestured with his free hand to the boy to come and walk with him. The boy fell into step walking dejectedly by his side.

As he passed by a man who was known as a skeptical believer though he was nominally known to be a Catholic. For some time, this man had wanted to address this known mystic friar brother with a question to test out whether God was a reality that could be grasped. He spoke to the passing brother with boy in tow and said, "They say you can communicate with God through prayers to His Mother. If this is so then ask God to tell you a list of my sins and if it is the true list, then I'll believe you really can get inspirations from the Lord and He truly exists." The brother looked at the man and nodded his head in silence and lifted his rosary and gave a little smile of encouragement to the man. With that the man fell into step next to the boy as they continued walking slowly towards the widow's house.

When they reached her home, the brother motioned for the two to wait outside while he knocked and

then entered her house where she left the door open and looked at the two waiting in her front yard. Without a word and still with rosary in hand he walked to the fireplace where a fire was burning and he reached down and grasped the fireplace poker and reached into the fire and drug out a red hot ember from the midst of the fire and let it sit by itself on the hearth about a foot apart from the main fire. The widow walked over and along with the brother stared at the slowly dying ember until finally it went dark and lay inert. Without saying a word, he looked over to her and then she said, "Oh, I understand now. Let me get my shawl and I'll go back with you to the church."

The four of them started walking back towards the town square and as they went along, they met a young girl who had a vacant look in her eyes as if thinking about what she was about to be engaged in as a "lady of the night." This was weighing heavily upon her soul but being alone and unwelcomed she had no hope or choices left. The skeptical man knew of her and in a self-righteous manner shot a question at her, "Where do you think you are going?" Still looking forward with down cast eyes she mumbled, "I'm going to a friends house in town." To which the man indignantly snorted but said nothing else. The girl looked at the brother still with rosary in hand, who cast a sympathetic and understanding look towards her and this made her feel somewhat accepted in a strange and unexpected way. She kept the same pace as the small group and came to the edge of the town square where they all stopped and looked at the Franciscan who had finished his rosary and tucked it under the cord at his side.

St. Francis had spoke to his followers saying, "Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary use words." It was time now to use words. The brother looking across the square at the church and then back to the young girl of the night he motioned with his hand toward the church and said to her, "That is my Friend's house and you are more than welcome as He is expecting to see you." The girl smiled in new appreciation and nodded in acceptance of the invitation gratefully. He said to the widow, "The Lord has been looking for you as did the Father looking for the Prodigal Son. He awaits you with love and open arms this very night." She smiled warmly upon hearing those words of acceptance.

Turning slightly he looked at the man and the man asked the brother, "Well, while you were praying the rosary did you ask God for that list of my sins?" "Yes." said the brother who looked at him with penetrating eyes then said, "God said to tell you that He has forgotten your sins!" With that obvious truth that the man had overlooked he shook his head and

closed his eyes for a moment in self-reproach and then shook his head that he accepted the answer he'd been given.

The brother's features softened and he looked down at the boy and said, "Tell me what tragedy has wounded your heart?" The boy said, "As you can see I'm from a different people than live here. Today I came to town from the work fields and with the little money I had scrounged I bought a small bag of food and when I went outside of the store the local boys waiting outside made fun of my looks and they surrounded me and pushed me down and I dropped the little bag of food. One boy grabbed the bag and they all ran away laughing and leaving me with nothing to eat for a couple of days now." Here the boys eyes were filled with anger and as he continued his anger flared, "I hate them. hate them all!" The boy then fell silent.

The brother then spoke to the boy saying, "I, too, at times have felt a great hate for those who have taken so much, with no sorrow for what they do. But hate wears you down and does not hurt your enemy. It is like taking poison and wishing your enemy would die. I have struggled with these feelings many times. It is like as if there were two wolves inside me. One is white, the other is black. The white wolf is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with those around him and does not take offense when offense is intended. It will only fight when it is right to do so, and in the right way. The black wolf is full of anger. The smallest thing will send him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great. It is helpless anger, for his anger will change nothing. Sometimes it is hard for me to live with these two wolves inside me, for both try to dominate my spirit." Here he stopped and peered at

the boy. The boy looked intently at the brother and asked, "Which one wins?" With the boy and the others looking expectedly for an answer, the brother smiled and replied, "The one I feed."

Looking back at the church the brother saw several friars of the First Order, some sisters from the Second Order, and some members of the Third Order all belonging to the family of St. Francis. The Franciscans were all looking on the manger scene and quietly talking or silently meditating on the humble scene. The brother, with lowered eyes, said to the ones who had followed him, "Come and meet my family for they'd love to meet and greet you in the Name of the Lord." With that he strode toward the manger with his little group following him. As he made his way he reflected on the stunned sparrow that had regained flight by the warm breath he blew on it. He thought of the four souls that had as Shakespeare had once said "...suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune..." and he prayerfully wished that Our Lady, the Mystical Rose, would pray to Our Lord, the Rose of Sharon, to send His Holy Spirit who would "blow His warm breath and fire" upon these poor "cold and stunned" souls. Now, that would make a truly Holy Night of Christmas Roses. He thought of how the day unfolded and then prayed: "Rosa Mystica, Immaculata, Mater Dolorosa, please continue to show me that you are my Mother, Bride of the Holy Ghost, and Queen of Heaven and Earth. I bless and thank you for the prayerful grace you obtained for these children today from the Most High God. Amen"

Ut In Omnes Gloriam Deum*
(*That in all things God be glorified.)

Pax et bonum, Bro. Sparrow

Bob Hall BSP, Little Flower Chapter, N. Carolina

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

MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

HANDBOOK OF THE ASSOCIATION...



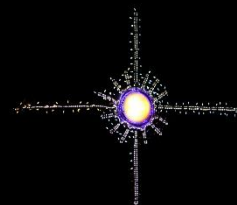
The BSP Handbook, titled *Stella Matutina: Handbook of The Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis* is now available for order.

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.



*Blessed Christmas
dear brothers
and sisters!*

follow the Star!



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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