



...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

Chapter X. Various Other Miracles



6. At Cori in the diocese of Ostia, a man lost the use of his leg, so that he could neither walk nor move about. He was in frightful agony and had given up hope of any human remedy. Then one night he began to complain to St. Francis, as if he saw him present there before him, saying, "St. Francis, help me. Remember the way I served you and the loyalty I showed you. I supplied an ass

and feet. I always had great devotion to you, and I was your benefactor. Now look at me dying with the pain of this torment." St. Francis was moved by his complaints and he remembered the services which he had done him. In gratitude for his devotion he appeared to the man together with another friar in a vision. He told him that he had come in answer to his appeal and that he had a cure for him. He touched the place where the pain was with a small stick shaped like a cross. At that the abscess burst and the man was completely cured. And, what is more wonderful still, the mark of the cross remained impressed on the spot where the ulcer had been cured, to remind the man of the miracle. This was the mark with which Francis sealed his letter, whenever charity demanded that he should write to someone.

7. Our hearts have been absorbed in describing the various miracles of St. Francis, but now by the intervention of the glorious standard-bearer of the Cross, they return once more to the Cross, by divine guidance. This is to remind us that, just as the Cross marks the highest point of all that Francis had done to win salvation while fighting in the army of Christ, so it has become the hallmark of all that brings him honor, now that he is sharing Christ's triumph.

8. The deep and wonderful mystery of the Cross in

which the gifts of grace and the reward of virtue—all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge—are hidden so sublimely that it is unknown to the wise and prudent of this world, was fully revealed to Christ's beggar; his whole life followed the way of the Cross; it held no attraction except that of the Cross; it proclaimed nothing but the glory of the Cross. At the beginning of his religious life, Francis could truly say with St. Paul, "God forbid that I should make a display of anything, except the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:14). At all times during his life, he could say with equal truth, "Peace and pardon to all those who follow this rule" (Ibid. 16). But at the end of his life he could say with greater truth than ever, "I bear the scars of the Lord Jesus printed on my body" (Ibid. 17). And we long to hear nothing more from him every day than the words, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen" (Ibid. 18).

9. You can make your boast in the glory of the Cross without fear now, O glorious standard-bearer of the Cross. It was from the Cross you began, and according to the rule of the Cross that you made progress, and it was in the Cross that you brought your life to its final consummation. Now, by the witness of the Cross, all the faithful see the glory you enjoy in heaven. Those who abandon the Egypt of this world can follow you with complete confidence; the Cross of Christ will part the waters of the sea like Moses' rod, and they shall traverse the desert to the promised land of the living, where they shall enter by the miraculous power of the Cross, having crossed the Jordan of our human mortality.

May Christ Jesus crucified, the true leader and savior of his people, lead us there by the merits of his servant Francis, to the glory of the triune God, who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Bonaventure—Major Life of St. Francis (1263)





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier

Sunday Sermon for, December 27, 2020

Readings: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Col 3:12-21; Lk 2:22-40



In the first reading today Sirach tells us that God has set a father in honor over his children and that a mother's authority over her sons is confirmed by God. I have been reading a book that addresses the proper ordering of relationships as presented for the Jewish family in the Old Testament. The point that is made very clear is the importance of the father in the religious upbringing of the children. Scripture is certainly clear about the role and authority of the mother, but God set things up so the father, as head of the family, was to be the leader in the practice of the Faith.

For the Jewish people, we recall that the mark of the covenant was literally incised into the flesh of each male. This was not a sleight to the women; rather, it was a reminder that each male, when he married, was to keep and pass on that covenant to the next generation. He was to lead the prayers, have his sons circumcised, and offer the sacrifices on behalf of his family. In essence, he was to be the priest to his family.

I mention all of this because the passage from the Prophet Malachi regarding the role of the Prophet Elijah in preparation for the Day of the Lord takes on greater significance when we understand this background. Elijah, we are told, will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. On one hand, this can be understood in terms of our Heavenly Father and turning us back where we belong. But on the natural level, it implies that there will be a breakdown of the family and the family relationships before the great and terrible day.

The way family life has been lived in our day looks very little like the way God intended it to be. The devil knows the importance of the family in the life of a child. He knows how important it is to have a mother and a father in the home. Therefore, in order to destroy the stability, security, and proper ordering in the minds of the young, the devil has put all his force into destroying the family. This has led to mass confusion among our young people. We see the attempts to redefine the family with a variety of

relationships other than mother and father, who are also husband and wife.

The breakdown of the family has had tragic results for everyone. Men do not know what it means to be men because they often did not have a dad in the home. Women do not know what true male love is because they were deprived of it in their upbringing. Mothers are frequently left to try to be both mother and father. Men feel like they are unwanted or not needed. The rise of "supermoms" has left many men feeling emasculated. The trend of effeminate men and masculine women is not only contrary to God's intention for us and for the family, but it is degrading and unnatural. How can children know who they are if their parents do not know who they are as men and women?

Sirach speaks of a mother's authority over her sons. While we can all understand this, we also need to realize that a mother's authority must be upheld by her husband. If her sons see that their father does not respect their mother's authority, they will follow the example of their father. If a girl sees that her mother has no respect for the honor God has given to her father, she will follow the example of her mother. It is imperative, for the sake of marriage, spouses, and children, the Church and society, that we turn back to what God created. We need to turn back the hearts of fathers to their children and turn back the hearts of children to their fathers.

If the role of the father is upheld, the role of the mother will be upheld as well. Both need to build up each other. God has revealed the proper ordering of the family, but it has become politically incorrect and either ignored or rejected. In the second reading St. Paul says wives are to be subordinate to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives.

This is what we see in the Holy Family. Our Lady and St. Joseph give us the model of what a marital relationship should look like: a relationship marked by mutual love and respect. The proper ordering of the marriage will lead to a proper ordering of the family which, in turn, will lead to stable and secure children. Live your marriage as God intended and you will have a holy family!

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ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...



Happy New Year!

The last several years when we hit New Year's we always discussed resolutions, the need to make some resolutions and decisions regarding the new year to get the entire year more centered in Christ. This

year let's discuss a primary resolution we should all have: to pray more!

St. Paul, in Thessalonians 5: 17, says "pray without ceasing". It is a wonderful idea and great goal but what comes to us is 'how do we do that?' How do we actually pray without ceasing? It is easier said than done as we ponder it.

Well, that is certainly how we have felt so often as we have considered it. Oh, we did various things at various times to pray more. We said more rosaries. We said ejaculations. We focused on prayer. But did we get it?

Then we ran into the answer, and it is an easy answer for the spiritually mature, in the Office of Readings for Friday of the third week of Advent, in a writing by St. Augustine, who was a very intelligent person, very philosophical, and a doctor of the Church. What St. Augustine said on that day was:

"For the desire of your heart is itself your prayer. And if the desire is constant, so is your prayer." (St. Augustine, Friday, Third week of Advent)

The desire of our hearts is the way we pray all day every day, even when we are sleeping. If we desire to pray and to lead holy lives, we will do it. It will happen, and we will be praying without ceasing.

Of course, this does not eliminate the need to pray the Rule for those of us who are professed. Or to pray with our families as a practice to build prayer into other people's lives. It does relieve us of worrying if we are praying enough, and it will bring us to a deeper consciousness of our relationship with God. If we can pray by having a simple desire to pray and serve God what else can it affect?

Well, the only answer is, it affects everything about our relationship with God. It models who we are, and how we see ourselves before God. It affects our opinion of the Church and the power of the Church, as one inherent desire of the Church is to see the salvation of all men. So, the desire of the Church is also the prayer of the Church and it goes on unceasingly. The Church is always after souls, and so should we be in union with the Church and in our prayers. With the Church we should be fishers of men.

We do that by living our Rule for ourselves, the good of the Church and the world. The effect of it is that it saves our souls. That is why St. Francis gave the Rule to the laity. To save their souls. So, we fast, and abstain, and pray, and lead simple lives in the sight of God, all for good and holy things. To become holy ourselves and hopefully bring the world along with us to heaven. We have a wonderful job to do.

So, let's rejoice as the Christmas season ends, and enter anew the life of our Rule for this good and holy purpose, to pray always and help save the world, for Jesus. And January 1st is the feast of Mary, the Mother of God, who is our mother too. So let us remember Our Mother in our prayers on that day, and always. She is always there for us.

Happy New Year to all!

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

What is the True Meaning of Christmas?

By Michael Gustek



"Now as they were eating Jesus took bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body. And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Matthew 26:26-28)

What does the Last Supper have to do with the True meaning of Christmas? It has everything to do with the True meaning of Christmas. In the second

chapter of Saint Luke's Gospel we read, **"Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis – Glory to God in the highest. And on**

earth peace to men of good will.” (Lk 2:14) These are the praises the angels proclaimed to the shepherds the night of Jesus’s birth. These verses show us we must, above all, praise and worship the One True God. This must be done because **“From eternity, in the beginning, He created me, and for eternity I shall not cease to exist.”** (Sir 24:9). God must be worshipped and praised because He alone is the Author of life. Without His love, we would not exist.

The worship of God is not man-made. In heaven, where the Lord sits on His throne, the angels and saints continuously honor God with **“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.”** (Is 6:3b). Saint John confirms this in Revelation, **“After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this...and day and night they never cease to sing, ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!’ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever...”** (Rev 4:1, 8b-9). In heaven, the angels and saints glorify and praise God continuously.

What does this mean for us? In the sixth chapter of Saint Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray. From this they, and we, received the Lord’s prayer. In this prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, **“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”** (Mt 6:10b). In heaven, there is continuous praise and worship of the One True God. We are to give praise and worship continuously to our God. Jesus instituted the Mass at the Last Supper and taught us how to praise and worship Him. This is seen in the passage from Saint Matthew written above. It is even more emphasized in Saint John’s Gospel in the sixth chapter. Jesus said, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him.”** (Jn 6:52b-56). To praise and glorify God is to be one with Him. The Holy Eucharistic is the gift bestowed on us by Jesus so we may be one with Him and ultimately one with the Holy Trinity. The Holy Eucharist instituted by Christ, preserved by the His

bride, the Catholic Church, is how God wants men of good will to worship Him.

Who are men of good will as revealed in the second chapter of Saint Luke’s Gospel? In the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, Luke 2:14 reads, **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased!”** Men of good will are those who hear the Word of God, obey Him, and thus are pleasing to Him. The Holy Bible has a lot to say about this. Here are just a few verses.

“Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord!” (Ps 119:1)

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.” (Jn 3:36)

“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 5:17-19)

Jesus commands us to take and eat His flesh and drink His blood. When we discern and worthily eat His flesh and drink His blood in the Holy Eucharist, we are pleasing to Him and are men of good will. The True meaning of Christmas is to give glory to God and this is done through the worship of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost through the Catholic Mass. Christmas is not just the 25th of December. It is every day since, every day, **“from the rising of the sun to its setting”** (Mal 2:11a) that the Catholic Mass is offered around the world.

Another piece of evidence that the True meaning of Christmas is the Mass comes from the word Christmas itself. This word was first introduced in AD 1038 and it is a shortened form of Christ’s Mass. On the 25th of December, Christ’s Mass is offered to commemorate the birth of Jesus and give glory to God above all things.

Now, many will protest and say what about Jesus being born to save us from our sins? Is this not the true meaning of Christmas, giving thanks for our redemption? Yes, Jesus did die for our sins, but this is not the primary reason for Jesus becoming man.

Blessed John Duns Scotus, a Franciscan friar who lived from AD 1265 to 1308, meditated and wrote

about the primacy of Christ. Here is one of his writings about the Incarnation.

In his *Opus Parisiense*:

"It is said that the fall of man is the necessary [in the sense of decisive] reason for this predestination. Since God saw that man would fall, He saw that he would be redeemed in this way, and so He foresaw [Christ's] human nature to be assumed and to be glorified with so great a glory.

"I declare, however, that the fall was not the cause of Christ's predestination. In fact, even if no man or angel had fallen, nor any man but Christ were to be created, Christ would still have been predestined this way. I prove this as follows: because everyone who wills in an orderly manner, will first the end, then more immediately those things which are closer to the end; but God wills in a most orderly manner; therefore, that is the way His wills. In the first place, then, He will Himself, and immediately after Him, ad extra (outside Himself), is the soul of Christ. Therefore, after first willing those objects intrinsic to Himself, God willed this glory for Christ. Therefore, before any merit or demerit, He foresaw that Christ would be united with Him in the oneness of Person."

This is a summary of the teaching of Saint Paul as seen in several of his epistles. Father Dominic Unger wrote this in 1942:

"Christ is the First-born and the Head of all the elect. That is the unmistakable doctrine of Saint Paul (cf. Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15; Ephesians 1:3-6; and also Proverbs 8:22). But that predestination in which Christ is First-born and the Head, is the original predestination of all men: according to Saint Paul there is only one predestination; not two—one at the creation without Christ, and one after the fall with Christ. There was only one plan of divine adoption and that was before the foundation of the world and in Christ Jesus. God wanted to elevate men to grace and glory; but He never willed to do that except through Christ. So Christ was in the very first picture of predestination and there is no longer rhyme or reason in speaking of His coming merely to redeem."

God became man in the person of Jesus because this was God's plan for all eternity. When we worship God according to His design in the Holy Mass, we give glory to God in the highest and we have peace as men of good will. This is the True meaning of Christmas.

Ave Maria

Michael Gustek, BSP

Penitents in 2021...



by Janet Klasson, BSP

From the First Reading, Baptism of the Lord

**For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)**

Well dear friends, if we have ever wondered why the Lord has resurrected the penitential way of life in our day, I think 2020 has given us plenty of rationale, enough to make us grateful for receiving the grace to answer the call. Consequently, the beginning of a new year steeped with uncertainty might be a good time to examine our response to that call in light of the Scripture passages on which St. Francis based the Rules of Life for his orders.

1. The Conditions of Discipleship

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever



wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." (Matt. 16:24,25)

By God's grace, through the Rule, we have been trained in the discipline of dying to self, in good times and in bad. One way we can know if we are being true to this scripture verse is how often we use the words, I, me, and my. These words can be indications that we are still using our own will as guide, and may have made little progress in dying to self. As an exercise, why not try substituting Thou, Thee, and Thy for a day and see if it makes a difference. Most especially the prayer, **Thy Will be**

done. Could be most enlightening.

In this pandemic uncertainty, dying to self cannot be optional if we expect to be a sign of hope to others in these darkening hours before the New Dawn. I have been listening to Fr. B. Thomas Celso, BDV, in his teachings on the writings of Luisa Piccarreta. Fr Celso says that a sure sign that we are still living in the human will is worry, fear, anxiety, complaining, negativity, sin, and doubt. Conversely, a sure sign we are living in the Divine Will is peace, happiness, and joy. A simple test.

2. The Mission of the Seventy-two

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way." (Luke 10:1-4)

Lambs among wolves—sounds very familiar. Did Jesus tell the lambs to pack weapons to keep them safe on the way? No! He wouldn't even let them pack a lunch! He sent them out barefoot, hungry, and defenseless and told them not to speak to anyone on the way—not to engage with the enemy outside the camp. In a series of talks on the Six Steps of Living in the Divine Will, Fr. Celso makes this comment in reference to the Fourth Step, "The Test": **"God loves impossible situations, and he puts us in impossible situations. Then he steps back and says what are you going to do about this? And we (need to) say, 'Jesus you're really good at impossible situations...Jesus I trust in YOU.' If we don't trust him in little things, we are not going to be able to trust him in the big things."**

Dear friends, are we not faced these days with many impossible situations? Everything is a test. Jesus gave us the Church to safeguard us against error. For 2000 years the Holy Spirit has ensured that the teachings of the Magisterium are protected, in good times and in bad. This has not changed and will never change. No matter how much confusion there is in the Church, the central teachings of the Magisterium will be protected by the Holy Spirit. We can trust that Jesus is speaking through the Church.

On March 20, 1899 Jesus said to Luisa:

*"The reason why the world has reduced itself to such a sad state is that **it has lost subordination to leaders; and since the first leader is God against whom they have***

***rebelled**, it happened as a consequence that they have lost any subjection to and dependence on the Church, the laws and all the others who are said to be leaders. Ah! my daughter, what will happen to so many members infected by this bad example of the very ones who are said to be leaders – that is, superiors, parents, and many others? Ah! They will reach such a point that neither parents, nor brothers, nor kings, nor princes will be recognized any more. These members will be like many vipers that will poison one another. Therefore, see how necessary chastisements are in these times, and how necessary it is for death to almost destroy this sort of people, so that the few who will be left may learn at the expense of others to be humble and obedient. So, let Me do; do not want to oppose my chastising the people."*

On October 21, 1899 he told her:

*"...be happy and calm, and, as I go about chastising the people you are to accompany Me with your sighs and sufferings, **praying that these very chastisements may lead to the people's conversion.**"*

How many years ago was that? Look at what is drawing down chastisement—rebellion against authority! Rebellion is never the will of God—it carries the stench of sulphur. Again, to quote Fr. Celso, *"If we live in the Divine Will, nothing should bother us, even if we don't understand it. In the Divine Will, everything is Fiat."* Like Mary.

God foresaw these days, just as he foresaw the days of Noah. That is why he gave us the Church and Our Lady. They are the Ark of safety for us.

There are many competing voices in the Church and in the world. The Church teaches that everything that happens is either the ordained will of God or the permissive will of God. Our faithfulness is being tested, just as Adam's was. There is fear and panic on every side. Look for balance. Look for peace.

We need to see ourselves as little barefoot lambs surrounded by wolves. At every sign of danger, we leap into the arms of our Shepherd and say, "Jesus, you're really good at impossible situations. I trust in YOU and the Church you founded. I don't have to figure everything out because you know everything, and you have a glorious, victorious plan. Hold me, carry me. I will rest in safety, while you take care of everything. Fiat!"

Jesus told St. Faustina: *"My daughter, let three virtues adorn you in a particular way: humility, purity of intention, and love. Do nothing beyond what I demand of you, and accept everything that*

My hand gives you. Strive for a life of recollection so that you can hear My voice, which is so soft that only recollected souls can hear it ... (Diary, 1779)."

The Rule wisely encourages us to silence the voices around us and inside us through contemplation. Let us remain recollected and ever still, trusting in the Lord, the God of history. He is coming to renew the face of the earth, so let us wait in joyful hope, within his loving embrace.

3. The Rich Official

An official asked him this question, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life. Jesus answered him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother."

And he replied, "All of these I have observed from my youth." When Jesus heard this he said to him, "There is still one thing left for you if you wish to be perfect: go, sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." But when he heard this he became quite sad, for he was very rich.

Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the

kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Luke 19: 18-25)

One thing I believe the Lord is trying to teach us through this pandemic is to keep to essentials—very Franciscan. Even penitents can get caught up in many things. The Lord is calling us to become littler. Are we little enough to fit in a manger? Are we humble enough to be born in a cave? If not, then we're not there yet and it's time to dig deeper. What we cling to is what will send us to purgatory, whether possessions, unhealthy relationships, even our own opinions. Until we become nothing, acknowledge our nothingness, and love nothing but Jesus and all people through him alone, we have yet more spiritual work to do. Yes, it's a marathon.

Friends, God never patches, but always creates. He is doing a new thing. Fr. Celso often says this: "*The reign of the evil one is ending. Evil is going down! This is a great time to be alive! Are you ready?*" He says the prayer for our time is this one: **Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful. Enkindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be RE-created! And you shall renew the face of the earth!**

May God bless us all as we look forward to the coming Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Come Holy Spirit! Fiat!

The Elder Faithful, God's Forgotten Army

"We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 1:1-5)

As is my custom when time allows, I arrived about half an hour early for mass one Sunday. It wasn't my usual parish as I was away from home, but I found a pew close to the tabernacle and knelt to pray. After a little while, two mature women, well past retirement age approached the votive stand near the tabernacle to light candles for their loved ones. I was noticing the shade of their hair—pure snowy-white—when I heard these words interiorly: "All the snow is at the summit."

I pondered this remembering again that God's ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. In ages past, the elderly in our society were revered and respected. Today it is much different; so often the elderly are seen as being a burden. But, in our Lord's eyes, the reality is much different.

The episode reminded me of something that happened several years ago on Holy Thursday in my home parish. After Mass I stayed to adore our Lord in the adoration chapel. Several other parishioners also stayed, among them a couple in their late eighties. Stiffly they walked, but reverently, bowing as much as they were able to acknowledge the Lord's presence. They stayed about 15 minutes, then got up to leave, again bowing as much as they were able. At that moment, I heard these words interiorly: "Well done, good and faithful servant." Beyond the words, I felt in my heart the Lord's absolute respect for the elder faithful. It brought me to tears and helped me see the elders with, not so much new eyes, but with a new heart.

Sometimes I think elders themselves feel that they have outlived their usefulness, but nothing could be further from the truth, not even in a pandemic! For,

as St. Paul tells us, "God's power is made perfect in weakness." When we are young and able, much of the time we spend working for the Lord is done with whatever time we have to spare. There is the temptation to feel we are doing it in our own power and often we have our own agenda. When we get older, he *puts a belt around our waist and leads us to a place we would rather not go*. It is in *taking up this cross and following him* that he is finally able to accomplish in us the greatest work of our lives—if we let him.

And what is that work? St. Francis did not consider himself a friend of Christ unless he loved the souls that Christ loved. He used to say that nothing is more important than the salvation of souls. This is the work that elders must take up. Lighting votive candles is an outward sign of an inward attitude of prayer for souls.

When I heard the words, "All the snow is on the summit," our Lord was trying to tell me that these elders were cooperating with him to accomplish the greatest work of their lives—the salvation of souls. This is a great spiritual battle. The weapons God provides to fight the battle—namely suffering and humiliation—are not those we would necessarily choose to take up. But remember that these are the same weapons Christ himself used on the cross. These weapons are invincible, as Christ himself proved. A soul that offers every moment of

ignominy, agony, or abandonment to the Father is on the cross with Christ shedding blood for the salvation of souls. There is nothing more important or more urgent—especially in a pandemic, when many are dying unprepared.

An elder faithful who makes a prayer of surrender each morning in the Divine Will, for the sake of souls, and endures every indignity and medical treatment, every tear and pain, every moment of loneliness and feeling of abandonment in, with, through, and for Jesus, is being used by God in a powerful way to save souls. Everything on earth will fade away, and elders feel this more keenly than the rest of us, but what joy it will be to know forever the gratitude of the souls we have assisted with our prayers and sacrifices. What unimaginable joy it will give us to hear the Lord's words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Prayer: *O Jesus, in the Divine Will, through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings of this day, in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered throughout the world. I offer them in, with, through, and for You, for Your glory, the salvation of souls, in reparation for sin, and for the purification of your Holy Bride, the Church. I accept all things from Your loving hand for Your kind and mysterious purpose, and may Your holy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.*

(Reprinted from an earlier newsletter, updated for the pandemic.)

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada

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https://oll-resources.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/oll3/store/titles/1172/StFrancis_0535_EBk_v6.0.pdf

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.



St. Francis Prayer Praising Mary

*Hail, holy Lady, most holy Queen,
Mary, Mother of God, ever Virgin.*

*You were chosen by the Most High Father in heaven,
consecrated by Him, with His most Holy Beloved Son and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.*

On you descended and still remains all the fullness of grace and every good.

Hail, His Palace.

Hail His Tabernacle.

Hail His Robe.

Hail His Handmaid.

Hail, His Mother.

*And Hail, all holy Virtues, who, by grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit,
are poured into the hearts of the faithful so that from their faithless state,
they may be made faithful servants of God through you.*



*Botticelli – Madonna of the Book – Virgin and Child
Painted between 1480 and 1483*

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!

[Website: www.bspenance.org](http://www.bspenance.org)



The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF
PENANCE



of St. Francis

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