



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

BONAVENTURE AND HIS LESSONS ON ST. FRANCIS:

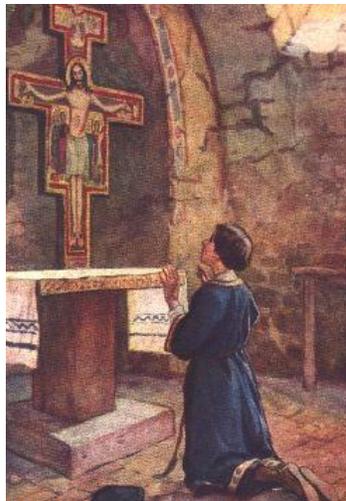
Some of the miracles which took place after St. Francis' death

Chapter I. The Beginning of St. Francis' Religious Life

1. *Fourth lesson:* One day as he was praying in solitude, Jesus Christ appeared to him, hanging on his Cross. He made Francis realize so vividly the force of the Gospel words, "If any man has a mind to come my way, let him renounce self, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mt 16, 24) that his heart was filled with compassion and burned within him with the fire of love. His soul melted at the sight of the vision, and the memory of Christ's passion was impressed so intimately on the depths of his heart that the wounds of his crucified Lord seemed to be always before his mind's eye, and he could scarcely restrain his sighs and tears. Now that he no longer had any regard for all that he owned in the world and thought nothing of it for love of Jesus Christ, Francis felt that he had found the hidden treasure, the brilliant pearl of great price, mentioned in the Gospel. He was eager to make it his own and he decided to give up everything and become like the trader in the Gospel.

5. *Fifth lesson:* He left the town one day to meditate out of doors and, as he was passing by the church of San Damiano, which was threatening to collapse with age, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to go in and pray. He knelt there before an image of our Lord on his Cross and he felt great pleasure and consolation in his prayers, so that his eyes were full of tears as he gazed at the cross. Then with his own ears, he heard a miraculous voice coming from the Cross saying three times, "Francis, go and repair my house. You see, it is all falling down." At first he was terrified at the divine command expressed in these extraordinary words; but then he was filled with joy

and wonder, and he stood up immediately, prepared to put his whole heart into obeying the command and repairing the material building. However, the message really referred to the universal Church which Christ bought with the price of his Precious Blood, as the Holy Spirit afterwards made him realize, and he himself explained to his close companions.



6. *Sixth lesson:* For love of Christ Francis disposed of everything he had there and then, to the best of his ability, and offered the money to the poor priest who was attached to the church, that he might use it to repair the building and give alms to the poor. He also entreated him earnestly to let him stay, but for fear of his parents, he refused to take the money; in his sincere disregard for worldly wealth, Francis threw the crude metal on a window-sill and had no more regard for it than if it were dust.

When he heard that his father's rage had been aroused against him by what he had done, he tried to avoid his anger, and he hid in an obscure cave for a number of days, where he fasted with prayers and tears. Eventually, however, he was clothed with power from on high and his heart overflowed with spiritual joy; he came out bravely into the open and went into the town, without the slightest fear. When the children saw his haggard looks, they thought that he was out of his mind and had gone mad. They threw mud from the streets at him, as if he were a half-wit, and shouted after him insultingly; but no insults could break or change him, and he passed through it all as if he could not hear a thing.

Bonaventure—Minor Life of St. Francis (1263)





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier

Sunday Sermon for, February 21, 2021

Readings: Gen 9:8-15; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15

“This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.” These

words, taken from today’s Gospel, are the first words our Lord spoke in His public ministry. In fact, as St. Mark records the events, they are the first words our Lord spoke after facing the temptations of Satan in the desert. Perhaps it is part of God’s providence that this year we hear these words twice in a month’s time; we just heard them on January 24.

Before considering these words, we need to look at the context the Church gives us. In the second reading, St. Peter speaks about baptism being prefigured by the flood and that God waited patiently while Noah built the ark. There are two points to notice here. First, that sin reaches a certain point of culmination, but then God waits until the people He has chosen are ready for the task they are to undertake. It took about one hundred years for Noah to build the Ark; God would not begin the deluge until Noah was prepared.

We notice this same pattern with our Lord. In the Gospel we hear about His forty days in the desert; the Synoptic Gospels record that Jesus’ public life and the calling of His Apostles began after this time of trial. St. John, however, gives us the detail about the wedding feast at Cana and shows us that Jesus did not begin His public ministry until everything was ready on the human level, that is, until His Mother was fully prepared. Recall that her statement to the waiters to “do whatever He tells you,” signaled the beginning of the events that would culminate in the hour of His crucifixion.

The second point we need to see is St. Peter’s reference to baptism. Baptism is the entrance into the New Covenant. This covenant was forged on the Cross and ratified in Our Lord’s resurrection from the dead. In other words, the sacrament of Baptism came to us only through suffering and death. We see this same pattern in the other two references to Noah. God makes a covenant with all of humanity that He would never again destroy the whole world by a flood. The rainbow is the sign of that covenant. This covenant was made only after the

horror of the Flood and the death of all humanity, save the eight people who were on the Ark.

To hear the same Gospel passage twice in a month is certainly not the norm, but the words need to catch our attention. It is a time of fulfillment; we need to believe in the Gospel, and we need to repent. The fulfillment, as we know, did not happen for three years after our Lord spoke these words but His words signaled the beginning of that time. Following His words, He gathers disciples around Himself, preaches the Word of God, works many miracles, and goes to His Passion and death. The fulfillment of the New Covenant is fully revealed in the resurrection.

This is a time of fulfillment. Sin has certainly reached a certain point of culmination. God has been waiting patiently while He gets His Saints into place. He has given this time to His Mother who, as we saw above, spoke the words at Cana that set into motion the previous time of fulfillment. Like the other occasions we have considered, this one will require a time of trial and will be complete only when new life begins after the time of death. This time of death will combine the two deaths in today’s readings. There will be the death of the Church and her glorious resurrection. There will also be the deaths of many people, including all who oppose God, as our Lady told us at Akita: fire will fall from the sky killing the greater part of humanity.

When the New Springtime of which St. John Paul spoke arrives, also known as the Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a new life of Godliness will begin as well. People will have been transformed by the suffering; those who remain faithful even when it all looks hopeless will live in a union with God that has been realized previously in only a few of the greatest of Saints. It will be a glorious time of grace and charity, true love of God and neighbor.

In the meantime, we have our Lord’s call to repent and believe in the Gospel. As we enter into this season of Lent, uniting ourselves with our Lord in the desert, we need to consider the areas of our lives that offend God. We need to put our faith into action through repentance and renew the commitment of our baptism: reject Satan and be faithful to God!

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ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

On God's Will

God is the only real meaning and purpose in life. As children, we were taught, at least those in Catholic grade schools that the purpose of life is to 'know, love, and serve God in this life

and be happy with him in heaven.' That's it! Now, that said, you could write a thousand books on how we do that. For each of us it is different.

In the book, [The Heliotropium](#), on conforming our human wills to the divine, the opening chapter addresses the will of God in several ways. First, it says that God's will is involved in everything that happens to us. Everything that happens to us does so either at the command of God, or with His permission. So, the former is called the Ordaining Will of God, and the latter the Permitting Will of God. Nothing happens to anyone purely by chance. This is the fundamental way of seeking to know God's will the book declares. True, wise, and holy is this, the book declares: "The Lord has done it all."

Within that framework God's Will is certainly what happens to us, and in us, naturally, and the message of the Gospel is God's Will for sure. The Gospel is the Word of God come alive, which is what Jesus is and always was and always will be. Jesus is God, and the Son of God and of man, and he is the Word of God made flesh. Naturally we get hungry, and we need to eat. Naturally we get tired and we need to sleep. Obviously, these things are God's will for us. We do a lot of things that have nothing to do with nature though, and therefore nothing to do with God's Will except that we can choose them, for God created us all with a free will, and that complicates, and often obstructs, our response to His Will.

For instance, we might like to smoke. That is our will, not God's, because we choose to do it and can live without it. We might enjoy a drink of alcohol, in that same vein. We watch TV programs, and many are really quite pointless except to humor or entertain us. There are many things we do because we like them, not because they are God's will for us, but are rather the exercise of our own free wills. Some of these things are sinful, but we seek them anyway.

As penitents we can modify even the obvious things God gave us as a sacrifice in union with what Jesus suffered, as substantiated by St. Paul when he said: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church." (Col 1:24) Since we get hungry we must



eat, in God's will. We can choose what to eat and how much to eat though. God allows us a variety of foods, some delicious and some not so delicious. We eat less food and those not so delicious. We eat sweets, but not those we like. So also, we can voluntarily fast from other things of our own free wills. By fasting we can fast, and add our sufferings voluntarily to those of Christ, and improve our prayer life because fasting and other acts of self-denial and mortification, St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, and St. Francis have all said, is essential to grow in mystical prayer.

The marital act is God's will too. It is completely natural, and without it there would be no human race. We cannot be "fertile, multiply" (Gen 1:22) without the union of man and woman, properly in the sacrament of marriage. Then comes the disorder in our passions so celebrated these days. We are told to value this union without marriage or children, or even to unite ourselves to those of the same sex, just for the fun of it, and if the woman gets pregnant, however she conceived, she can abort the fetus! Abortion is the great sin of this age and begs the wrath of God. Obviously if we give up the marital act we won't die, but it is a good example, especially in these days, of how the world, and the devil, calls us to sin, forgetting God's will.

Just as God never changes His love for us, we must do the same towards Him and our neighbor. It is His Will. As Jesus said: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mt 22:37-39) Then He also said: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another." (Jn 13:34) So, this is true, and God's will for us.

We love God, and we love our neighbor, as God loves us. That doesn't make everything easy. God will send us all problems, crosses, challenges, and difficulties. Even difficult people to deal with! He does that precisely because He loves us, to test our love, and to purify us of our faults, weaknesses, sins, and failings. We need to blanket everything with prayer and faith to overcome these things peacefully.

The movie "The Passion of the Christ", by Mel Gibson, which covered the world some years ago with a visible depiction of what Jesus suffered for us, shows in one scene Jesus being whipped to death. His mother is looking on and says "My Son, when and how will you get past this?" She knew what he could do for others. She knew He could take care of

Himself if He wanted to because she knew He was the Son of God. Yet, she knew He was not releasing himself from the scourging and His coming death. She held to her faith, but her mother's heart was pierced with a sword, as Simeon had foretold. In the resurrection her joy was restored and complete.

So, for us, we need to move in peace in the Will of God, as portrayed for us in the Gospel and in the wonderful natural gifts God has given us, used carefully, prayerfully, and respectfully. As penitents we refrain from enjoying all we can to offer sacrifices to Christ crucified consistent with our calling to be his disciples. In the Gospel he says to us all: "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (LK 9:23) This is God's will for us and this one

Scripture was one of three that St. Francis picked to form his three Orders. The Rule of the BSP is the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis.

We need to hold to our faith and exercise our free wills for God's glory, following the Gospel, and for us, the wonderful example of St. Francis, who perfectly followed Our Lord in his life. When we experience problems, or difficulties, living as we hope to for the Lord, we can call on the Lord and say: "When Lord will you get us past this? Please Lord get us past this." Our Lord can do anything and will for all who surrender to His Will.

May God bless us all, and lead us more deeply and perfectly into His Will.

(Reprinted from a previous newsletter.)

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

The Saints on Silence

By Michael Gustek

With the season of Lent (upon us), here are some quotes from various Saints with respect to the use of our tongue. We need to ask ourselves, myself included, do I need to spend less time talking with people and more time speaking with God this Lent?

"The true servant of Jesus Christ bears all things; she labors much, and speaks little." Saint Mary Magdalen de Pazzi

"Speak a great deal with God, and little with men." Saint Ephrem

"A dispersed and dissipated intellect given to frivolous talk and foul language produces many vices and sins. Laughter and loose, immodest speech also lead to sin." Saint John Damascene

"The Father spoke one Word, which was His Son, and this Word He speaks always in eternal silence, and in silence must it be heard by the soul." Saint John of the Cross

"It is surprising that most Christians look upon decorum and politeness as merely human and worldly qualities and do not think of raising their minds to any higher views by considering them as

virtues that have reference to God, to their neighbor, and to themselves. This illustrates very well how little true Christianity is found in the world and how few among those who live in the world are guided by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Still, it is this Spirit alone which ought to inspire all our actions, making them holy and agreeable to God." Saint Jean Baptiste de la Salle

"Beware of much speaking, for it banishes from the soul the holy thoughts and recollection with God." Saint Dorotheus

"Exile means that a man should control his mouth." Saint Sisoies

"He who has become aware of his sins has controlled his tongue, but a talkative person has not yet come to know himself as he should." Saint John Climacus

"They who seek after piety, must take care not to pour forth their souls in laughter." Saint Basil the Great

"By silence we learn to consider well what we shall afterwards say." Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori

Ave Maria

Michael Gustek, BSP





Simple Fusion... by Janet Klasson, BSP

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Recently, I had the opportunity to tell a priest about the BSP. I gave him a copy of our handbook so he could understand the Rule from its source. He absolutely loved the handbook and asked if he could keep it for his own meditation! I thought that was a beautiful testimony to the glory of the Rule given to us by St. Francis!

The next thing he said took me by surprise. He said that when he read it, he felt he had gotten to know me a lot better. I never thought of it that way. I have said before that over time the rule becomes as comfortable as a favourite old sweater, and we may even take it for granted. But that conversation begged a bit of pondering. I reflected that as we "put on" the Rule at our Profession, there is a true fusing

that takes place and we ultimately become what we live—penance. It is "simple" fusion simply because it is Franciscan.

As members of the BSP we should review the rule once a year. After my talk with the priest, I opened my handbook and read from the beginning. When I got to St. Francis' *Letter to All the Faithful*, I knew I had to put it in the newsletter. So, I include it here with the Introduction and Commentary by Bruce and Shelley Fahey that is found in the handbook. May it help to make our Lenten season fruitful and simply Franciscan.

God be praised in St. Francis and all the Franciscan penitents that have ever lived! Fiat!

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada

LETTER TO ALL THE FAITHFUL

Source: Omnibus of Sources - written by St. Francis himself

INTRODUCTION

By Bruce and Michele Fahey BSP, Administrators

*The **Letter to All the Faithful** has generally been held to have been written in the year 1215. St. Francis wrote it as he began to reach out to everyone in the whole world with his message of the need for personal conversion. It is rich in its message and in its simplicity. It clearly held something for everyone, and like the First Rule of the Third Order of 1221 it was clearly penitential in tone, though not as explicit in its prescriptions. It has often been referred to as the "First Rule" to the faithful from St. Francis, and that the actual First Rule (Memoriale Propositi) was intended to be the "Constitutions" of the Letter. This makes the Rule of 1221, the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis, all the more beautiful, as it is the fruit of the Letter to all the Faithful in the heart of St. Francis. Whatever the intention of St. Francis, welcome to his Letter to all the Faithful!*

TO ALL CHRISTIANS, religious, clerics and lay folk, men and women; to everyone in the whole world, Brother Francis, their servant and subject, sends his humble respects, imploring for them true peace from heaven and sincere love of God.



I am the servant of all and so I am bound to wait upon everyone and make known to them the fragrant words of my Lord. Realizing, however, that because of my sickness and ill-health I cannot personally visit each one individually, I decided to send you a letter bringing a message with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Word of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit, whose words are *spirit and life* (Jn 6: 64).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious Word of the Father, so holy and exalted, whose coming the Father made known by St. Gabriel the Archangel to the glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, in whose womb he took on our weak human nature. He was rich beyond measure and yet he and his holy Mother chose poverty.

Then, as his passion drew near, he celebrated the Pasch with his disciples and, taking bread, *he blessed and broke, and gave to his disciples, and said, Take and eat; this is my body. And taking a cup, he gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, This is my blood of the new covenant, which is being shed for many unto the forgiveness of sins* (Mt. 26: 26-29). And he prayed to his Father, too, saying, *Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me* (Mt. 26: 39); and it was the Father's will that his blessed and glorious Son, whom he gave to us and who was born for our sake, should offer himself by his own blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the cross; and this, not for himself, through whom *all things were made* (Jn 1: 3), but for our sins, *leaving us an example that we may follow in his steps* (1Pet. 2: 21). It is the Father's will that we should all be saved by the Son, and that we should receive him, or want to be saved by him, although *his yoke is easy, and his burden light* (Mt. 11: 30).

All those who refuse to *taste and see how good the Lord is* (Ps. 33: 9) and who love *the darkness rather than the light* (Jn. 3: 19) are under a curse. It is God's commandments they refuse to obey and so it is of them the Prophet says, *You rebuke the accursed proud who turn away from your commands* (Ps. 118: 21). On the other hand, those who love God are happy and blessed. They do as our Lord himself tells us in the Gospel, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul...and thy neighbour as thyself* (Mt. 22: 37-39). We must love God, then, and adore him with a pure heart and mind, because this is what he seeks above all else, as he tells us, *True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth* (Jn. 4: 23). *All who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth* (Jn. 4: 24). We should praise him and pray to him day and night, saying, *Our Father, who art in heaven* (Mt. 6: 9), because we *must always pray and not lose heart* (Lk. 18: 1).

And moreover, we should confess all our sins to a priest and receive from him the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The man who does not eat his flesh and drink his blood cannot enter the kingdom of God (cf. Jn 6: 54). Only he must eat and drink worthily because *he who eats and drinks unworthily, without distinguishing the body, eats and drinks judgment to himself* (1 Cor. 11:29); that is, if he

sees no difference between it and other food.

Besides this, we must *bring forth therefore fruits befitting repentance* (Lk. 3: 8) and love our neighbours as ourselves. Anyone who will not or cannot love his neighbour as himself should at least do him good and not do him any harm.

Those who have been entrusted with the power of judging others should pass judgment mercifully, just as they themselves hope to obtain mercy from God. *For judgment without mercy to him who has not shown mercy* (James 2: 13). We must be charitable, too, and humble, and give alms, because they wash the stains of sin from our souls. We lose everything which we leave behind in this world; we can bring with us only the right to a reward for our charity and the alms we have given. For these we shall receive a reward, a just retribution from God. We are also bound to fast and avoid vice and sin, taking care not to give way to excess in food and drink, and we must be Catholics.

We should visit churches often and show great respect for the clergy, not just for them personally, for they may be sinners, but because of their high office, for it is they who administer the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. They offer It in sacrifice at the altar, and it is they who receive It and administer It to others. We should realize, too, that no one can be saved except by the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and the holy words of God, and it is the clergy who tell us his words and administer the Blessed Sacrament, and they alone have a right to do it, and no one else.

Religious especially are bound to make greater efforts, without neglecting the duties of ordinary Christians, because they have left the world...Our Lord says in the Gospel, it is from the heart of man that all vice and sin comes (cf. Mt. 15: 18-19), and he tells us, *Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you* (Lk. 6: 27).

We are bound to order our lives according to the precepts and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so we must renounce self and bring our lower nature into subjection under the yoke of obedience; this is what we have all promised God. However, no one can be bound to obey another in anything that is sinful or criminal.

The man who is in authority and is regarded as the superior should become the least of all and serve his brothers, and he should be as sympathetic with each one of them as he would wish others to be with him if he were in a similar position. If one of his brothers falls into sin, he should not be angry with him; on the contrary, he should correct him gently, with all patience and humility, and encourage him.

It is not for us to be wise and calculating in the world's fashion; we should be guileless, lowly, and pure...through our own fault we are wretched and utterly corrupt, nothing more than worms, as our Lord tells us by the Prophet, *I am a worm; the scorn of men, despised by the people* (Ps. 21: 7). We should not want to be in charge of others; we are to be servants, and should *be subject to every human creature for God's sake* (1Pet. 2: 13).

On all those who do this and endure to the last the Spirit of God will rest (cf. Is. 11: 2); he will make his dwelling in them and there he will stay, and they will be *children of your Father in heaven* (Mt. 5: 45) whose work they do. It is they who are the brides, the brothers and the mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. A person is his bride when his faithful soul is united with Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit; we are his brothers when we do the will of his Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt. 12: 50), and we are mothers to him when we enthrone him in our hearts and souls by love with a pure and sincere conscience, and give him birth by doing good. This, too, should be an example to others.

How glorious, how holy and wonderful it is to have a Father in heaven. How holy it is, how beautiful and lovable to have in heaven a Bridegroom. How holy and beloved, how pleasing and lowly, how peaceful, delightful, lovable and desirable above all things it is to have a Brother like this, who laid down his life for his sheep (cf. Jn. 10: 15), and prayed to his Father for us, saying: Holy Father, in your name keep those whom you have given me. Father, all those whom you gave me in the world, were yours and you gave them to me. And the words you have given me, I have given to them. And they have received them and have known truly that I have come forth from you, and they have believed that you have sent me. I am praying for them, not for the world: Bless and sanctify them. And for them I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified in their unity, just as we are. And, Father, I wish that where I am, they also may be with me, that they may see my splendor in your kingdom (cf. Jn 17: 6-24).

Every creature in heaven and on earth and in the depths of the sea should give God praise and glory and honour and blessing (cf. Ap. 5: 13); he has borne so much for us and has done and will do so much good to us; he is our power and our strength, and he alone is good (cf. Lk. 18:19), he alone most high, he alone all-powerful, wonderful, and glorious; he alone is holy and worthy of all praise and blessing for endless ages and ages. Amen.

All those who refuse to do penance and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are blind,

because they cannot see the light, our Lord Jesus Christ. They indulge their vices and sins and follow their evil longings and desires, without a thought for the promises they made. In body they are slaves of the world and of the desires of their lower nature, with all the cares and anxieties of this life; in spirit they are slaves of the devil. They have been led astray by him and have made themselves his children, dedicated to doing his work. They lack spiritual insight because the Son of God does not dwell in them, and it is he who is the true wisdom of the Father. It is of such men as these that Scripture says, *their skill was swallowed up* (Ps. 106: 27). They can see clearly and are well aware what they are doing; they are fully conscious of the fact that they are doing evil, and knowingly lose their souls.

See, then you who are blind, deceived by your enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Our fallen nature loves to commit sin and hates to serve God; this is because vice and sin come from the heart of man, as the Gospel says. You have no good in this world and nothing to look forward to in the next. You imagine that you will enjoy the worthless pleasures of this life indefinitely, but you are wrong. The day and the hour will come, the day and the hour for which you have no thought and of which you have no knowledge whatever. First sickness, then death, draws near; friends and relatives come and advise the dying man, "Put your affairs in order". Wife and children, friends and relatives, all pretend to mourn. Looking about, he sees them weeping. An evil inspiration comes to him. Thinking to himself, he says, "Look, I am putting my body and soul and all that I have in your hands". Certainly a man who would do a thing like that is under a curse, trusting and leaving his body and his soul and all that he has defenseless in such hands. God tells us by his Prophet, *Cursed shall he be that puts his trust in man* (Jer. 17:5). There and then, they call a priest; he says to the sick man, "Do you want to be absolved from all your sins?"

And the dying man replies, "I do". "Are you ready then to make restitution as best you can out of your property for all that you have done, all the fraud and deceit you practiced towards your fellow men?" the priest asks him. "No", he replies. And the priest asks, "Why not?" "Because I have left everything in the hands of my relatives and friends", is the answer. Then his speech begins to fail and so the unfortunate man dies an unhappy death.

We should all realize that no matter where or how a man dies, if he is in the state of mortal sin and does not repent, when he could have done so and did not, the devil tears his soul from his body with such anguish and distress that only a person who has

experienced it can appreciate it. All the talent and ability, all the learning and wisdom which he thought his own, are taken away from him, while his relatives and friends bear off his property and share it among themselves. Then they say, "A curse on his soul; he could have made more to leave to us and he did not." And the worms feast on his body. So he loses both body and soul in this short life and goes to hell, where he will be tormented without end. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In that love which is God (cf. 1 Jn. 4: 16), I, Brother Francis, the least of your servants and worthy only to kiss your feet, beg and implore all to whom this

letter comes to hear these words of our Lord Jesus Christ in a spirit of humility and love, putting them into practice with all gentleness and observing them perfectly. Those who cannot read should have them read to them often and keep them ever before their eyes, by persevering in doing good to the last, because they are *spirit and life* (Jn. 6:64). Those who fail to do this shall be held to account for it before the judgment-seat of Christ at the last day.

And may God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless those who welcome them and grasp them and send copies to others, if they persevere in them to the last (cf. Mt. 10:22).

COMMENTARY

By Bruce and Michele Fahey BSP, Administrators

Since it is commonly held that the Letter to all the Faithful was written before the First Rule of the Third Order, Memoriale Propositi, which is the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis, then St. Francis must have intended that those who wished to lead a committed life of penance should do more than the letter prescribes. The Rule of the BSP, and its supporting and defining Statutes, puts into writing these admonitions in concrete form. Consideration of these documents clarifies the intent of St. Francis himself. It would not be sufficient for the brothers and sisters of penance to have the Letter to All the Faithful read to them. They were to put it into effect in their lives according to the specifics of that original Rule of Life, Memoriale Propositi, the Rule of 1221, now the Rule of the BSP.

"It is an earnest appeal to all the faithful to sanctify themselves by prayer, by the use of the sacraments, by mortification, and by the practice of justice, charity, and humility; to show respect for the Blessed Eucharist; and to live the Catholic life in all its fullness. It is especially noteworthy for its graphic description of the last moments of an impenitent possessor of ill-gotten goods." (Franciscan Omnibus of Sources)

With these thoughts in mind, the Letter to All the Faithful carries in it the seeds of the First Rule of all of the Orders that St. Francis established. From its rich message souls would rise and taste and see how good the Lord is (Ps. 33: 9) and gain the courage to make the deeper commitment of embracing a penitential Rule of Life as their way to follow the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Letter to all the Faithful was a starting point, not an ending, for the conversion of the masses.

Hence, this general commitment to living the Gospel all Christians should embrace. The Rule of 1221, being a specific lifestyle within that call, a "call within a call" as it were, is a commitment that many can make that takes one beyond the Letter. The contents of the Letter to All the Faithful are fulfilled in a dramatic and definite way by living the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of 1221 in the modern Association of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis. Blessed are those who feel called to do that! These admonitions, or perhaps it is more accurate to say, prescriptions, of the Letter to All the Faithful are very straightforward and simple and can be summarized nicely as follows, taking into account the current teaching of the Catholic Church on these same matters.

WE CAN:

- ...bring with us only a right to a reward for our charity and the alms we have given...

WE SHOULD:

- ...praise him and pray to him day and night saying *Our Father, who art in heaven*

(Matt.6:9)...

- ...pass judgment mercifully...
- ...visit churches often...
- ...show great reverence for the clergy...
- ...become the least of all and serve our brothers...

- ...be as sympathetic with others...as we wish others to be with us...
- ...not be angry with others...
- ...be guileless, lowly, and pure...
- ...not want to be in charge of others...
- ...be servants...
- ...*be subject to every human creature for God's sake (1 Pet.2: 13)*
- ...be an example to others...

- ...be charitable, too, and humble...
- ...give alms...
- ...renounce self and bring our lower nature into subjection under the yoke of obedience...

WE MUST:

- ...receive him with a pure heart and chaste body...
- ...confess all our mortal sins to a priest and receive from him the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ...
- ...realize...that no one can be saved except by the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ and by the holy words of God...
- ...love God, then, and adore him with a pure heart and mind...
- ...*bring forth therefore fruits befitting repentance*
- (Lk. 3: 8)...
- ...love our neighbors as ourselves...

WE ARE BOUND:

- ...to fast...
- ...to avoid vice and sin...

...to order our lives according to the precepts and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ... Religious especially are bound to make greater efforts, without neglecting the duties of ordinary Christians, because they have left the world...

WE MUST TAKE CARE:

- ...not to give way to excess in food and drink...

Such are the admonitions and holy prescriptions of the Letter to all the Faithful, and all of them are incorporated in the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of St. Francis, as he himself had the Rule of 1221, our Rule, prepared for the laity to live. In living the Rule of the BSP we fulfill the demands of the Letter. And, St. Francis himself says of this, in the Letter to All the Faithful:

"And may God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless those who welcome them and grasp them, and send copies to others, if they persevere in them to the last".



MORNING STAR: NEWS ON THE ASSOCIATION...

THE WRITINGS OF ST. FRANCIS IN A FREE DOWNLOAD

All are welcome to download a pdf of the writings of St. Francis made available at the Online Library of Liberty.

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.

*Remember that you are dust...
...and to dust you shall return.*

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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