



...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 II. The Foundation of the Order — the Power of Francis' Preaching

1. *First lesson:* When he had finished the work on the three churches, Francis went to live at the one dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. There by the merits and intercession of the Mother of God who gave birth to the Price of our redemption, he was found worthy to be taught the way to perfection, by the spirit of Gospel truth which was infused into him from above. One day at Mass the passage of the Gospel was read which recounts how our Lord sent his disciples out to preach and laid down the form of the Gospel life for them, telling them that they are not to have gold or silver or money to fill their purses, nor a wallet for their journey, no second coat, no spare shoes or staff (cf. Mt 10,9). The moment Francis heard these words, the Spirit of Christ came upon him and clothed him with such power that he adopted the way of life described, not only in mind and heart, but also in his daily life and dress. He took off his shoes there and then, threw away his staff, and discarded the purse with his money. He kept only one tunic to wear, and exchanged his leather belt for a rope. His only anxiety of mind now was to discover how he might practice what he had heard and conform perfectly to the rule given to the apostles for their guidance.

2. *Second lesson:* Like a second Elias, Francis now began to take up the defense of truth, all inflamed as he was with the fiery ardor of the Spirit of Christ. He invited others to join him in the pursuit of perfect holiness, urging them to lead a life of penance. His words were full of the power of the Holy Spirit, never empty or ridiculous, and they went straight to the depths of the heart, so that his hearers were astonished beyond measure and hardened sinners and were moved by their penetrating power. As his high and holy

ideals become more widely known by the force of his sincerity and his straightforward teaching, together with his personal life, a number of others were encouraged to follow his example and lead a life of penance. They left all behind and came to join him, sharing his way of life and dress. In his humility, Francis decided that they should be known as Friars Minor.



The Friars Minor walk to Rome to present their Rule
Pedro Subercaseaux

3. *Third lesson:* By God's calling the number of friars soon grew to six and, like a devoted father and shepherd, Francis sought out a lonely place where he could weep over the misspent years of his youth, which had not been free from sin, in the bitterness of his heart. There he implored mercy and grace for himself and his sons the friars, whose father he had become in Christ. Then his whole being was bathed in an excess of joy

and he was given the assurance that all his sins were completely forgiven to the last farthing. He was rapt in ecstasy and completely absorbed in a sort of light which seemed to give life, so that he could see clearly what the future held in store for himself and his friars, as he afterwards told them confidentially, in order to encourage his little flock. Then he foretold the future growth of the Order and how it would expand, by God's providence.

After a brief delay, they were joined by a number of newcomers so that their number grew to twelve, and Francis decided to present his inexperienced band of followers to the Apostolic See. He had set down briefly in writing the way of life which God had shown him in all humility, and he was anxious to have it approved by the Holy See with the fullness of the Apostolic authority.

Bonaventure—Minor Life of St. Francis (1263)





VISITOR'S MESSAGE

Homily by Fr. Robert Altier

Sunday Sermon for, March 28, 2021, Palm Sunday

Readings: Acts 9:26-31; 1 Jn 3:18-24; Jn 15:1-8



In the Gospel reading our Lord tells us that He is the True Vine and we are the branches. On the natural level, because the sap flows through the vine and into the branches, fruit can be borne by the branches only when they are connected to the vine. Our Lord tells us that we are to bear fruit, but if we are the branches, we cannot bear fruit unless we are united to the Vine. God is the author of grace, so the divine life flows through us only when we are united with Jesus.

However, our Lord makes this point in a way that seems strange at first. He says we must remain in Him and that we can only bear fruit if we remain in Him. In other words, it is not enough to be merely connected to the Lord, we must abide in or remain in Him.

He tells us that if we remain in Him we will bear much fruit, but if we do not remain in Him we will be thrown out and burned. We may be wondering just what this idea of remaining in Him is about. One clue is given when Jesus says "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you..." The words of our Lord must be received and accepted deep within us. They do not merely sit within, but they must be dynamic and alive. It is clear that just having the words stuck in or on us is not sufficient. They must be brought into the interior of the person, embraced, and lived. To remain also suggests it is ongoing and long term.

St. John elucidates the issue for us. He says that anyone who keeps the Lord's commandments remain in Him and He in them. St. John goes on to say the way we know He remains in us is by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us. In other words, if we are living upright and moral lives and striving to grow in the spiritual life, then we are remaining in the Lord. Another way to say this is that as long as we are in the state of Grace, we remain in the Lord and He in us. Of course, if we fail to follow the commandments and fall into mortal sin, we have chosen something over God, we no longer remain in Him and He no longer remains in us.

If we have cut ourselves off from the Vine, this can be rectified through confession, but we have to wonder how much fruit we will be able to bear if we have lost the life giving powers that flow through us when we are united with our Lord. On the natural level, if an arborist is trying to graft a branch onto a tree, it will take some time for the wound to heal and the sap to flow in such a way that the branch can bear fruit. If the branch keeps falling off and being put back on to the tree, there will be a cycle of losing the source of life, then having life injected back into it, then losing it again. All the energy will be spent on just trying to keep life in the limb, not in bearing fruit.

If we keep falling into sin and getting to confession, we are basically fighting for our spiritual lives. There will not be much fruit borne because everything is focused on trying to keep the branch united to the Vine. In such a scenario, the branch is certainly not remaining in the Lord. Only when the wound of having been cut off is healed will the grace be able to flow through the person in order to bear fruit. This helps us to understand better that remaining in the Lord means just that: staying in the state of Grace so His life can flow through us and bear fruit.

We can also look at the first reading and see that the fruit our Lord seeks will differ with the individuals. Just as we do not expect to find the same kind of fruit on different kinds of trees, neither would our Lord expect each person to produce the same kind of fruit. For instance, we are told the people were afraid of Saul of Tarsus, and with good reason. We see the Lord working through St. Barnabas who took St. Paul under his wing and brought the new convert to the Apostles. The Holy Spirit used Barnabas' personality to bear this fruit. We are each called to bear fruit for our Lord also, each according to our personality and the grace God gives. This grace is given through the Holy Spirit, but only when we remain in the Lord.

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ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE...

Love actually!

One of the absolutes about our faith is that God is love. It is really quite incomprehensible, but true, and it explains so much about so many things that affect us and are a part of our daily life. It also explains why the discussion of love in Scripture permeates everything. It is mystifying, but beautiful, and certainly worth consideration by any of us.

To begin recall how St. Paul discusses love in the letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor.: 13) He is describing the type of love that God has and he identifies many characteristics of love that are worth considering. To begin, of course, love infuses meaning into every aspect of life. It is a machine, and it churns out nothing but good things. We can learn so much from pondering these things and just pondering them will bring us to a great love of God, who is himself the furnace of burning love from which all things came, and that certainly includes all of us and everyone and everything around us. It is a meditation beyond belief. No matter how successful we are without love we are bankrupt and the world would be bankrupt. The riots and violent protests, and chaos of our modern times in so many places shows us where love is bankrupt. In all other ways, and times, we can all see the love of God in motion if we but look around us.

We scanned the Internet for the definition of love used by St. Paul and got the following list, which about says it all:

Love is patient. Love doesn't rush. Love is willing to wait for others. Love is willing to give others the benefit of the doubt. When you get married you get to work on this one!

Love is kind. Despite what your Sunday school posters say, kindness is not sitting in a meadow and petting a lamb. Kindness is about treating others the way that you would like to be treated. It is about looking to the interests of others above your own.

Love does not envy. When you are jealous, you are being selfish. Instead of celebrating a good thing with the person, you are putting the focus back on yourself. Facebook is sometimes a struggle for me because I can see people with certain things I want and instead of being happy for them I am jealous. Love celebrates instead of envying.

Love does not boast. A person with love doesn't have to tell everyone about how great your life is.



They are content serving Jesus and letting him get the credit.

Love is not proud. Love doesn't push to the front of the line or consider itself better than others. Love is humble. Love looks out for the needs of other people.

Love is not rude. Love makes a point to not offend people unnecessarily. Some people make a sport out of offending people, but that is not loving.

Love is not easily angered. Love gives the benefit of the doubt. Loving people give grace because they have been given grace. This makes for a much more pleasant life.

Love keeps no record of wrong. Loving people don't dredge up old hurts and hold grudges.

Love rejoices with the truth. Loving people are happy when truth wins and they do not enjoy any type of evil.

Love protects. Loving people protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Love trusts. To have love there must be an atmosphere of trust. No trust, no love. Trust is the foundation of a loving relationship.

Love hopes. Loving people have hope for others. They wish the best for people.

Love always perseveres. Love doesn't give up. Loving people don't run away when it gets hard. They are there for the long haul!

Love never fails. Love will always win out in the end. When Jesus takes his followers up to heaven we will participate in this victory.

Love is the greatest. Of all the qualities you can have, love is the greatest. If you do nothing else today seek to become a more loving person by God's power

And mothers are God's love in motion. In all lives, in time, and in eternity. Our Lady, whose month it is, loves us all with the love of God and she is herself the love of God in motion in our lives and is poised over all the world to rescue it from the clutches of Satan, who rages now in so many places and lives. We need her love, and we need her loving protection which is listed in St. Paul's list. Love protects people in the love of other people. We protect those we love, and we are protected by those who love us. God loves us, Our Lord loves us, His mother loves us, the Saints all love us, and we love

each other. In this knowledge we can never say we don't have friends, or a place to hide. And that brings us to the last point.

We must be love to others, and to do that we need to love ourselves. That is not always so easy but it is essential to the message and it is certainly

in the will of God for each of us. We live our Rule of life in that love, for that love, to grow in that love, and to serve God's love. So let's take that message to heart, and be that love, which gives God great joy, and brings that joy to all around us.

May the Lord bless and lead us all!

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

Franciscan Saints

By Ian Vincent, BSP

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With 800 years of Franciscan saints, and counting, there isn't a day that goes by that isn't a feast day for some Franciscan saint. That being said many of these are very obscure and completely unknown outside of Franciscan circles (and little-known inside of them). I highly recommend getting the recently republished book [The Seraphic Order: A Traditional Franciscan Book of Saints](#). At 1026 pages it is filled with all the inspiration anyone could want. For a lighter option I highly recommend the website <https://www.roman-catholic-saints.com/traditional-franciscan-calendar.html> This website has many Franciscan saints arranged by month and day. Once you find the saint you can look them up in the left side links. Sometimes the site won't have any

information on a saint but you can often find other sites using a quick internet search.

For example, did you know that May 30th is the feast day of St. Joan of Arc? St. Joan probably needs no introduction but I was very surprised to learn that she was a Franciscan Third Order member. For a much less well-known saint there is May 26th, the memorial of St. Mariana of Jesus from Ecuador. She "led a life hidden in God and devoted to prayer and penance" in her home. She seems like the perfect patron for members of the BSP who do the same. In future months I hope to detail some of the more unknown Franciscan saints that are well worth knowing about.

God Bless everyone!

Ian Vincent, BSP, Canadian member living in Japan



A time of testing...

by Janet Klasson, BSP

Second Reading on Ascension Sunday

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and

what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. (Ephesians 1:17-29)

Dear brothers and sisters, this is a glorious month, the month of Mary, in a glorious year, the year of St. Joseph. It is also the month in which the Church celebrates the Ascension (May 16) of Our Lord followed by Pentecost (May 23) and the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity (May 30). Graces surely abound!

I don't mean to diminish the very un-glorious things that are happening everywhere these days, but we need to keep our eyes on the sure hope of our glorious inheritance, by the greatness of God's power, for all who are destined for eternal life. Our exile on earth is a time of testing, so it shouldn't

surprise us when we are tested, although it often does. However, the game is rigged in our favor. God always provides what we need ahead of time in order for us to pass our tests, if we're wise enough to recognize help when we see it. For us in the BSP, we have the blessing of a rule that instructs us on how to stay on the narrow path that leads to eternal life.

In his book [True Devotion to Mary](#), St. Louis Marie de Montfort touches on some of the themes in the Scripture passages on which St. Francis based the rules of life for his orders. He emphasizes how much we need the assistance of our Blessed Mother to stay



on the narrow path of denying ourselves and dying daily to ourselves in order to follow Her Son. In Chapter Two of his booklet, St. Louis outlines the basic principles of true devotion to Mary. Under the Third Principle we read the following passages:

78. *Our best actions are usually tainted and spoiled by the evil that is rooted in us. When pure, clear water is poured into a foul-smelling jug, or wine into an unwashed cask that previously contained another wine, the clear water and the good wine are tainted and readily acquire an unpleasant odour. In the same way when God pours into our soul, infected by original and actual sin, the heavenly waters of his grace or the delicious wines of his love, his gifts are usually spoiled and tainted by the evil sediment left in us by sin. Our actions, even those of the highest virtue, show the effects of it. It is therefore of the utmost importance that, in seeking the perfection that can be attained only by union with Jesus, we rid ourselves of all that is evil in us. Otherwise our infinitely pure Lord, who has an infinite hatred for the slightest stain in our soul, will refuse to unite us to himself and will drive us from his presence.*

79. *To rid ourselves of selfishness, we must first become thoroughly aware, by the light of the Holy Spirit, of our tainted nature. Of ourselves we are unable to do anything conducive to our salvation. Our human weakness is evident in everything we do and we are habitually unreliable. We do not deserve any grace from God. Our tendency to sin is always present. The sin of Adam has almost entirely spoiled and soured us, filling us with pride and corrupting every one of us, just as leaven sours, swells and corrupts the dough in which it is placed. The actual sins we have committed, whether mortal or venial, even though forgiven, have intensified our base desires, our weakness, our inconstancy and our evil tendencies, and have left a sediment of evil in our soul. Our bodies are so corrupt that they are referred to by the Holy Spirit as bodies of sin, as conceived and nourished in sin, and capable of any kind of sin. They are subject to a thousand ills, deteriorating from day to day and harbouring only disease, vermin and corruption. Our soul, being united to our body, has become so carnal that it has been called flesh. "All flesh had corrupted its way". Pride and blindness of spirit, hardness of heart, weakness and inconstancy of soul, evil inclinations, rebellious passions, ailments of the body, - these are all we can call our own. By nature we are prouder than peacocks, we cling to the earth more than toads, we are more base than goats, more envious than serpents, greedier than pigs, fiercer than tigers, lazier than tortoises, weaker than reeds, and more changeable than weather-cocks. We have in us*

nothing but sin, and deserve only the wrath of God and the eternity of hell.

80. **Is it any wonder then that our Lord laid down that anyone who aspires to be his follower must deny himself and hate his very life?** He makes it clear that anyone who loves his life shall lose it and anyone who hates his life shall save it. Now, our Lord, who is infinite Wisdom, and does not give commandments without a reason, bids us hate ourselves only because we richly deserve to be hated. Nothing is more worthy of love than God and nothing is more deserving of hatred than self.

81. Secondly, in order to empty ourselves of self, **we must die daily to ourselves.** This involves our renouncing what the powers of the soul and the senses of the body incline us to do. We must see as if we did not see, hear as if we did not hear and use the things of this world as if we did not use them. This is what St. Paul calls "dying daily". Unless the grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain and does not bear any good fruit. **If we do not die to self and if our holiest devotions do not lead us to this necessary and fruitful death, we shall not bear fruit of any worth and our devotions will cease to be profitable. All our good works will be tainted by self-love and self-will so that our greatest sacrifices and our best actions will be unacceptable to God. Consequently when we come to die we shall find ourselves devoid of virtue and merit and discover that we do not possess even one spark of that pure love which God shares only with those who have died to themselves and whose life is hidden with Jesus Christ in him.**

82. Thirdly, we must choose among all the devotions to the Blessed Virgin the one which will lead us more surely to this dying to self. This devotion will be the best and the most sanctifying for us. For we must not believe that all that glitters is gold, all that is sweet is honey, or all that is easy to do and is done by the majority of people is the most sanctifying. Just as in nature there are secrets enabling us to do certain natural things quickly, easily and at little cost, so in the spiritual life there are secrets which enable us to perform works rapidly, smoothly and with facility. Such works are, for example, emptying ourselves of self-love, filling ourselves with God, and attaining perfection.

The devotion that I propose to explain is one of these secrets of grace, for it is unknown to most Christians. Only a few devout people know of it and it is practised and appreciated by fewer still. (Click the title above for a downloadable file of St. Louis Marie

de Montfort's booklet.)

The low world is a passing thing. Let us not get caught up in the dramas which surround us and which play with our emotions and passions. Instead, let us stay focused, remembering to follow Mary and Joseph on the way of detachment. St. Louis Marie tells us above: *We must see as if we did not see, hear as if we did not hear and use the things of this*

world as if we did not use them. This is the pathway to peace.

Let us also imitate Mary and Joseph by keeping our eyes firmly fixed on God's most Holy Divine Will, making it our aim to satisfy to the best of our ability his fervent desire for the salvation of souls. We are penitents, after all, called daily to die to self, for the salvation of souls and the glory of God. Fiat!

Janet Klasson BSP, Divine Mercy Chapter, Canada



Got questions? Just Ask!

Bruce recently had a question come to him via email. It was a good question and he gave a good answer (two actually), well worth sharing with the BSP family.

Jessica H. wrote:

I was exploring the BSP website and rule, and I am just looking for some clarification on Rule 9, the one pertaining to daily fasting from November 12 until Christmas. Does that mean that during those days, except for Sundays and feast days, we need to fast in the way that we would fast on Fridays throughout the year (meaning 2 small snacks that don't equal a meal, and one meal)?

Also, I'm curious about deserts... ever. Is that a thing with this rule? Not as a snack, I'm seeing... but things like a cookie or ice cream with supper... a no go? Except out of charity when it is specifically offered?

Thanks!

Jess

Bruce's first reply:

Good questions. How we fast is entirely up to us. The Church says to fast by eating three meals a day but two should not equal a full meal when put together. The third meal would be normal, and I think the Church says avoid snacks so that probably includes desserts. No desserts during a Church fast which is only a few days a year. Now that is the Church's definition which you can confirm by discussion with your parish priest. As to all other fasting in our Rule, which is NOT defined by the Church, we can decide how to do that. I will share how I fast, under the Rule, and I am professed and I live the entire Rule and have for years. I love it too I will add. :)

I fast like this. I eat a light breakfast and a light lunch. The two meals probably equal a full meal together. I like a muffin, or even half a muffin for breakfast and an apple or an apple and a hard boiled egg for lunch, for example. I eat a full

dinner every day and with dessert if we have dessert, or a I have a cookie or two or some peanuts, trail mix, or candy to end the meal. Something sweet. I reserve the right to have popcorn or a snack anytime I want it too which means when I don't want it or wish to sacrifice it I can too. It is NOT covered by the Rule. The Rule does NOT address snacks or popcorn when you are watching a movie or at a movie even. Remember, it is NOT A SIN to break the Rule, unless you VOW to live it. St. Francis did not make it a sin to break the Rule. It is something we do for the love of God, and love is very flexible as you know.

Keep in mind that I am 74 years old and do not have to fast even the Church fasts which can be stopped at age 60. The good news about how I fast is that it is up to me and I can bounce around and have different meals. I also observe the abstinence of our Rule and that is more than the required fasting as you know. But abstinence means meat, steak, chicken, pork, etc., not meat sauces or casseroles with meat, or leftovers as far as I am concerned or you might be throwing them out. Here again I think you can decide how you will abstain. I love fish! So I would have fish before I would have a steak, so abstinence is not very punishing to me! haha Or mac and cheese is good. Or ramen noodle soup.

Oh, and as to charity, no fasting or abstinence if someone else makes dinner or takes you out to dinner. Even St. Francis said his followers were to eat what was put in front of them in others' houses. You can fast another day when no one knows you are fasting. Keep it to yourself. Shelley, my wife, is my spiritual director because I have not found a priest willing to be my SD for years. She is tough, but she knows how I fast, when I fast, if I fast, or abstain, and she will call

me on it if I am overdoing it. So, you might want to set someone up to do that for you that is easy to get to and easy to talk to and you trust. St. Francis called us to obey others rather than do our own will. Of course you can use your priest or SD too but they are usually not so easy to get to. Shelley is right here. smile...

Anyway, I hope this helps. If not ask another question, and have a nice day, in God's love.

Bruce

And his follow-up answer:

That instruction on snacks is from the Statutes, not the original draft of the Rule. If you look at Article 6, which is the article that draft is in, it says nothing about snacks. So we, as Administrators, and the Visitor, who is spiritual director to all of us, decided to comment on snacks in explaining how to live the Rule. That is

how that got there.

Special occasions are by definition what you consider special occasions. They are not otherwise defined. So, if you decide to have a snack you basically declare something a special occasion. I will tell you that my wife and I watching a movie together IS a special occasion. smile... And, you can decide how to live the Rule. Maybe another time when others are having a snack and invite you to, you will decide to offer it up and say 'no'. The Rule is alive, and it is a joy to live. Live it in fun, joy, not destitution and fear. It is holy. Be happy. You are on a narrow path, and few there are who find it.

Hope this helps!

God bless.

Bruce

If you have a question, Just Ask! Email Bruce at minncc03@gmail.com.

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://bspence.org/forum/>. Hope to see you there!

HANDBOOK OF THE ASSOCIATION...



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

There is a link to the ordering page on our BSP homepage. You will need a credit card or a Paypal account to order. Cost is \$10.00 plus shipping.



Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

—Matthew 28:18-20

The BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE OF ST. FRANCIS

A.k.a. BSP, is a non-profit Private Association of the Faithful, which is dedicated to renewing the ancient way of penance as contained in the First Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis of 1221 for lay people in our modern world. We have the blessing of the Catholic Church to do this through several of its Archbishops, Bishops, and priests. If you are bound by another Rule of life in another profession of the way of St. Francis that does not permit you to enter other religious families you are nonetheless invited to add the elements of this beautiful way of life that Saint Francis of Assisi gave us to the lifestyle of your profession.

All members, and Franciscans, are welcome to submit articles for consideration for inclusion in this newsletter if they are directed towards the spiritual formation of members or are the outgrowth of the lifestyle of the Association. Just send them to the BSP at minncc03@gmail.com. Feel free to share this newsletter with your friends or neighbors. It is intended to be the primary monthly communication of the Association, and ongoing formation for all members and friends. And if you can find it in your heart and in your budget remember that donations to the BSP are used strictly to promote the lifestyle and are tax deductible.

We remain, always, sincerely yours in the love of Jesus Christ!

Bruce and Shelley Fahey BSP, 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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