

The Fraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

*Circular Letter For The Month Of November
Year Of Our Lord 2008*

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Penance, the Lord give you peace.

It is true that in our material age almost everything caters to the comfort and pleasure of the flesh and its appetites. Look around and see that at almost every corner, the world spits out its evil advertising at the price of offending the good God. Its advertising, being a deceptive and false mirage, if embraced leads to Hell.

*"We ought also to fast and to abstain from vices and sins and from superfluity of food and drink, and to be Catholics." St. Francis of Assisi.**

Our Divine Lord in the Gospel and our holy father Francis in our Holy Rule bid us do penance! It is sometimes very easy to assign to the Saints alone the corporal penance which has been practiced throughout the centuries and have shown to be pleasing to the Almighty God. In the name of a "changing age" or in the name of "prudence" perhaps much that could be done by souls is left undone. But the fact remains, in my humble opinion, dear brethren, that in order to become saints, we must do what the saints have always done. Even if we cannot physically perform many of the penances the Saints performed, our small efforts will be accepted and the love with which we do these acts will be looked upon by the good God as if they were very great indeed.

Brothers and Sisters of Penance, the Order which has chosen you and accepted you into its fine ranks, is one of penance. We must be worthy of the name of penitents, and we must, to the extent of our capabilities do penance. It will help perhaps to look upon some of those who have obtained Heaven and their practices so that we may imitate them. Our holy father Francis being the founder of our beloved Order cannot be overlooked in his thirst for conquering his flesh. It causes us to smile dear brethren when we look at Francis. Imagine, this young man to yourselves and think of how you would look at him if you were alive in his day. He was walking through the streets in bare feet, in a tunic which had a cross drawn on it with a piece of chalk. He was thin from fasting, rugged in looks, a friend of the poor, outcasts, the weak, sick and lepers, all the while he was filled with holy joy! In the beginning people threw mud and stones at him because they thought he had gone mad. St. Francis was radical, and this only because the Gospel calls in truth for a radical turning to God and away from that which is not God. St. Francis was a madman, an admirable madman driven to loving God unto folly, and what an effect this love had indeed!

Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish. Luke 13. V. 3.

St. Margaret of Cortona was a woman who had to wait three long years before being allowed to enter the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi and to whom Our Blessed Lord said: "I have put thee as a burning light, to enlighten those who sit in the darkness.—I have set thee as an example to sinners, that in thee they may behold how my mercy awaits the sinner who is willing to repent; for as I have been merciful to thee, so will I be merciful to them."(1) What an example indeed: "She had reveled in rich clothing and jewels; henceforth, so far as her friends would permit her, she would clothe herself literally in rags. She had slept on luxurious couches; henceforth she would lie only on the hard ground. Her beauty, which had been her ruin, and the ruin of many others besides, and which even now, at twenty-seven, won for her many a glance of admiration as she passed down the street, she was determined to destroy. She cut her face, she injured it with bruises, till men would no longer care to look upon her. Nay, she would go abroad, and where she had sinned most she would make most amends. She would go to Montepulciano; there she would hire a woman to lead her like a beast with a rope round her neck, and cry: "Look at Margaret, the sinner."(2)

St. Peter of Alcantara was no slouch in his penances dear brethren: "He rose quickly to high posts in the Order, but his thirst for penance was still unappeased, and in 1539, being then forty years old, he founded the first convent of the "Strict Observance." The cells of the friars resembled graves rather than dwelling-places. That of St. Peter himself was four feet and a half in length, so that he could never lie down; he ate but once in three days; his sack-cloth habit and a cloak were his only garments, and he never covered his head or feet. In the bitter winter he would open the door and window of his cell that, by closing them again, he might experience some sensation of warmth.(3) This blessed Saint appeared to St. Teresa of Avila after his death and said that it was the penances he practised that won such a great reward.

St. Benedict Joseph Labre lived a true pilgrim's journey living the evangelical counsels: He wore "a long cloak covering him, tied with a rope around the waist, a cross on his breast, a large pair of beads round his neck; his feet were partly covered with substitutes for shoes, carefully prepared, one might have thought, to let in water and stones." "He ate whatever men gave him; if they gave him nothing he looked to see what he could find on the roadside. He refused to take though for the morrow, if at any time he had more than sufficed for the day, he invariably gave it to another."(4)

St. Therese of Lisieux who is often looked at as one who did little in the way of penance. It is true that Our Lord permitted her to become ill when using certain austerities, however, it is not always known that the Carmelite Order is very austere. They eat no meat all year, they contemplate twice daily and for one hour each time. They wear heavy, coarse garments and their life is one of strict poverty. It is little known that she suffered so terribly from temptations against the faith that she wrote CREDO in her own blood on a sheet of paper and carried it with her wherever she went!(5) As her autobiography attests, she would not ask for an extra sheet to keep her warm in the cold evenings, and thus she suffered more from the winter cold than from anything else as the Carmel did not have heating.

"Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. 3 V.2.

Why dear brethren do we make penance? Indeed, we do not make penance because it is fun or easy. We do not do it in order to say to others "look at the austerities we practise," this is of course penance for the sake of penance and would be fruitless. We do not make penance thinking that we are doing God any favours! God is perfectly happy in Himself and even if we gave all of our blood for His law it would not add in the least to He, Who Is. Why then, do we do penance? We may say in reply to this question, that it is love that has drawn us to embrace a life of penance. We may say that upon seeing Christ Jesus in the crib, poor and shivering with cold and hunger, that seeing Christ Jesus torn and broken, nailed to a hard Cross, literally pouring Himself out for love of us, that we are afflicted with a great desire, an ardent yearning to pour ourselves out for Him. We may reply that these following words of Our Jesus have cut us to the heart and penance is the response of these poor hearts broken by sorrow and compassion to somehow in our little way to make a return:

"Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has *spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming itself*, in order to testify its love. In return, I receive only ingratitude, by their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt they have for Me in this sacrament of love."(6) (emphasis mine)

To return the immense Love of the Sacred Heart with the love of our poor prayers and penance, to repair for the crimes of our lives and of our age, to imitate this Heart of Christ in sparing nothing, in exhausting ourselves and even if it were possible to consume ourselves for love of Him, we wish to make penance. We dare to obey the Gospel and make penance therefore, knowing that it will be the good God who will supply the needed graces for us to carry these works out with love and devotion. We will dare to love Love Who is not loved!

Living the Gospel is not an option for us, and the words of the Holy Writ tell us, and it is to be admitted that this is quite terrifying if put to heart: "*And everyone that heareth these my words, and doth them not, shall be like a foolish man that built his house upon the sand, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof.*" It is impossible to merely hear, one must do, as the King of Glory has said: "*Not everyone that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven.*"(6) It is the will of the good God that we as the children of God do penance for ourselves and those who do not do penance, this is certain.

As Advent approaches, the Holy Rule of Nicholas IV has the Tertiaries fast every day from November 1st until the blessed feast of the Nativity. Those following the observance of Leo XIII, though they are not obliged to take up this fast, are encouraged to do as much penance as possible in this time in preparation for Christmas, and they are asked to pray for those who will be fasting.

"Let us moreover, "bring forth worthy fruits of penance." And let us love our neighbours as ourselves." St. Francis of Assisi. ☺

Also, we take this time to simplify the intentions for the Crusade of the Sacred Heart. Those who are making a Holy Hour once a week and once a month are asked to pray especially for the intentions below:

- 1. *The Reign and Glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus/ In Reparation For Our Sins and Those Which Offend His Divine Heart.***
- 2. *The Triumph of the Immaculate Heart of Mary/ Consecration of Russia to Her Immaculate Heart.***
- 3. *For the Intentions stated in the Rosary Crusade launched by His Excellency Bishop Bernard Fellay.***
- 4. *For the Conversion of Sinners & Release of Souls From Purgatory***
- 5. *For the Third Order of St. Francis/ Its Restoration and The Sanctification and Salvation of Its Members In Tradition.***

Brothers and Sisters, we beg you who have not yet pledged a Holy Hour for the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to please join the Fraternity this Advent in doing so. We extend the invitation once again to make a Holy Hour once a week at any time, preferably from 9pm to 12pm or later. There have been abundant blessings given the souls who have taken this up and they will attest to its efficacy. The Devil is exceedingly furious, as can be imagined at this sacrifice of love made by our Tertiaries. One may contact the Minister Prefect or the Vice-Prefect to pledge your Hour, but please, if nothing else, take up this penance as a testament of your love for the Heart of the Babe of Bethlehem.

We intend to send his Excellency Bishop Fellay a Christmas card assuring him that the intentions for the Crusade for Tradition are included in our weekly night adoration in the home. We wish to do this in gratitude and remembrance that this Bishop, the Superior of the S.S.P.X has given all of our members and future members his blessing, and has assured us of his joy and prayers in doing our part in restoring the Third Order Secular of St. Francis of Assisi.

Know dearest Brothers and Sisters, that I am your little servant in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Fra Pio-Francis T.O.S.F. Minister Prefect.

Fra Pio - Francis T.O.S.F.

Circular Approved By Rev. Fr. Freddy Mery S.S.P.X. Director.

Freddy Mery

- (1)(2)(4) <http://www.ewtn.com/library/MARY/SNTSIN.HTM#2>
- (3) <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/lots/lots325.htm> (Butler's Lives of the Saints.)
- (5) Intimate Life of St. Therese By Dolan.
- (6) The Life of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. Rev. Emile Bougaud.
- (5) & (6) Matt. Ch. 5 V. 26 and 21.
- (*) <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/wosf12.htm>