

Voluntary Poverty

Jesus said, to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." **Mt 19:21.**

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." **Mt 5:3.**

"If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have no love, I gain nothing."
1 Cor 13:3.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich." **2 Cor 8:9.**

"Voluntary Poverty, in the footsteps of Christ, is a symbol of Christ which is much esteemed, especially nowadays. It allows people to share in the poverty of Christ who for our sake became poor, though he was rich, so that we might become rich through his poverty, 2 Cor 8-9, Mt 8:20." **Renewal of Religious Life, 13.**

"Poverty really lived by pooling goods, including pay, will testify to the spiritual communion uniting you: it will be a living call to all the rich and will also bring relief to your needy brothers and sisters. **Ibid, 21.**

"In prayer, too, we come to see the stark reality of our own poverty, the absolute need we have for a savior. We discover to a more profound degree the many ways in which we ourselves are poor and needy, and thus we begin to feel an increasing solidarity with all the poor. In the end, we more fully than ever before know that the Good News for the poor is Good News for ourselves as well." **Ibid.**

The Church's love for the poor, is a part of her constant tradition. This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, the poverty of Jesus, and his concern for the poor. Love for the poor is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to 'be able to give to those in need.' It extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty." **CCC 2444.**

"Abandonment to the providence of the Father in heaven frees us from anxiety about tomorrow. Trust in God is a preparation for the blessedness of the poor. They shall see God." **CCC 2547.**

"The poor, in varied states of affliction, are the oppressed, those on the margin of society, the elderly, the sick, the young, any and all who are considered and treated as "the least". The option for the poor is inherent in the very structure of love lived in Christ. All of Christ's disciples are therefore held to this option; but those who wish to follow the Lord more closely, imitating his attitudes, cannot but feel involved in a very special way. The sincerity of their response to Christ's love will lead them to live a life of poverty and to embrace the cause of the poor." **Pope John Paul II, Consecrated Life, 1996.**

"God is the true wealth of the human heart. Precisely for this reason evangelical poverty forcefully challenges the idolatry of money, making a prophetic appeal as it were to society, which in so many parts of the developed world risks losing the sense of proportion and the very meaning of things. Thus, today more than in other ages, the call of evangelical poverty is being felt also among those who are aware of the scarcity of the planet's resources and who invoke respect for and the conservation of creation by reducing consumption, by living more simply and by placing a necessary brake on their own desires."
Ibid.

"The saying of St Therese of Lisieux about one day standing before God with empty hands, and holding them open to him describes the spirit of these poor ones of God: they come with empty hands, not with

hands that grasp and clutch, but with hands that open and give and thus are ready to receive from God's bountiful goodness." **Pope Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth.**

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Voluntary poverty is a spiritual gift that copies the very poverty of Jesus who chose to be born in a poor family and to live a life of dependency on the giving of others. Love for the poor and a willingness to share one's goods with them reflects the spirituality of detachment from material things and an attraction to pooling goods with those who need them more. Both laity and religious reflect this gift and it is supported by the many ministries of giving to those less fortunate both at home and abroad. To choose poverty so that others may live and thrive, militates against the secular value that more is better and embraces the truth that all we have is gift and needs to be shared with those who have less.

Questions to share

- 1. Which passage touches you or burns in your heart the most? Why?**
- 2. How have you exercised this gift in the past?**
- 3. How are you now exercising this gift in ministry?**
- 4. Do you see new ways you can exercise this ministry in the future?**