

“Don't create needs for yourself”

Don't forget it: he has most who needs least. Don't create needs for yourself. (The Way, 630)

31 January

Many years ago, twenty-five and more, I used to visit an eating place run by a charitable group for the benefit of beggars who were so poor that their only food each day was the meal they were given there. There was a large canteen looked after by a number of kind women. After the first meal was served, more beggars

would come in to finish off the leftovers. Among this second group of beggars one man in particular attracted my attention. He was the proud owner of... a pewter spoon! He would take it carefully out of his pocket, look at it covetously and, after he had downed his meagre ration, he would look at the spoon again with eyes that seemed to exclaim: 'It's mine!' Next he would lick it a couple of times to clean it and then, with deep satisfaction, would hide it away again in the folds of his tattered garment. True enough, the spoon was *his*! Here was a wretchedly poor beggar who, among his companions in misfortune, thought himself to be rich.

Around that same time I knew a titled lady who belonged to the Spanish aristocracy. In the eyes of God such a thing counts for nothing. We are all equal, all of us are children of Adam and Eve, weak

creatures with virtues and defects, and capable all of us, if Our Lord abandons us, of committing the worst crimes imaginable. Ever since Christ redeemed us there are no distinctions of race, language, color, birth, or wealth: *we are all children of God*. This lady of whom I have just been speaking lived in an ancestral mansion. But she spent next to nothing on herself. On the other hand she paid her servants very well and gave the rest of her money to the needy, while depriving herself of almost everything. This lady had many of the goods which so many people are anxious to obtain but she personally was poor, given to mortification and completely detached from everything. Am I making myself clear? In any event, all we need do is listen to the words of Our Lord: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.'

If you want to achieve this spirit, I would advise you to be sparing with yourself while being very generous towards others. Avoid unnecessary expenditure on luxuries and comforts, whether out of caprice, or vanity, etc. Don't create needs for yourself. In other words, learn from St Paul 'to live in poverty and to live in abundance, to be filled and to be hungry, to live in plenty and to live in want: I can do all things in him who comforts me'. Like the Apostle, we too will come out winners in this spiritual combat if we keep our hearts unattached and free from ties. (Friends of God, 123-124)
