

## Sharing in Jesus' Poverty

October 4 is the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, a good opportunity to meditate on the Christian virtue of poverty. "Love and practise poverty of spirit," wrote Saint Josemaria. "Be content with what enables you to live a simple and sober life. Otherwise, you will never be an apostle."

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*Below are some quotes from the published works of Saint Josemaria*

*that show his love for the virtue of poverty.*

## **Talking to God**

Aren't you glad to feel the poverty of Jesus so close to you? How splendid it is to be lacking even what is necessary! But as He did, it must be borne silently and unnoticed.

*The Forge, "Work," no. 732*

You tell me that you want to practise holy poverty, you want to be detached from the things you use. Ask yourself this question: do I have the same affections and the same feelings as Jesus Christ has, with regard to riches and poverty?

I told you: as well as resting in the arms of your Father-God, with all the confident abandonment of one who is his child, you should fix your eyes particularly on this virtue to love it as Jesus does. Then, instead of seeing

it as a cross to bear, you will see it as a sign of God's special love for you.

*The Forge, “Selection,” no. 888*

My God, I see I shall never accept you as my Saviour unless I acknowledge you as my Model at the same time. Since you yourself chose to be poor, make me love holy poverty. I resolve, with your grace, to live and die in poverty, even though I may have millions at my disposal.

*The Forge, “Dazzled,” no. 46*

**Always poor: but how?**

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*, "Detachment," no. 123

You haven't got the spirit of poverty if, when you are able to choose in such a way that your choice is not noticed, you do not select for yourself what is worst.

*The Way*, "Poverty," no. 635

Detach yourself from the goods of the world. Love and practise poverty of spirit: be content with what enables

you to live a simple and sober life. Otherwise, you will never be an apostle.

*The Way*, “Poverty”, no. 631

One clear sign of detachment is genuinely not to consider anything as one's own.

*The Forge*, “Recovery,” no. 524

If you are a man of God, you will seek to despise riches as intensely as men of the world seek to possess them.

*The Way*, “Poverty,” no. 633

Poverty lies in being truly detached from earthly things; in cheerfully putting up with discomforts, if they come our way, or lack of money.

“Go and tell John what your eyes have witnessed: how the blind see, and the lame walk, the lepers are made clean and the deaf hear, the

dead are raised to life and the poor have the Gospel preached to them' (Matt 11:4-5). My sons, you have heard what our Lord is saying to us: his words move me deeply. So we have to love detachment, we have to love it with our whole heart: because when the spirit of poverty begins to falter it is a sign that the whole interior life is going badly."

Quoted in S. Bernal, *Msgr. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer: a profile of the founder of Opus Dei*, p. 312.

If we are close to Christ and are following in his footsteps, we will wholeheartedly love poverty, privation and detachment from earthly things.

*The Forge*, "Eternity," no. 997

## **In hard times**

I copy these words for you because they can bring peace to your soul.

“My financial situation is as tight as it ever has been. But I don’t lose my peace. I’m quite sure that God, my Father, will settle the whole business once and for all.

I want, Lord, to abandon the care of all my affairs into your generous hands. Our Mother — your Mother — will have let you hear those words, now as in Cana: ‘They have none!’ I believe in you, I hope in you, I love you, Jesus. I want nothing for myself: it’s for them.”

*The Forge, “Crucible,” no. 807*

I love your Will. I love holy poverty, my own great lady. And, now and for ever, I detest and abominate anything that might mean the slightest lack of attachment to your most just, most lovable, and most fatherly Will.

*The Forge, “Crucible,” no. 808*

If only we could live with more trust in divine Providence, strong in faith, in the certainty of God's daily protection which never fails, how many worries and anxieties we would be spared! Then that fretfulness which, as Jesus said, is typical of pagans, of 'the heathen world', that is, of people who lack a supernatural outlook on life, would disappear. Now that I am confiding in you as a friend, as a priest and as a father, I would like to remind you that in every circumstance of our lives we are, by God's mercy, children of our almighty Father, who is in heaven but who also dwells in the intimacy of our hearts. I would like to engrave upon your minds the conviction that since 'your Father well knows what you need', we have every reason to be optimistic on our journey through this life, with our souls completely detached from those earthly things that seem so very necessary. God will provide.

Believe me, this is the only way to be lords of creation and to avoid the pitiful slavery into which so many people fall because they forget that they are children of God and spend their time worrying about tomorrow or a future that they may never see.

*Friends of God*, no. 116

To my way of thinking, the best examples of poverty are those mothers and fathers of large and poor families who spend their lives for their children and who with their effort and constancy — often without complaining of their needs — bring up their family, creating a cheerful home in which everyone learns to love, to serve and to work.

*Conversations*, no. 111

## **What we need to live and work**

Naturally, you have to use earthly means. But put a lot of effort into

being detached from everything of the earth, so that you can deal with it with your mind always fixed on the service of God and of your fellow men.

*The Forge*, “Work”, no. 728

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