



Day 25: Poverty

Jesus, the Poor Man

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:3

Kenosis is a powerful word that describes the “self-emptying” of Jesus. As the Second Person of the Holy Trinity He “emptied himself, taking the form of a slave” (Phil 2:7), to reveal to us that path of sonship and redemption. To become poor is not an accessory to the Gospel. It is vital. Jesus, by living poverty, allowed himself to stay emptied of Himself and receptive to God the Father’s providence and loving care. In every season of His life - in Nazareth, in His active ministry, and in His passion and death - Jesus was the “Poor Son,” emptied, waiting to be filled by His good Father. On the cross, the pierced hands of Jesus became the culmination and image of what gospel poverty looks like. Jesus, with arms stretched out and hands nailed to the cross, shows us that He is a son that does not hold on to anything of his own. He does not grasp or manipulate but says yes to poverty that begets radical trust in the love and goodness of His heavenly Father.

Mary, the Lowly Mother

It is natural to think that the opposite of poverty is being rich. But what if the opposite of poverty is not actually being rich in things of the world but being too full of ourselves? Mary shared in the spirit of *kenosis* with her son and allowed herself to be completely empty for the sake of Jesus. God looked with favor “on the lowliness of his servant” (Luke 1:48) because He had found in her someone who had space in her mind and heart to receive the fullness of God Himself. She was emptied of herself, her ego, her preferences and her plans. Mary rejoiced in her poverty and emptiness because this meant that God could fill her with grace and to do all that he desired to do in her life and vocation. Mary’s poverty and humility became a place of refuge that formed the heart of Jesus. As her son, He was able to drink deeply of the gift of poverty, allowing it to become the atmosphere that He lived in. As mother, Mary’s arms were always outstretched in receptivity and trust, and as her Son, Jesus assumed this grace of poverty that would ultimately lead to the cross.

St. Juan Diego and Us

Do not be afraid of your poverty. The poverty of my brother Franciscan missionaries was one of the key factors that laid the groundwork for the Gospel message to be received by the Native people of Mexico. Their simple way of life and dress, their life of penance and

daily labor united them to the poorest of the poor which planted the seed of the Gospel in a handful of souls. Juan Diego was one of these souls who embraced the Gospel and lived it. His poverty, not only materially, but spiritually, allowed God to do great things. As we reflected before, he told Our Lady, “I am really just a man from the country, I am the porter’s rope, I am a back-frame (for carrying), just a tail, a wing; I myself need to be led, carried on someone’s back.” (*Nican Mopohua*, 55). What a wonderful witness of poverty! St. Juan Diego was convinced of his poverty and littleness and knew he could not do anything on his own. This is what it means to be a son. Needing himself to be “carried on someone’s back” he humbly acknowledges his need for someone to help him. In a world that rebels against being poor, empty, and little, it is hard to believe that embracing poverty is actually possible and effective. When St. Juan Diego came to terms with his poverty and embraced it, this is exactly where Our Lady of Guadalupe provided the miracle. In restoring the gift of our sonship, we are invited to live in the atmosphere of poverty and humility. Brother, embrace poverty! Tell Jesus and Mary joyfully, “*I am poor! I myself need to be led, carried on your back!*” and you too will create a space for God to work miracles.

Prayer

O Jesus, we adore You, we love You, and we thank You for the gift of Your presence. You are the beloved Son, emptied and poor so that the Father could give you everything. We too long to be poor sons after your own heart. Please help us not be afraid of our poverty. We ask you now to hear this prayer.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of God and Mother of us, draw us close to your heart. You blessed St. Juan Diego in his poverty and littleness and allowed him to be your great instrument. We offer our lives to you. Please come and fill us with your love.

Amen.

After reading today’s reflection, pray the Litany of Restoration of Sonship.