

# Poverty<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament,  
Paris, Friday, July 9, 1858

**To become a true Servant of the Blessed Sacrament, a sister must love poverty,** honor it by the way she dresses, by what she eats, by her room, by her entire life. It must be like the royal virtue of Jesus Christ, her master.

The vow of poverty is necessary in the religious life in order to live this life perfectly. Human nature finds poverty difficult, because the heart can easily become attached. We see this in religious, men or women, who have left everything, all the pleasures of the world in order to become poor with Jesus; yet they become attached to a book, a cross, a picture. Novices must check themselves carefully on this point, and not overlook anything. [...] This costs much to our human nature; this virtue is harder to practice than the virtue of obedience, but we shall never enjoy union with God if we allow something to come between God and us. We must give up everything to gain everything.

**Religious orders have continued to exist only insofar as they have kept holy poverty.** Those who failed had to fold up and did not recover, such as the monastery of Cîteaux. Therefore, although our order is rich since we possess Jesus Eucharistic, we must excel in this beautiful religious virtue. Yes, we can receive things for Jesus, to surround him with glory and honor; but nothing for ourselves. **Let us live in total abandonment to divine Providence, relying only on God.** Isn't he *the one who decks the lilies of the field?* (cf. Mt 6:28-29) How powerful and free we will be, with the power and the freedom of love, as long as we expect nothing from men, for some day they will come asking something from us. Fortunately, this has not yet occurred. And so, let us train ourselves in the spirit of poverty, loving it, looking for occasions to practice it. Work at it with courage, so that those who come after you will follow your example. Always remember the prime importance of the novitiate. During that time you must cultivate the religious virtues; if you neglect this, you will never be good religious. This is like an education missed during youth. It can never be fully recovered.

**My dear Daughters, the vow of poverty consists in divesting ourselves of material goods, in having no personal belongings, but all in common.** Besides, there is the love of poverty that looks for opportunities to practice this virtue, an attitude that sees poverty as a good and treasure. It would be unreasonable to leave material things behind, and still long to enjoy them, or continue regretting that we no longer possess them.

Thirdly, **there is spiritual poverty**, which is the most perfect, because then we truly give everything to God. It is good to become poor and to love poverty; but spiritual poverty goes further. You come before God without any thoughts, the dryness of the desert; take your poor mind and offer it to God, make a sacrifice of it out of love. Your heart is cold, insensitive, and dead, without any feeling of fervor or love: My God, here is my heart that is so poor it does not know if it loves you; take it; I give it to you with all its wretchedness. Then your will can no longer act, or formulate any desire or resolution, it is paralyzed. Again you place it in the hands of Jesus, king of the poor. This is total emptiness, a meritorious state in the eyes of God, supported with a love for holy poverty. Very few have the joy of possessing it, but when they do they advance rapidly in the way of perfection. Jesus Christ said: ***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*** (Mt 5:3). This kingdom is nothing other than God himself, his grace, his peace, and his love.

❖ Cf. Number 67. **Supernatural Charity, Friendly, Dedicated** – Book 3 B

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<sup>1</sup> Number 48. *Pauvreté.*