



A message from
Judith Schaum, SSND

Dear Colleagues,

In the last *United in Mission* newsletter, seven sisters from the Atlantic-Midwest province shared reflections on the latest SSND directional statement *Love Gives Everything*. I am so grateful to them for accepting the invitation to share their thoughts about the challenges contained in the new document.

In this newsletter we will ponder the first point from the directional statement: "We embrace Gospel Poverty, probe its deeper meaning, and risk opening ourselves to be transformed." Several references will be used that may spark a new insight for you as you prayerfully read about Gospel poverty.

Our foundress Blessed Theresa said: "Let us never tolerate any-

thing in our hearts that is not of God." And *You Are Sent* states: "Enriched by our experience of Christ's love, we dare to follow him in unqualified reliance on a provident God." (C 15) May these two quotations ready our hearts as we reflect on Gospel Poverty.

Sincerely,

Judith Schaum, SSND

Judith Schaum, SSND
Ministry Services,
Associate Director
jschaum@amssnd.org

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YOU are SENT

The directional statement includes some references to our constitution You Are Sent. What follows are excerpts from the provided references. Ask yourself questions, such as: What is the deeper meaning

of these quotes? How am I being called to open myself to be transformed? How does the vow of poverty compel us to be other-centered?

C 16: Fundamentally, we stand before God in total emptiness, humbly accepting our humanity. We cling to nothing but the Lord who gifts us with peace and joy, enables us to be content with what we receive, and sets us free from the selfish desire to possess.

C 17: Our living of gospel poverty urges us to serve the poor. Making the concerns of the poor

our own, we become painfully aware of the many who suffer privations stemming from the sinfulness of our world.

GD 19a: Because the earth and its resources are God's gift to all humanity, we are reverent, just and sparing in our use of created things, concerned for the needs of present and future generations.

GD 20f: We live in ways that make us accessible to the poor and sensitive to their concerns; by living gospel poverty we experience ever greater solidarity with the poor.

Laudato Si'

Pope Francis' encyclical on "Care for Our Common Home" provides some helpful reflections on the vow of poverty.

155 The acceptance of our bodies as God's gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father... Learning to accept our body, to care for it and respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. (See YAS C 16.)

158 In the present condition of global society, where injustices abound and growing numbers of people are deprived of basic human rights and considered expendable, the principle of common good immediately becomes, logically and inevi-

tably, a summons to solidarity and a preferential option for the poorest of our brothers and sisters. (See YAS C 17 and GD 20f.)

226 We are speaking of an attitude of the heart, one which approaches life with serene attentiveness, which is capable of being fully present to someone without thinking of what comes next, which accepts each moment as a gift from God to be lived to the full. Jesus taught us this attitude when he invited us to contemplate the lilies of the field and the birds of the air... (See YAS C 16.)



Religious poverty for life is expressed in the way we love, not selfishly inverted, but altruistically everted - turned inside out, according to Jesus' example, for the life of the world.

- Anthony J. Gittins, CSSp, "Poverty for Life"

This document of Pope Francis is an exhortation on “the call to holiness in today’s world.” Our Holy Father reminds us that God wants us to be saints and not to “settle for a bland and mediocre existence.” (paragraph 1) In chapter three, the pope reflects on the Beatitudes. The following quotes are based on the first Beatitude: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt 5: 3)

GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE

67 The Gospel invites us to peer into the depths of our heart to see where we find our security in life. (See YAS C 16.)

69 We need to train ourselves to be indifferent in our attitude to all created things ... so that, on our part, we do not set our hearts on good health rather than bad, riches rather than poverty,

honour rather than dishonour, a long life rather than a short one, and so in all the rest.

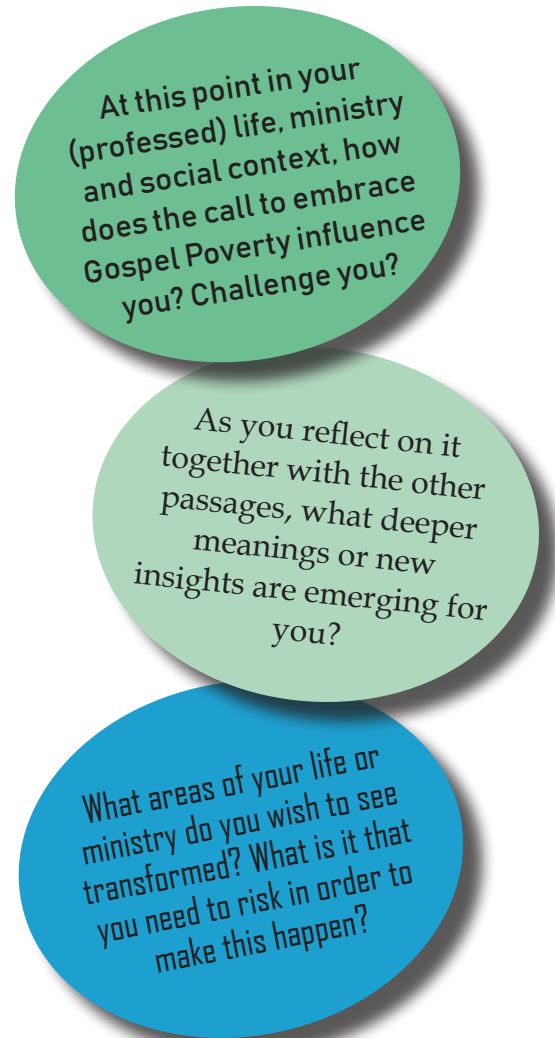


You shall love your neighbor as yourself, and not wish to be master over him.

POETIC Reflections

It is not only greed which is our enemy, but wrongful desire and love for all that is in this world. For some the need to possess things is their undoing, for others it is knowledge, or gold, or power over other beings. Be always little, humble, poor. And in your heart let love be engraved. That is the root, the soul of poverty: love. Love that allows all of creation to be, to be freely. Love that accepts the conditions of life and forsakes all else to have the love of the great Beloved. The birds in flight and the lilies of the field care not for great affairs or marvels beyond their reach. They live in the never-ending present, giving glory to their Father from whom all their needs come. We are God’s children and He will not give us snakes and stones for food, or vinegar for drink. He has fed us with His son’s body and blood. Is that not enough? He who is all in all has chosen to dwell among and within us. Is that not enough? Seek not to hold but to be held in the eternal embrace. Spread your arms wide as a cross and be stripped of all ambition, all desire, except that which will bring you home. This is poverty: to be so enamored of God that you let go of all else but that love which in the end consumes you, leaves you with the nothing which is everything.

- Written by Joseph Madonna



At this point in your (professed) life, ministry and social context, how does the call to embrace Gospel Poverty influence you? Challenge you?

As you reflect on it together with the other passages, what deeper meanings or new insights are emerging for you?

What areas of your life or ministry do you wish to see transformed? What is it that you need to risk in order to make this happen?

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