

Fr. Perozich comments —

To discern my state as impoverished or enriched, I reflect on the things I do, say, and think.

I am retired with a residence and enough money to make ends meet. I don't think about that very often.

While not a pastor, I have an hour of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament each day with Bible reading, the Divine Office, litanies, and lots of intercessory prayer for at least a 1,000 souls.

I celebrate Mass at a parish when requested, or at home privately.

This email shows that I care for souls to guide them to Jesus by feeding them with the Truth of Jesus, the Bible, the deposit of faith.

Still I am not perfect and need to reflect on my life and receive the grace of the Sacrament of Penance.

It is hard not to see the many spiritually impoverished souls. I have family who no longer attend church or who have left the Catholic faith depriving themselves of the sacramental life that formed their souls in former times.

The politicians who claim Catholic roots or even claim to be devout, yet promote abortion, sexual license, who fail to speak of Jesus, rather wasting precious words on climate, diversity, equity, inclusion, race, socialism, and on, join many high ranking clergy in the church trumpeting the same message while ignoring the real spiritual poverty that affect all souls in the world.

The documents of the upcoming synod show the spiritual poverty of those who wrote them, promoting so much material and worldly values, some of which are in such direct opposition to Jesus, that they have to use corporate language rather than biblical language to justify the statements.

David Bonagura reminds the reader of the need to address spiritual poverty, and I would say particularly to those who have attained to power, possessions and prestige in the church and in the world.

Romans 1:16-17: For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek. For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, "The one who is righteous by faith will live."

2 Timothy 8: So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God.

Save the whales? OK.

Save the migrants? OK.

Save lost souls? ABSOLUTELY

Spiritual Poverty and Eternal Salvation

David G Bonagura, Jr.
THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 2023

Charity is the highest theological virtue. The *Catechism* teaches that “giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2447) Charity toward the poor comes in many forms: we can give them fish for a day or teach them to fish.

What constitutes “the poor” also encompasses a broad range, from destitution to struggling to make ends meet. Charity to the former may include money and clothing; to the latter it could be scholarships to school or free registrations for community activities. The point for the giver is to meet the need, whatever that may be, in order both to ease the recipient’s suffering and to enable him to feel God’s love through our compassion. In doing so we show “a preferential love” for the poor that is a hallmark of a true disciple of Christ. (Catechism 2448)

But what of the “spiritually poor?” These are not the first beatitude’s “poor in spirit,” who are the humble before God. (Matthew 5:3) **In our day, sad to say, spiritually poor people exist in droves: the lonely, depressed, addicted, and suicidal are some of them.**

Those who live without God in their lives are also spiritually poor. As with material poverty, spiritual poverty has a range: those who do not know God or have forsaken Him are the most destitute; those who have God but not Christ are a rung up; those who have Christ

but not the Catholic Church are less poor but still suffer from not having their needs completely met; those who are Catholic but do not attend Mass are blind to their poverty.

The spiritually poor surely need to receive charity too. What ought this charity be? Why don't we emphasize the suffering that these poor experience on a daily basis?

Church missionary activity grounded to an effective halt after many misread Vatican II as claiming that the Catholic Church was not necessary for salvation. Since those who did not know Christ would get to Heaven eventually, the faulty reasoning went, there was no sense sacrificing so much to spread the Gospel. Material missions in the developing world would continue, but evangelization was no longer necessary, since what one believes no longer mattered.

Such thinking arises from **a materialistic worldview that sees faith as relative and secondary to persons' "real"— that is, material — needs. Holders of this view may well believe in Christ, but they do not think,** contrary to our Lord's repeated warnings and the continuous teaching of the Church, that what they believe *matters* or has anything to do with salvation.



*

To allow others to persist in spiritual poverty, assuming that they will get to Heaven someday, is akin to telling the materially poor, “Don’t worry: suffer your hardships now; when you turn 65 you will receive Social Security benefits, and you will be saved from all your financial worries.”

Pope Leo XIII, in extolling Christopher Columbus’s evangelical zeal in *Quarto abeunte saeculo*, put this truth more bluntly: “Miserable it is to live in a barbarous state and with savage manners: but more miserable to lack the knowledge of that which is highest, and to dwell in ignorance of the one true God.”

Our preferential love of the poor has to include the spiritually poor. But as with charity to the materially poor, when it comes to the spiritual order, we cannot give what we do not have. If any Catholic does not believe firmly that faith in Christ is a matter of eternal life or eternal death, then he is the one who is spiritually poor and needs charity.

What is this charity to the spiritually poor? First, we must teach them that salvation is not something that happens magically when we die. It begins when we are baptized. If we are baptized as infants, then our entire lives — 70, 80, 90 years — are spent growing in the salvation that Christ bestowed on us through baptism. We call this process sanctification. Death completes this process as it brings us before the Savior, when we will be rewarded, or punished, based on how well we loved Him in this life.

The Catholic faith exists to sanctify us in this life so we can be made ready for the next. If we wait to embrace the faith, hoping that we will find salvation when we die, it’s quite possible — likely even — that we will have waited in vain.

Second, we must show the great good that faith in Christ does for us in this life. The list is as long as that of saints in the Church. Faith gives us meaning and purpose for living, for we

know that God loves us and created each of us with a unique vocation.

We receive a rule for living — what to do to flourish and what to avoid lest we harm ourselves. **Through the sacraments and through prayer, we receive power to fulfill our duties and to fight temptation. We learn that worship of God and love of neighbor are what bring us true happiness, and we know these two actions are intimately linked.** We receive grace not only to persevere through the inevitable suffering life brings, but to be made holy by this suffering.

Jesus promises the “poor in spirit” that the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. If we want to fulfill the needs of the spiritually poor, to lift them out of the doldrums of meaninglessness into God’s love, then we must show them that Heaven is real, and it can be theirs, too, if they reach out to receive the Lord’s hand.

***Image:** *Sacred Heart of Jesus* by Pompeo Batoni, 1767 [Church of the Gesù, Rome]

You may also enjoy:

Michael Pakaluk’s [*The Wreck of Vatican II*](#)

Robert Royal’s [*In Praise of Popular Catholicism*](#)

© 2023 *The Catholic Thing*. All rights reserved. For reprint rights, write to: info@frinstitute.org

The Catholic Thing is a forum for intelligent Catholic commentary. Opinions expressed by writers are solely their own.