

Simplicity of Life

As members of the **Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests**, we do not assume poverty or simplicity in any structural form. that is. we take no religious vow of poverty.

Nonetheless. we find ourselves daily faced with the Gospel challenge, living in the midst of the wealthiest nation and in a ministry which often provides us with the best and richest. As we are in the world, we must learn to use its goods effectively in serving the people.

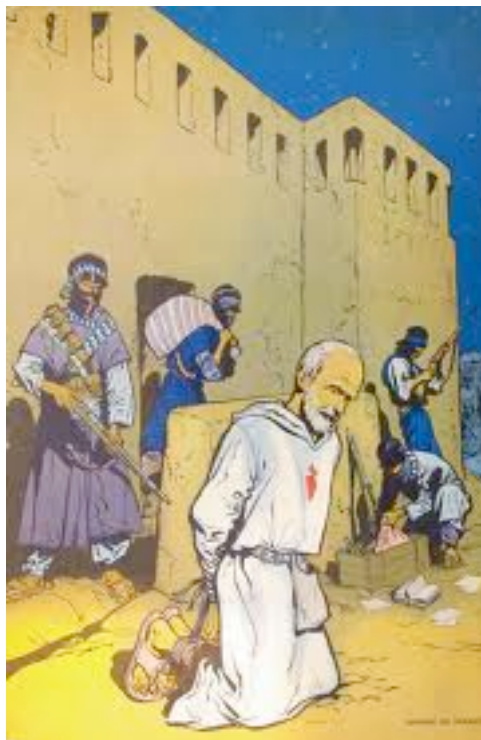
Simplicity brings Freedom

In our modern technological world, we recognize that material poverty is subordinated to the legitimate obligations of our diocesan ministries. We are convinced that poverty must be an interior freedom, a freedom of heart, which makes us generous servants in the midst of this world's wealth.

In recent years. the International Fraternity has challenged the U.S. Fraternities to look at the people and places where all the brothers serve, especially those in third world countries. So many live out the charism of Brother Charles, the way of Jesus of Nazareth, to be one with the poorest people, to be one with all humankind. This is expressed clearly in the statement from the General Assembly of Algiers, 1982. where it says. "...we renew our choice to take the way of the poor. There are many ways to find it. It can be: *'for the poor, with the poor, like the poor'* (L. Boff)...."

Serving the Poor

The Fraternity should continue to foster a spirit of commitment to the poor, each one of us having to express clearly this service, in his own situation and following his own vocation." The consciousness of the world's poor in the International Fraternity holds a sensitivity and challenge for every U.S. brother.



- For some members, the Fraternity has helped them discern very difficult choices as to where God might be calling them to serve, accepting diocesan sponsored mission parishes, inner-city or poor parishes, or other parochial or non-parochial assignments which have demanded much sacrifice. Each of these choices, as well, reflect the call to live out the concrete concern for poverty in their lives.

- Perhaps, the longer one is with the Fraternity, the more one is drawn into the manifold aspects of Gospel poverty. How poor a means Jesus Caritas itself is to reach the Lord.

Simplicity Makes us Dependent

How poorly equipped each of us is to accomplish the mission of Jesus on earth. Yet, our striving to address the reality of Gospel simplicity *concretely* and not *theoretically* leads us to embrace our total dependence upon

Jesus in our personal lives. It draws us into a spirit of freedom and detachment regarding our human means for accomplishing God's ministry. Our very acceptance of our ministry and the people we serve allows them to become the very means for pastoral simplicity, our own way of being poor without illusion.

Finding Poverty in our own Circumstances

As we face failures, or accept sometimes very painful sufferings, and live with personal inadequacy or insufficient personnel or resources, we are led to embrace more fully the mystery of Jesus' self-emptying love.

Often the Fraternity can help an individual member translate general concerns about lifestyle into concrete choices. in order to keep him from that self-deception which frequently accompanies money matters. For instance, any major expense or general use of our income might be examined together with the fraternity in the spirit of the Gospel. This will always be a sensitive matter for diocesan priests. We should not view this as getting permission to spend our money, but desiring to explore how we might best use our material resources for our wellbeing and for the mission of Jesus with the help of our brothers in Christ.

The Actual Versus the Ideal

Most U.S. Fraternities have not yet come to terms with, nor explored in depth this dimension of pastoral poverty. Overall, this dimension of Brother Charles' spirituality remains for us a source of unease and discomfort. We continue to listen to the Spirit speaking to us through what happens within us, as well as through the mission of our Brothers throughout the world. How can we best be one with them, with Jesus among them?

Jesus Caritas Fraternity of Priests -- An Overview of Spirituality and Method, (Fifth Edition, April 1987), sometimes called the 'American Experience'



PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

Father,
I abandon myself into your hands;
do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you.
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only Your will be done in me (and in all your creatures).
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands, I commend my soul;
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands without reserve,
and with boundless confidence,
for You are my Father.

CHARLES DEFOUCAULD

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Jesus Calls

Do not worry about your life and what you will eat, or about your body and what you will wear. For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. Notice the ravens: they do not sow or reap; they have neither storehouse nor barn, yet God feeds them.

Lk 12:22-24

Response of Brother Charles

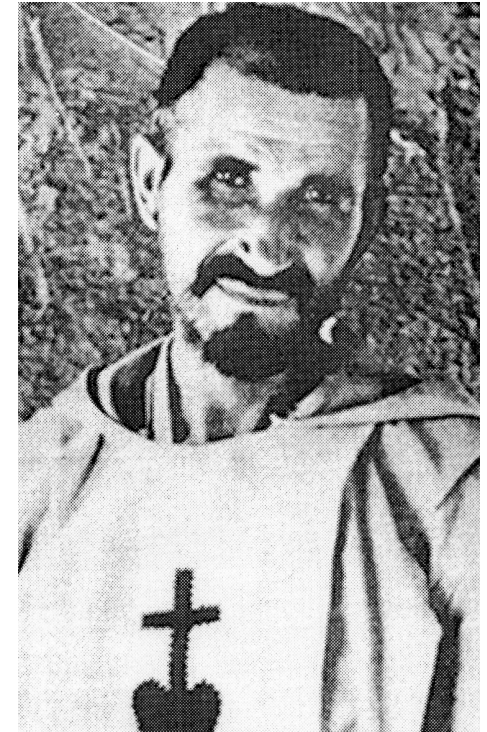
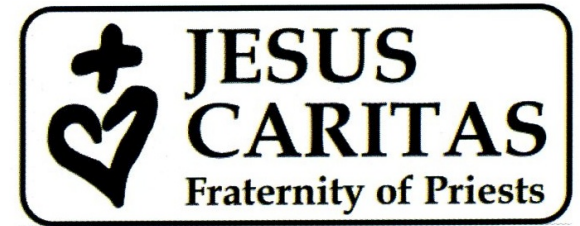
My God, I don't know if it is possible for certain souls to see you poor and to voluntarily remain rich, so see themselves greater than their Master, than their Beloved, and not want to resemble you as much as they can, in your humbling circumstances.

*de Foucauld, THE LAST PLACE
DP 174-175*

My Response

We are called to the beatitude of being one with "those who have the soul of a poor person" and to the freedom of those who have renounced everything. Do I doubt the authenticity of heart and feel that it is just an illusion? but think, if poor, downtrodden, suffering, voiceless, marginalized, and unhappy people feel at ease with me, just as they felt at ease Jesus, I will have my proof of authenticity.

Lafon 15 DAY WITH CHARLES DE FOUCAULD P. 26



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