

17. February 2026
REFLECTION ON POVERTY
“Some aspects of voluntary poverty”

Today I would like to conclude this short series in which we have addressed certain aspects of the three evangelical counsels and their application by the Lord's disciples who live in the world. As far as the third counsel is concerned, it is not so easy to apply it in the world, since voluntary poverty for the Lord's sake can take on very radical forms, as we see both in the New Testament and in many examples throughout the history of the Church.

Just think of the community of goods in the early Church, as presented to us in the Acts of the Apostles (cf. Acts 2:44–45). We can also recall the hermits and the many monastic communities who made this ideal a reality, abandoning everything to follow Christ and giving their possessions to the poor. To this day, this remains an immensely valuable call. May God grant that many respond to it and that there continue to be communities that make it a reality.

If I were to think of a large spiritual family, made up also of people who live in the world and want to follow the Lord, I would choose the following phrase from St. Paul as a guide for putting poverty into practice: *“But if we have food and clothing, with these we shall be content”* (1 Tim 6:8).

If we internalize this word, we will adopt an increasingly receptive attitude that we will have to put into practice every day. It is an attitude that receives everything as a gift, is content with little, and is always grateful. In fact, if we put this maxim of the Apostle into practice in its spiritual sense, we will discover God's gifts with ever greater clarity. We will notice even the smallest details with which our Father, in His love, indulges us.

In this receptive attitude, which no longer focuses on multiplying possessions, a certain inner detachment takes place that frees our hearts from disordered attachment to material goods. We leave behind the apparent security that these goods give us and become more capable of sharing. In this way, we prepare ourselves during our earthly life for the state in which we will find ourselves at the hour of our death, when we will no longer have anything material and will leave everything behind.

We must embrace voluntary poverty—for Christians living in the world, it would be more appropriate to speak of modesty or simplicity—that is, we must love it, because it is a precious treasure. It introduces us to the spiritual dimension of life, since our thoughts will no longer have to be constantly preoccupied with how to obtain the necessities of life, how to increase our possessions, or how to acquire what, according to the mentality of the world, is best for ourselves. It is precisely this latter attitude that makes us easily succumb to the temptation of disordered self-love.

By overcoming these inclinations of our nature, which are often deeply rooted, our gaze focuses on the essential: sharing in the wealth of the Lord, who did not come to us in bright clothes or with the pomp and splendor of a prince, but with the simplicity of the manger in Bethlehem.

By practicing voluntary poverty (understood as modesty), we will aspire with all our hearts to the spiritual goods that God offers us and thus make the Lord's words a reality: *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Mt 6:21).

With its spiritual beauty, voluntary poverty is an excellent means of active purification against greed and avarice, which cause so much evil in the world.

Those who enjoy a certain prosperity or even material wealth are strongly encouraged to try to manage their goods with inner freedom and not to attach their hearts to their possessions if they want to follow the Lord as He desires. If they sincerely share and thus serve the common good, they will also be able to live, to a certain extent, in spiritual poverty.

Today's theme thus serves as a transition to the beginning of Lent. During the next forty days, I would like to offer daily meditations as a kind of spiritual retreat for our large spiritual family. This includes, in addition to our community of life, those who have joined our spirituality through Jemael, the "Family of Abba," and also the "army of Balta-Lelija." Of course, all those who follow my daily meditations and/or the "3 Minutes for Abba" are also invited to join. For the meditations, I will draw mainly on the lectionary of the traditional rite. Should important events occur in the Church or in the world, I will address them when appropriate.

I entrust this Lenten spiritual retreat to the Holy Spirit so that it may be fruitful, and in this sense I also ask you to accompany me with your prayers. In addition, it would be helpful to share these meditations so that they may serve as many people

as possible.

As usual, at the end of each text we will include links for those who wish to listen to a meditation on the reading and/or the Gospel of the day according to the Novus Ordo lectionary.

Meditation on today's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/to-resist-temptations-3/>