

PONTIFICAL MISSIONARY UNION

DECEMBER 2021

(Consecrated persons)

You cannot be a missionary if you are attached to earthly things

(Blessed Paolo Manna)

The missionary dimension of the poverty of consecrated persons

From the Gospel of Matthew

“Now someone approached him and said, ‘Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?’ He answered him, ‘Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He asked him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus replied, ‘You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to him, ‘All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to [the] poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.”

(Mt 19:16-22)

From the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

“There is another failing that the missionary must scrupulously avoid, and that is the desire to make any profit beyond the acquisition of souls. There is, of course, no need to delay on this point. If a man is the victim of a craving for financial gain, how can he fulfil his obligations of working single-mindedly for the glory of God? And how can he, for the increase of God’s glory, hold himself ready to sacrifice everything he has, even his life, to the work of calling others back to a state of spiritual health?”

(BENEDICT XV, Apostolic Letter on the Propagation of the Faith throughout the World, *Maximum Illud*, 21)

“Religious should diligently practice and if need be, express also in new forms that voluntary poverty which is recognized and highly esteemed especially today as an expression of the following of Christ. By it they share in the poverty of Christ who for our sakes became poor, even though He was rich, so that by His poverty we might become rich (cf. 2Cor 8:9; Mt 8:20).”

(SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 13)

“Evangelical poverty is a value, since it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in the imitation of the poor Christ. Its primary meaning, in fact, is to attest that God is the true wealth of the human heart. [...] Consecrated persons are therefore asked to bear a renewed and vigorous evangelical witness to self-denial and restraint, in a form of fraternal life.”

(JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, 90)

From the writings of Blessed Father Paolo Manna

“Jesus’ entire life was a continuous lesson in poverty and detachment from all earthly things. He taught this from the ‘pulpit’ of His cradle, from the ‘pulpit’ of [His humble life in] Nazareth, and especially from the highest of all ‘pulpits’, that of His cross.”

(P. MANNA, “Il Vincolo”, I [September 1929], n. 2, 11)

“Those missionaries who [seek] in any way [personal gain], little by little no longer look after the interests of God; they stop being shepherds, and become mercenaries, to whom the sheep are of little interest.”

(P. MANNA, “Il Vincolo”, I [September 1929], n. 2, 11)

“Let us not place too much value on money as a vehicle for the apostolate. I would like [everyone] to understand the correct force of the phrase ‘too much.’

The Gospel [evangelization] will not go far if it needs money as a crutch. Even if it looks like progress, it won't be a lasting or true progress."

(P. MANNA, "Il Vincolo", I [September 1929], n. 2, 12)

"[A missionary] who holds something back and is not willing to give everything to Jesus, is a missionary in name only. The Church and the Institute do not know what to do with such a man."

(P. MANNA, *Apostolic Virtues*, translated from Italian by Fr. Steve Baumbusch, PIME, New York 2009, 131)

"Are you missionaries? Then you must have this spirit of detachment from all earthly things, and you must regulate your lives according to this spirit. Even if you had the vow of poverty, without such a spirit, that wouldn't make you any better."

(P. MANNA, *Apostolic Virtues*, translated from Italian by Fr. Steve Baumbusch, PIME, New York 2009, 135)

Questions for reflection

- Do others see that I lead a simple life, in the daily choices I make, and in my lifestyle?
- In my apostolate, do I place my trust in prayer or in material things?
- Do I accept what I have with simplicity and joy, or do I look continuously for personal/material gain, and an ever more comfortable life?
- How attached am I to my personal possessions? Am I willing to share what I have with others, and without hesitation?

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 de Foucauld