

# STUDIES

## in the Spirituality of Jesuits

On Becoming Poor  
A Symposium on Evangelical Poverty



A More Authentic Poverty  
by  
Horacio de la Costa, S.J.

The Decree on Poverty  
by  
Edward F. Sheridan, S.J.

### DISCUSSIONS

by  
Michael J. Buckley, William J. Connolly, David L. Fleming,  
George E. Ganss, Robert F. Harvanek,  
Daniel F. X. Meenan, Charles E. O'Neill, Ladislav Orsy

Published by the American Assistancy Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality,  
especially for American Jesuits working out their *aggiornamento*  
in the spirit of Vatican Council II

consists of a group of Jesuits from various provinces who are listed below. The members were appointed by the Fathers Provincial of the United States. The purpose of the Seminar is to study topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and to communicate the results to the members of the Assistancy. The hope is that this will lead to further discussion among all American Jesuits--in private, or in small groups, or in community meetings. All this is done in the spirit of Vatican Council II's recommendation to religious institutes to recapture the original charismatic inspiration of their founders and to adapt it to the changed circumstances of modern times. The members of the Seminar welcome reactions or comments in regard to the topics they publish.

To achieve these purposes, especially amid today's pluralistic cultures the Seminar must focus its direct attention sharply, frankly, and specifically on the problems, interests, and opportunities of the Jesuits of the United States. However, many of these interests are common also to Jesuits of other regions, or to other priests, religious men or women, or lay men or women. Hence the studies of the Seminar, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

THE MEMBERS OF THE SEMINAR ARE:

Michael J. Buckley, S.J., Jesuit School of Theology, 1735 Le Roy Avenue,  
Berkeley, California 94709

William J. Connolly, S.J., Center for Religious Development, 42 Kirkland  
Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

David L. Fleming, S.J., Lewis Memorial Residence, 3701 Lindell Blvd.,  
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

George E. Ganss, S.J., Chairman of the Assistancy Seminar and Editor of  
its *Studies*. His address is: The Institute of Jesuit  
Sources, Fusz Memorial, 3700 West Pine Blvd., St. Louis,  
Missouri 63108.

James J. Gill, S.J., Loyola University School of Medicine, 2160 S. First  
Avenue, Maywood, Illinois 60153

Robert F. Harvenek, S.J., Loyola University, 6525 N. Sheridan Road,  
Chicago, Illinois 60626

Philip S. Land, S.J., Center of Concern, 3700 13th Street, N.E.,  
Washington, D.C. 20017

Daniel F. X. Meenan, S.J., Editor of the *Review for Religious* and Secre-  
tary of the Assistancy Seminar, Fusz Memorial, 3700 West  
Pine Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63108

Charles E. O'Neill, S.J., Loyola University, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118

Ladislav Orsy, S.J., Catholic University of America, Department of Canon  
Law, P.O. Box 63, Washington, D.C. 20017

John W. Padberg, S.J., Weston School of Theology, 3 Phillips Place,  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

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Fusz Memorial, St. Louis University  
3700 West Pine Boulevard  
St. Louis, Missouri 63108

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## Editor's Foreword

The present symposium aims to deal chiefly, though not exclusively, with practical aspects of Jesuit evangelical poverty; in other words, with matters which will help in the implementation of the decree on poverty of General Congregation XXXII. A brief account of the origin of this symposium will help many of our readers to understand the papers better.

In the meeting of September 27-28, 1975, the members of the Assistancy Seminar, hoping to aid toward carrying the recent General Congregation into practice, decided to devote the issue of these *Studies* for March, 1976, to the decree on poverty. Two papers of high quality written by members of the Congregation were already available. The Chairman had the text of a lecture on the decree which Father Edward F. Sheridan had delivered to an audience of religious men and women in the Centrum Ignatianum Spiritualitatis on May 28, 1975. And Father Daniel F. X. Meenan, editor of the *Review for Religious* had another paper on the same topic, written by Father Horacio de la Costa, which he offered to us for simultaneous publication in these *Studies* and the *Review for Religious*.

Each of these authors had a wide background which made him unusually well equipped to treat this topic. Father Sheridan has been a professor of moral theology, Provincial of the Province of Upper Canada, a member of General Congregations XXXI and XXXII, and in XXXII, Chairman of the Commission on Poverty which drafted the decree and guided it through the debates. He is presently Regional Assistant of the English Assistancy. Father de la Costa received his STL from Woodstock College and his doctorate in history from Harvard. He is the author of the scholarly history, *Jesuits in the Philippines: 1581-1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). He has served as Provincial of the Philippine Province, as General Assistant to Father General Arrupe, and as a member of General Congregations XXXI and XXXII. At present he has resumed his scholarly work on the history of the Jesuits in the Philippines.

Inevitably these two papers on one topic occasionally overlap. Yet each approaches the topic from a different viewpoint and has a special

strength, Father Sheridan's in connection with the juridical features of the new legislation, and Father de la Costa's in regard to its relations with our contemporary culture in the widely different regions of the world.

The upshot was that the Seminar members planned a discussion on the two papers mentioned above, for December 6, 1975. Almost immediately, however, the remarks spread to the decree itself and then to perennial problems ranging over the whole field of evangelical poverty. Rather naturally there was considerable disagreement. With no small sense of frustration as the discussion was ending, those present agreed that each one should reflect for some days and then briefly write his reactions, reflections, and opinions on the topic, focussing them on the formulation "How to Become Poor." Each one had liberty, however, to modify this title. Hopefully this collection of brief papers would become the Seminar's addition to the sound work already done by the two principal authors.

These brief papers were distributed to all the members before the meeting of January 31, 1976, and then discussed in it. The disagreements, although much diminished, had not all vanished. But each one present had new perspectives and found himself far better able to understand the positions taken by others. The increase in common outlook was surprising and encouraging.

These new discussions led us to think that in regard to matters connected with the new decree, many other American Jesuits will have reactions, questions, difficulties, and hopes similar to those which had surfaced among us. We also thought that it will be advantageous and desirable for them to engage in dialogues similar to ours. Only after the various opinions have been thus thrashed out are these Jesuits likely to be in position to implement the decree adequately. The two major papers and the briefer ones we now had in hand seemed to be a solid help toward informed discussion of this kind.

Hence we decided to publish the present materials in a joint issue for March and May. The writers of the brief papers were asked to revise their successive drafts in the light of our discussions; also, to stress the practical aspects of the topic. The symposium was to carry the title: On Becoming Poor.



Unlike ourselves, however, the authors of the two principal papers did not enjoy such opportunity to profit from our discussions, to defend their opinions, or to revise their opinions. In fairness to them, it is wise for the rest of us to keep this fact in mind.

George E. Ganss, S.J., Chairman  
The American Assistancy Seminar



## I. A MORE AUTHENTIC POVERTY

by

Horacio de la Costa, S.J.  
c/o Xavier House  
P. O. Box 2722  
Manila  
Philippines

A consideration of the decree on poverty of the 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus must begin with a word about its background. The General Congregation immediately preceding, the 31st, decided that Jesuit legislation on poverty should be brought into conformity with the dispositions of Vatican II, but at the same time perceived that this would be better done not by itself but by experts reflecting on the matter over a period of time. It therefore elected what are called definitors (*definitores*) to draw up statutes on poverty which would become Society law, on the authority of the General Congregation itself, upon approval of the superior general. In 1967, Father General Arrupe approved these "Statutes on Poverty."

The 31st General Congregation had provided, further, that the statutes thus adopted be submitted for review to the next General Congregation. Accordingly, Father General Arrupe, having decided after the Congregation of Procurators of 1970 to convene the 32nd General Congregation, appointed a study commission to go over the statutes and recommend possible improvements. Some of the *definitores* sat in this commission also. Most of its members were moral theologians, jurists, or administrators. Some months before the Congregation convened, Father General expanded the membership of the commission to include experts from other disciplines and areas of experience.

The 32nd General Congregation constituted from among its membership its own Commission on Poverty: Commission III. Some of the members of the pre-Congregation commission, being also delegates (*congregati*), were elected to Commission III. Very broadly speaking, it can be said that for the juridical aspects of the present decree, the Congregation relied chiefly on the work of the pre-Congregation commission; for its pastoral aspects,

on its own Commission III.

The decree itself is divided into three sections. Section A is a declaration of what Jesuit poverty should be today in the light of prevailing conditions in the Church and in the world. This declaration sets forth the ascetical and pastoral principles on which is based the dispositive part of the Decree, Sections B-F. Section B, "Norms," gives the prescriptive guidelines for a revision of the statutes on poverty, to be undertaken by a commission appointed by Father General, who is to approve and promulgate the revised statutes. Sections C-F are supplementary provisions concerning certain aspects of the new juridical structure which is being given to the Jesuit practice of poverty.

A principal objective which the pre-Congregation commission set for itself was to simplify Jesuit legislation on poverty. It was observed that over the years numerous alterations had been introduced into the primitive legislation of the Ignatian Constitutions, usually by obtaining an indult, that is, an exception to the law, from the Holy See; for instance, the indult whereby Jesuits are enabled to accept Mass stipends.

Another kind of deviation from the primitive legislation was that of certain accepted anomalies; for instance, houses of writers. A house of writers is not, strictly speaking, a "college" in the sense of the Constitutions. It is not a house of formation, the only Jesuit institution to which St. Ignatius allowed fixed revenues. Later, however, houses of writers were also permitted fixed revenues, on the grounds that they cannot otherwise carry on their valuable apostolate, since the kind of books Jesuits write are very seldom best-sellers.

Similarly, there was no provision in the primitive legislation for the care of the sick and the aged. These were therefore assigned to the same juridical category as the Jesuit seminarians ("scholastics") supported by the colleges. In effect, those retired from the active apostolate were equated with those who had not yet begun it, and the *arca seminarii*, or formation fund, did double-duty as a social-security fund.

There were also accepted ambiguities which amounted to legal fictions. For instance, missionary priests in the Spanish colonies--at least up to the time the Jesuits were expelled therefrom (1767)--received fixed yearly

stipends from the government. In the Philippines, this stipend was 100 silver pesos and 100 *fanegas* (bushels) of rice a year. This was by no means a pittance. A silver peso in those days was really made of silver, and its purchasing power was probably a hundred times that of the present metal-alloy peso. At any rate, each missionary priest was able to support with his stipend a missionary brother, and still have something left over toward building a parish church and a parish house. Now, then, this stipend can, with a little stretching of meaning, be called an alms. But the government, and almost everybody else, considered it a salary--something which the Constitutions did not allow for, especially with reference to spiritual ministries, the normative maxim for which was to "give freely what you have freely received."

A more recent example of this ambiguity is the salary received by military and hospital chaplains. Military and hospital chaplaincies are certainly valuable, even necessary apostolates. But in many countries of the world, the civil law does not allow anyone to become a military or hospital chaplain unless he accepts a salary. It does not allow him to give freely what he has freely received.

Finally, there were what looked like downright violations of the law to those who did not understand or appreciate the need from which they arose. How, for instance, was the glorious Japanese mission of the Old Society, founded by Xavier himself and so fruitful in martyrs, supported? Why, by the fantastically lucrative Macao-Nagasaki silk trade. Portuguese investors in the trade would invest sums for, or on behalf of, the Jesuit Province of Japan, and the profits from these investments were what supported the Province's catechumenates, houses of formation, mission stations, printing press. Were they alms? Were they fixed revenues? Or were they *negotiatio vetita*, commerce forbidden to clerics?

All these complexities seemed to arise from the fact that thoroughly valid and even absolutely essential apostolates could not be undertaken or maintained without such departures from the primitive legislation. And the reason for this was the difference in economic, social, and juridical structures between the modern world, the world that emerged from the Industrial Revolution, and the late-medieval world, the world of St. Ignatius.

There are all-pervading socio-economic realities we must take into account today which St. Ignatius and his first companions almost certainly did not foresee. Here are some of them.

In many parts of the world, Western and non-Western, capitalist and socialist, there is a decline in the witness value of mendicancy. Living on alms is rarely if at all considered an effective witness to apostolic freedom and trust in divine Providence. Accompanying this decline is a corresponding appreciation of the ethical and social value of work, and of what are generally considered to be the natural adjuncts of working for a living, such as the provident setting aside of savings for the future, and the investment of such savings in economic enterprises that generate income.

Another difference to be noted between St. Ignatius' time and ours is the decline in the modern world of the temporal power and wealth of the Church, and the dissolution of medieval forms of union of Church and State. It is no longer possible for large-scale apostolic enterprises to be financed by endowments granted by pope or prince, by cardinal or *conquistador*. How are large-scale apostolic enterprises financed today? Mostly by small private donations derived chiefly from the middle class: the people, neither rich nor poor, who enable religious institutes to train their seminarians and establish foreign missions. It is a fact, to be acknowledged with gratitude, that in the world as it now is we depend almost entirely on the *bourgeoisie* for the financial viability of our apostolic enterprises. On the other hand, we religious are called to live not precisely as *bourgeois* but as poor men and women. How do we do this, in the world as it now is? How do we set up a structure for our poverty that will be simple enough and practical enough to enable us to carry on our ministries effectively, and yet live poor?

The pre-Congregation commission on poverty mentioned earlier proposed that one way of doing this was to accept the basic distinction between communities and apostolic institutes, a distinction already sketched out by the *definitores* of the statutes of 1967. The 32nd General Congregation accepted the distinction, along with the juridical implications spelled out by the commission.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Congregation made that distinction the "keystone" of its "reform of the structure of temporal administration."<sup>2</sup>

There are, of course, problems raised by this revision of structure, or foreseen as following upon it. That is why the Holy Father directs that the decree be put into practice *ad experimentum*, so that the next General Congregation "can re-examine the entire question on the basis of the experience acquired in the years to come."<sup>3</sup> But where the religious life is concerned, juridical structure is usually consequent on a spiritual discernment. In the present case, that discernment is set forth in the expository portion of the decree (Section A), to which we now turn.

The 32nd General Congregation confirms the findings of its predecessor on the basis of a review of the Society's experience during the decade intervening between them. These findings are chiefly three. First, that our present practice of evangelical poverty falls short of the norms established by St. Ignatius and the first companions, and hence, that we must resolutely and perseveringly undertake a renewal of the spirit of poverty according to the specifically Ignatian inspiration. Second, that while we must by all means keep the primal norms of our poverty intact as far as their substantive demands are concerned, we must also adapt them to the socio-economic and juridical conditions of our time, very different from those of the time when St. Ignatius and the first companions established them. In other words, our renewal of the spirit of poverty must be accompanied by a certain adaptation of structures and procedures; it must be a *renovatio accommodata*. Third, that in the matter of poverty, as in other matters, spirit and structure are intimately interdependent; that while the spirit of poverty needs a structure to support it, safeguard it, and make it operative, the structure will not work, will become dead-weight and dead-letter, unless those involved in the structure are imbued with the spirit of poverty and are resolved to make the structure work.

The determination of the surplus income of a community might serve to illustrate this third finding, namely, the interdependence of spirit and structure. The surplus income of a Jesuit community cannot be retained. It must be disposed of annually.<sup>4</sup> By surplus income is meant what is over and above the expenses and the contingency fund provided for in the annual budget of the community as determined by its "responsible administrator" with the approval of the provincial superior.<sup>5</sup> The norm for estimating

the annual budget is a community style of life "removed as far as possible from all infection of avarice and as like as possible to evangelical poverty."<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, therefore, this whole régime of placing the community on a budget and disposing of annual surpluses will depend on the style of life adopted by the community. It will depend on how seriously the community tries to live up to the norm set by the Congregation, namely, that "the standard of living of our houses should not be higher than that of a family of slender means whose providers must work hard for its support."<sup>7</sup> In a word, it will depend on how much alive the spirit of poverty is among us. For, as the Congregation says, "While law can support spirit, no legal reform will profit anything unless all our members elect evangelical poverty with courage at the invitation of the Eternal King, Christ our Lord."<sup>8</sup>

The norm for our standard of living just cited may in turn serve to illustrate the second of the findings mentioned above, namely, the need for adaptation. It is stated that our standard of living can be lower, but not higher than that of "a family of slender means." Yes; but what are "slender means"? What does "slender" mean? One particularization of the term follows immediately: a family of slender means is one whose providers must work hard for its support. This would seem to exclude unearned income, that is, income from invested funds, at least as a principal source of support for our communities. It would seem to imply that our communities should derive their day-to-day support from the earnings of the day-to-day work of their members.

Here is one example of the adaptation to the changed conditions of the times noted earlier. The Congregation itself calls attention to it: "For centuries, the perfection of religious poverty was found in mendicancy. . . . He was counted poor who lived on alms, placing all his hopes in the providence of God operative through benefactors. With growing clarity the Church invites religious to submit to the common law of labor. 'Earning your own living and that of your brothers and sisters, helping the poor by your works--these are the duties incumbent upon you.'"<sup>9</sup>

This may possibly explain why the Congregation does not have recourse to the gauges or measuring rods of religious poverty devised in times past.



Such as, that religious poverty is a poverty of dependence: dependence, in the first instance, on the superior, but through him, dependence on the providence of God "operative through benefactors"--that is, dependence on alms. The emphasis today is not on alms but on work. Or again, that our poverty should be assimilated to that of *honesti sacerdotes*, reputable secular priests; for while the reputable secular priests of former times did live very slenderly, they were nevertheless supported by "livings," that is, stable revenue derived chiefly from landed property.

However, it must not be thought that the Congregation excluded mendicancy--dependence on alms for support--altogether. Neither did it suppose that religious who live on alms do no work. We should give it credit for a certain measure of realism. It is a fact that many of our hardest workers are dependent on alms for their support; for instance, missionaries. It is also a fact that in certain regions of the world today, for instance, in those countries behind the Iron Curtain where the Church is permitted to exist, Jesuits can live and work only if supported by free-will offerings. And it is equally a fact that even in those regions of the world where the right of the Church to exist is recognized, many of the works we have to do as ministers of the Gospel do not have a financial remuneration attached to them.

Thus, while we should by all means adapt ourselves to the work ethic of our time, we should guard against pressing too closely the work-income nexus. It is my impression that the Congregation was fully aware of the dangers of doing so; fully aware that it could introduce among us what usually accompanies the work ethic, namely the market orientation. It is not too far-fetched to foresee an evolution of attitude after this fashion: One begins by looking around for compensated work in order to be able to contribute to the support of one's community. One goes on to prefer compensated to non-compensated work, the apostolic value of the works being roughly equal. A gradual, perhaps a very gradual, an almost imperceptible reversal of values then takes place, whereby the value of apostolicity becomes secondary to the value of marketability. Such a process might even end up with an alternative version of Surplus Value, namely, that wages represent an apostolic "surplus" over and above the apostolic value of the

work itself, and hence that the better compensated work *is* the more apostolic work.

Besides vitally affecting our choice of ministries, a too rigid interpretation of the duty of "earning your own living and that of your brothers and sisters" could introduce in the Society--informally, to be sure, but palpably--another system of grades, one based not on presbyteral function but on earning capacity. Those engaged in gainful employment and thus contribute to the support of the community would, for all practical purposes, be the professed; those not thus engaged, and hence are supported by the community, would be the coadjutors. Such a stratification would tend to bring our community life down to a purely human level, and may well have disastrous consequences: assumption of privilege by the gainful workers, frustration and resentment on the part of the "unprofitable servants."

Are these purely conjectural hypotheses, or do we perceive them even now, in certain parts of the Society, as a cloud no bigger than a man's hand? At any rate, we have from the Congregation a reminder that the adoption of any valid principle of action--involves risk. "The frequent engagement of Ours in professions and salaried offices is not without dangers, not only for the spirit of gratuity, but even for the observance of common life itself. Such work is to be chosen only as a more effective means to the communication of faith, without thought of remuneration or of the privileges attached to an office."<sup>10</sup>

But to get back to the slender-means norm. Besides the fact that it is means acquired by work, present hard work, rather than a stable income from invested funds, what other nuances can give it sharper definition? Perhaps this, that it should be a deliberate renunciation of consumerism, of "the appetite for enjoyment and consumption of material goods" which, as the Congregation points out, "spreads everywhere and verges on a practical atheism."<sup>11</sup> At least that. "At the very least, religious poverty should try hard to limit rather than to expand consumption," says the Congregation.<sup>12</sup>

Another nuance of the slender-means norm is that our style of life should be pitched at a level which enables and encourages us not only to work for the poor but with the poor. In order to do that, we need to

"acquire some experience of their condition," and even of their "miseries and distress." This, the Congregation says, is a necessary consequence of the basic option we have made regarding our apostolate today, namely, "commitment to the cause of justice and to the service of the poor."<sup>13</sup> It is with this nuance that the Congregation repeats St. Ignatius' injunction "to love poverty as a mother and, within the measure of holy discretion, experience some of its effects as occasions arise."<sup>14</sup>

Here, then, are some of the specifications that might make the slender-means norm of our voluntary poverty less abstract, more applicable to real-life situations. Our style of life should be that of the worker rather than the stockholder (*rentier*); it should put out of our reach the open-ended self-indulgence of the consumer society; it should afford us some direct experience of what the involuntarily poor of today have to put up with, so that we can the more realistically and effectively help them to help themselves. I must confess, however, that even so, for me personally, the slender-means norm remains somewhat fuzzy round the edges. And I think I see the reason why in a statement *in obliquo* of the Congregation itself. It expresses regret that we have no other word to designate the poverty of the religious life except the word "poverty." This is regrettable because "poverty means very different things to different people."<sup>15</sup>

Not only that; different people (and therefore different Jesuits) can hold their different views of poverty honestly and sincerely, without hypocrisy or cynicism. Further, the reasons why they hold these different views are not always myths but often realities. Thus, a Jesuit style of life really and truly considered poor in Australia or Western Germany may well be considered really and truly affluent in Ecuador or Indonesia; not necessarily because Ecuadorian and Indonesian Jesuits are religious of strict observance, while Australian and West-German Jesuits are religious of lax observance, but simply because of the difference between "a family of slender means" in the developed world and the corresponding family in the underdeveloped world.

Consider, too, the fact, or at least the possibility, that the type of apostolate to which a Jesuit is sent has, perhaps should have, an influence on his style of life; an influence that leads, perhaps inevitably,

to a difference in standard of living. Thus, it might be asked whether the style of life of Jesuits teaching in the Gregorian University in Rome should be, or can be exactly that of Jesuits working among the *marginados* in Venezuela.

The classical precedents invoked by those who favor a difference are well-known. Among the missionaries of the Old Society in India, was there not a significant difference in style of life between those who worked among the pariahs? And what about the drastic change in style of life adopted by Xavier in Japan, when he learned that the Japanese paid scant attention to mendicants but might possibly give a hearing to an *hidalgo*? Equally familiar are the precedents brought forward by those opposed to recognizing such differences. Ignatius' instructions to Laynez and Salmerón, papal theologians at the Council of Trent, that they should not follow the life style of the Council Fathers, but should work in hospitals as orderlies, preach in city squares without a stipend, and beg their meals from door to door. The example of Ignatius himself, when he returned to Loyola from Paris: refusing to stay in the ancestral castle with his brother, he chose to lodge in the town infirmary, considering it a better platform from which to persuade his fellow citizens to the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

There is, then, an ambiguity--a necessary ambiguity, as it seems--in the general norms proposed by the Congregation; and the Congregation admits it. Not only does it recognize that poverty can mean different things to different people, but in recommending "the insertion of communities among the poor" as "a testimony of love of the poor and of poverty to which the Church encourages religious," it calls attention to the fact that "implementation of this proposal will have to be different in our widely differing circumstances."<sup>16</sup> What it is saying, in effect, is that the slender-means norm can mean different things to different communities.

The practical conclusion that follows from this is that it is up to the discernment of local and provincial communities to ensure that, taking into account differences in socio-economic context and apostolic commitment, our poverty is, and is seen to be, the poverty of Christ. It is to the same practical conclusion that the Congregation comes in the other major

areas of our life and apostolate.<sup>17</sup> The crucial role which the Congregation assigns to discernment, personal and communitarian, in the process of translating its decrees from paper to practice, clearly appears in that it recognizes discernment as an ingredient of Jesuit identity,<sup>18</sup> and gives extended treatment to it as a feature of our community life.<sup>19</sup>

This brings us to what was mentioned earlier as the first of the findings of the Congregation on Jesuit poverty, namely, the need for a renewal of the spirit of our poverty as conceived by St. Ignatius.

A first observation and an obvious one is that we have vowed ourselves as religious to evangelical poverty, that is, the poverty proposed by the gospel as a counsel of perfection, and adopted by Christ himself. Hence, a first distinction, equally obvious, must be made between our voluntary poverty and the involuntary poverty that afflicts so large a portion of the human race. This inhuman and dehumanizing poverty, frequently imposed by injustice, is an evil. It cannot be the object of a vow. It is not the poverty we embrace, it is the poverty we must fight. Religious poverty is evangelical, not necessarily sociological.

Not necessarily; which leads to a second observation. All religious institutes are followings of Christ, but each religious institute follows Christ in its own way, according to the charism of its founder. Of St. Ignatius it may be said that his way of following Christ is pre-eminently the way of service, of apostolic service. We belong to a Society which "is founded for this purpose above all . . . the defense and propagation of the faith" and any kind of ministry whatsoever that shall be "for the glory of God and the common good."<sup>20</sup> Our poverty, then, as everything about us, is--or is meant to be--apostolic. We embrace poverty not for its own sake, as another religious institute well might, but in function of the apostolate. St. Ignatius' phrase "praedicare in paupertate"--to preach in poverty--must, I think, be understood in this sense. We are to be poor that we may all the more effectively preach.

The images in which St. Ignatius embodies his notion of poverty seem to suggest as much. For Francis of Assisi, poverty is the Lady Poverty, the lady of a troubadour, a loveliness to be loved for itself alone. For Ignatius of Loyola, on the other hand, it is "the firm wall of religion":

fortifications designed to defend an "intra muros," an area of peace in which to build the City of God. And we must love poverty, certainly; but "as a mother": a mother who gives birth to a life, nurtures and trains it, not to keep for herself but to send forth; a life that will be something of value in the world of men.<sup>21</sup>

In the world of men today, that something of value is, for us Jesuits, a commitment to "the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement."<sup>22</sup> Hence, if the promotion of justice should require in some place, at some time, the "insertion of communities among the poor," if it should summon us "to live among the poor, serving them and sharing something of their experience," something of their "miseries and distress,"<sup>23</sup> then we must by all means do so, but with a clear understanding that such poverty is a degradation not an enhancement of the human condition, and that we embrace it for the sole purpose of helping our fellow men to free themselves from it. In a word, evangelical poverty is not necessarily sociological poverty, but may demand acceptance of it in function of the apostolate.

This brings us to a third observation, namely, that if our poverty is in function of the apostolate, then it is what might be called a "functional" poverty. It is, in level, form and style the poverty that best serves our apostolic ends. Its measure is the *tantum-quantum* of the Exercises.<sup>24</sup> That is why the Congregation begins its declaration on poverty with a "reflection on the Gospel in the light of the signs of our times"; or so it seems to me. It seems to me that the Congregation, faced with the task passed on to it by its predecessor of answering "the demands of a real and not pretended poverty," did not begin by asking the question "What should our poverty be?" but by asking the question "What should our poverty be for?"

From its reading of the signs of the times, the Congregation brings forward certain apostolic objectives which our poverty should by preference bear witness to or serve.

At a time when nations, groups, and individuals have come to realize that the material resources of this planet are limited, and have reacted to that realization by accepting as a fact of life that the race is only to the swift and the Devil takes the hindmost, vowed poverty should be,

and be a witness to, *sharing*. "On all sides there is felt a desire to discover new communities which favor a more intimate interpersonal communication, communities of true sharing and communion, concerned for the integral human development of their members. Our lives, our communities, our very poverty can and should have a meaning for such a world."<sup>26</sup> That meaning and message will be effectively conveyed by "a poverty profoundly renewed . . . happy to share with each other and with all."<sup>27</sup> In fact, "our communities will have no meaning or sign value for our times, unless by their sharing of themselves and all they possess, they are clearly seen to be communities of charity and of concern for each other and all others."<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, at a time when human fulfillment tends to be equated with the possession, enjoyment, and consumption of material goods, vowed poverty should point in the opposite direction. It should point to *simplicity*: a "simpler way of life," "simple in community expression and joyous in the following of Christ," and by this witness opening up to men "a new liberty and another happiness."<sup>29</sup>

Finally, at a time when the struggle for justice often means a struggle against unjust establishments, a disengagement from the affluent and powerful elites from which we have received, and perhaps continue to receive benefactions, vowed poverty must have and be seen to have a detachment that makes it *credible*. "It will be difficult for the Society everywhere to forward effectively the cause of justice and human dignity if the greater part of her ministry identifies her with the rich and powerful."<sup>30</sup> That must be the touchstone of our credibility: detachment. "The attitude of the Society should be that of the Third Class of Men . . . fully as ready to abandon as to retain, to the greater service of God,"<sup>31</sup> manifest in a poverty that is "apostolic in its active indifference and readiness for any service; inspiring our selection of ministries and turning us to those most in need."<sup>32</sup>

In sum: the selfless sharing of a simplicity of life that leads to integral human development and, by its realism, gives credibility to our efforts to remove the obstacles to that development--this is what the Congregation proposes our poverty should be today, as discerned from the signs of the times.

But in what sense is this a renewal, a making new again, a return to what the Society was when it was new? This brings us back to a point which came up earlier: the crucial role given by this Congregation to discernment. For if it is admitted that ours is a functional poverty, a poverty in function of the apostolate, then the authentic practice of that poverty will depend at any given moment on what we discern to be the concrete objectives of our apostolate at that moment; in short, on "our mission today." And this adaptation is truly a renewal--so, at least, it is argued--because it is precisely what St. Ignatius did.

What Ignatius did was to give meaning and structure to the practice of vowed poverty which was in function of what he discerned to be the apostolic needs of his time. He then wrote Constitutions which not only do not forbid but demand that we practice our poverty in the light of a similar discernment. What was his discernment? We might illustrate how concrete it was by its apparent contradictions, for it is a well-known fact that the concrete and its demands do not always meet the requirements of abstract logic.

Ignatius made Jesuits in professed houses live from day to day and even beg from door to door; but he allowed fixed revenues for colleges, that is, the houses where Jesuits were being trained to live from day to day and beg from door to door. He would not permit the sacristies of our churches to be supported by such revenues, but the churches themselves, works of art which might be considered verging on the lavish, he accepted from, or consented to be constructed by, benefactors belonging to the affluent establishments of his time. He did not favor our men going on horseback, even if they were on a mission and in somewhat of a hurry; yet he decided that professed houses should have a garden for our men to walk in. A garden! Why certainly; a garden in cities where the ordinary citizen took the air in open sewers which, by an exaggeration of courtesy, were called streets.

But, after all, was not Ignatius following in this matter the example of Christ himself? Christ, who regularly skipped meals because of the poor, the sick, and the bedevilled who pressed around him, but who told treed Zacheus to come down from his perch and give him lunch in his house, the



rather well provided house of an officer of the internal revenue. Christ, who did not even have a fox-hole or a bird's nest where to lay his head, but who, on his way to or from Jerusalem, regularly stopped at Bethany, in the house of the opulent Lazarus; who did this at least once with his entire entourage, seemingly unannounced, for he sent Martha into a tizzy trying to figure out how many courses to lay on for dinner. Christ, who told the seventy-two he was sending out on mission not to bring a purse or an extra pair of sandals, but who also told them that wherever they found acceptance they should eat and drink what was put before them, because the laborer is worthy of his hire. Christ, who had a rather expensive robe, woven without seam from top to bottom, as the soldiers gambling for it immediately recognized; but who died naked on the cross.

What then? Is there a fixed poverty line calculable in currency values, valid for all times and seasons, to which we must keep? It seems not. But in that case how do we make, how can we be sure that we are making our poverty authentic? It would seem that our poverty is authentic in the measure that it is really and truly in function of our apostolate--as it was in the case of Ignatius, as it was in the case of Christ. And because it is in function of the apostolate, our poverty is, in sum, a basic insecurity: the basic insecurity of men who can be sent and are willing to be sent on any mission, even without provision for the journey and with no assurance of provision at the end of it.

Our poverty level is the minimum required to enable a Jesuit theologian to enlarge the frontiers of theology. It is also the maximum allowable for a Jesuit engaged in the "pedagogy of the oppressed" to be credible to the oppressed. And it is a willingness on the part of the theologian to be sent to the oppressed, and a corresponding willingness on the part of the pedagogue of the oppressed to join a theological faculty. Let us give the last word to the 32nd General Congregation: "The authenticity of our poverty, after all, does not consist so much in the lack of temporal goods, as in the fact that we live, and are seen to live, from God and for God, sincerely striving for the perfection of that ideal which is the goal of the spiritual journey of the Exercises: 'Give me only a love of you with your grace and I am rich enough, nor do I ask anything more.'"<sup>33</sup>

## II. THE DECREE ON POVERTY

by

Edward F. Sheridan, S.J.  
Borgo S. Spirito, 5  
Casella Postale 9048  
00100 Roma, Italy

This is not an address or "conference" on religious poverty, its place in religious life, its theology, and the like. Traditional teaching on that subject is something which I shall presuppose, even though it is teaching now in transition. This present address, therefore, is about a specific piece of legislation on religious poverty, the decree of the recent Jesuit General Congregation XXXII. I shall divide the matter I have outlined for myself into three parts: (I) the background, general and particular, of the decree; (II) the principal parts of the decree itself; finally, (III) the hopes and fears, at least mine, regarding the decree.

### I. The Background, General and Particular, of the Decree

I suppose that the first question to be addressed is this: Why a decree on poverty? And much more, why the emphasis given to poverty in Father General's convocation of the Congregation, and in the view of the preliminary provincial congregations? We live in a world where love of God and faith and hope in His Christ seem ever harder to maintain; where the very continued existence of religious life as an influential and effective institution in the Church is called in question; where obedience seems shredded, clerical celibacy and religious chastity doubted as religiously significant or humanly constructive. Why then the emphasis on poverty?

I suppose that it is because we are children of our generation. Experience of our world has focussed our attention on poverty. One could make a good case for saying that these signs of the times are something of

a revelation of the will of God. Here I must beg your indulgence to be very brief, but the matter is one for lengthy meditation.

Six percent (6%) of the people of the world consume (40%) of its goods. The phrase lacks meaning. Put it this way. Of two men faced with 100 pounds of food and clothing and medicine and all the things required to sustain and embellish life, one man takes 90 pounds and leaves 10 for the other--year after year. You and I, of the north Atlantic nations, are that man or that woman. We have become aware that on this small but populous planet, it is no longer a question of sharing the wealth, but of sharing the poverty. Finally we have become genuinely conscious of global hunger, want, disease, privation.

We have experienced some twenty years of revolt, largely youthful, gradually spreading, revolt against a technocratic consumer society which produces for the sake of producing and consumes to support production. Hundreds of thousands and probably millions of young people have dropped out--out of school, out of the competition of industrial-commercial society. Many have done this in an immature way, but many too for better reasons; and it is slowly being borne in on us that our society is sick and alienating, and that there is need for a return to a simpler life, for other attitudes toward material things. There is a greater awareness of the brotherhood of man, a search for communities of concern and sharing, sometimes naive, but born of a desperate isolation. There is a frustrated but pervasive consciousness that a religious community life of simplicity, of mutual love and concern, of sharing, should be an example to such a world; and yet we feel that we are not that example.

On the apostolic level, though the process is a hundred years old, the breakout of Vatican II has made us aware that Christendom has become a post-Christian world, with great masses of the working population and the poor drifting far from any Christian influence or passionately rejecting it. How approach this multitude most in need of liberation, reconciliation, if everything about us religious and clerics--our mental baggage, our mindset, our way of life, our aspirations and utopias--is alien to this growing majority? Religious who look deeply into themselves or their institutes often find themselves and their brothers or sisters terribly chained and

bound by economic, social, and cultural institutions of enormous weight and force; chained and bound in the manner of St. Ignatius' meditation on the Two Standards; bound in thought, imagination, sensitivity, will, and affection by a culture which has shaped them from the dawn of consciousness. All this new awareness is a call--surely a call from God--which does not permit us to be just as we have been.

It would be instructive, but too lengthy, to trace the reactions of the Church's magisterium to this new and developing consciousness, reactions which in turn have contributed to the current. Of particular moment, however, is an evolution in the sense and meaning of evangelical poverty. Traditionally it has been valued as an aspect of the imitation of Christ, "who became poor that we might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9), "emptying himself and taking the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7), born in a stable, living as a poor workman's son, who, in his public life "had not where to lay his head" (Matt. 2:20, Luke 9:58)--with all this viewed in the light of the injunction that the disciple "is not greater than his master" (Matt. 20:24, Luke 6:40).

Besides this unitive and mystical aspect, on the ascetical level poverty was valued as part of the discipline of renunciation, necessary if charity was to grow and be free, uninhibited by attachment to material things. The poverty of mendicancy was extolled as an aid to that perfect trust in the Father who feeds the birds, clothes the lilies, and will provide for his children (Matt. 6:26).

Without abandoning or denying these moments and values, the Church has emphasized other aspects of religious poverty, positive and more immediately apostolic elements. In the decree on Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*) of Vatican II, religious are urged to "cultivate poverty and to give it new expressions" (no. 13); they are to regard themselves "as subject to the common law of labor, . . . making provision for their livelihood and undertakings" (ibid.), "contributing of their own resources to other needs of the church and the support of the poor" (ibid.). In the chapter on religious, in the dogmatic decree on the Church (*Lumen gentium*) it is the apostolic testimony of the evangelical life which receives the greatest stress: ". . . the greater freedom from earthly cares, to manifest

the possession of heavenly goods already possessed, indicating that the kingdom of God is superior to all earthly considerations" (no. 44). Poverty is commended both to secular priests (On Priests, no. 17) and to the laity (The Church Today, no. 72), as a means to bring the gospel with greater freedom to the poor.

Less than six years later, in 1971, there is a much clearer and increased emphasis on these apostolic and social elements of religious poverty in Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelica Testificatio (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, LXIII [1971], 497-526)*. The imitation of Christ is there, but an imitation of Christ identifying with the poor, to respond to their needs (no. 17). The vocation to religious poverty calls religious to awaken men's consciences to the demands of social justice, leading some religious to join the poor in their situation of real poverty, to increase their commitment to the poor and to give proof of an authentic poverty (no. 18). Religious are to earn their living and that of brothers and sisters, and to give to the poor (no. 20); their sharing should be a summons to the rich to relieve the needs of the poor (no. 21) and they must beware of being seduced by the alluring security of possessions, of knowledge, of power (no. 19). Though these passages are set formally in the context of the evangelical life of the vows, a new and vigorous apostolic thrust is evident.

Given the significant changes in the whole atmosphere, social and ecclesial, secular and religious, the call to a renewal and reform of poverty was inevitable.

To turn to the more proximate background, some 200 requests (*postulata*) which dealt with the matter of poverty were sent to the Congregation. The number is deceptive; for while some were brief and simple, most contained multiple sections, and the whole constituted some 150 crowded pages of typescript. There were certain evident thrusts, all of them in the direction of the new consciousness which had been developing.

The most insistent and pressing demand was that our poverty, Jesuit poverty, should become more real. Though recognizing that our poverty could not be a poverty of destitution, many provincial chapters evidenced a repentant conviction that our poverty was too comfortable, too convenient, too removed from the experience of those called poor though not indigent, the

hard-working poor of sharply limited means. This was, I think, a *cri de coeur*, that our lives be more simple, more frugal, more limited and constrained in all the ways in which the poor feel constraint--in food and clothing, in lodging, in amusements and recreations, in vacations and travel, in the services of domestics, use of automobiles, in cultural amenities, TV, hi-fi, libraries of books, of music; in everything like this, there seemed to be just too much, too much. It was a demand that the Society make good its promise of ten years ago in General Congregation XXXI, that is "to answer the demands of a real and not a pretended poverty" (Decree 18, no. 7).

Next in order of insistence was the requirement that our poverty express itself in the mode of *Evangelica Testificatio*, greater service of the poor and a dedication to social justice, work for the poor, yes, but with the poor and, in the degree feasible, among the poor. Perhaps we might learn to live religious poverty from the poor. This poverty should be apostolic, having a meaning beyond the ascetico-moral perfection of the individual, so that our communities and their lives would witness against a crass materialism, consumerism: preach the beatitudes; a lesson of hope to the multitudes who are, in Paul VI's words, "drawn into the implacable process of work for gain, of profit for enjoyment and consumption"; for religious poverty should "witness to the true meaning of work as a source of self-support and of service" (*Evangelica Testificatio*, no. 20, in *AAS*, LXIII [1971] 508).

There was strong demand that poverty should support community, charity, sharing: with each individual contributing all to the community, a community of brotherhood, of sharing with others, in a fraternity not merely verbal, but real. There was call for a sharing also by institutions and works, for the sake of a more effective apostolate. There was considerable advocacy of a central fund for needy communities and works throughout the Society. Perhaps I should explain to non-Jesuits that our *Curia Generalizia* or central administration has no capital, but is dependent on taxes levied on the provinces.

In the *postulata* of the provincial congregations there was frequent expression of the view that the practice of poverty was a community matter,

a concern in which the community as community should be involved. Community deliberation and spiritual discernment were proposed as the means of determining in the concrete case, the standard of living of the community. The community should be involved in the determination of its budget and should be fully informed of the financial administration of the community. There were suggestions or requirements that individuals in their personal and/or apostolic budgets should be responsible to the community, which should normally be informed of the role of each in the common life. The principle seemed to be that if the community is responsible for the individual and his support, the individual should reciprocally be responsible to the community.

Though it was recognized that apostolic institutions often needed some endowment for their stable operation, there was strong demand that communities of Jesuits, as distinct from the institutions, should not be allowed to accumulate capital or enjoy its income. However, there was need, especially in view of the crisis of vocations, to provide for the support of the sick and the aging. If these were to be dependent on the declining number of apostolically active Jesuits, this would greatly inhibit the apostolic mobility of the latter.

This renewal of poverty was to find its motivation and inspiration in the gospel, in the Ignatian vision of Christ, the Redeemer, as presented in the *Exercises*. It seems to me that the postulata show greater confidence in the Ignatian spiritual principles which stand behind the legislation of the *Constitutions*, than in the particular structures which St. Ignatius found most suitable in the sixteenth century. He placed emphasis *on the sources of income*: There should be no capital or fixed income from it for Jesuit houses and residences, with dependence on alms alone for support; only colleges could have capital. The postulata seem to indicate that for our contemporary practice of poverty, *structures to control the expenditures of income* were judged more important than limitations of the sources of revenue.

## II. The Principal Parts of the Decree Itself

We turn now to the decree itself. There are two possible strategies

which the commission on poverty might have adopted. It could place the desiderata I have mentioned before the Society, and then urge their implementation in the most eloquent language it could find. Alternatively, the commission and the Congregation could undertake to legislate structures--patterned ways of doing things, of controlling income and expenditure--which might help to achieve these goals. Influenced by the mass of postulata which asked for structures, the Congregation undertook the way of a legislative reform of temporal administration.

It was felt, however, that any legislation needed a preface of reasons and general aims, and this was incorporated into the first part of the decree as "section A." This section indicated briefly the traditional inspiration of Jesuit poverty, the gospel and the *Spiritual Exercises*, and moved to a summary indication of the signs of the times, signs which modified this primitive inspiration and posed a new challenge. It outlined the response envisaged by the Congregation, the new structures designed to meet that challenge, and ended with an admission of failings in our fidelity to the charism of St. Ignatius, hope for a renewed poverty, and a plea for generous and patient effort to achieve this renewal.

This introduction was followed by section B, Norms. This section sketches the norms for the revision of the Statutes on Poverty, and embodies the skeleton of the structures which hopefully would support the spirit of reform.

To make poverty more real, to move to a more frugal and simple way of life, it seemed necessary to control the standard of living; and this was clearly impossible without accurate knowledge of just what a community spends simply on itself, its support. That amount would have to be budgeted, limited by some authority, which would decide that this or this amount should be enough to support a community in a given place according to a reasonable but frugal standard. To acquire this knowledge and establish this control, it was first necessary to distinguish the financial administration of the community from that of the apostolic work or institution served by the community.

By the law of the Society there is to be established a distinction between communities and apostolic institutes, at least with regard to the destination and usufruct of their goods and between the



financial accounts of each (Decree on Poverty, no. 19; Norms, III, 1). The legislation, you will note, limited itself to a distinction of financial administration, that is, of accounting. Whether it might be advisable to establish a distinction of civil and/or ecclesiastical moral persons was left open according to local circumstances.

This distinction of financial administration, to be real, will require that the property and revenues of the institutes, as opposed to those of the community, are accurately determined--and respected. While the institute remains the possession of the community, its resources are sacred to its own purposes, the apostolate. They may not be diverted to the support of the community except for a moderate stipend or remuneration paid to those Jesuits who work for the institute, in an amount to be approved by the provincial.

The goods of apostolic institutes of the Society may not be diverted to the use or profit of members, except for a suitable remuneration, to be approved by the provincial, for work in such institutes or for services rendered (*ibid.*, no. 21; Norms, IV).

This is evidently analogous to the Ignatian prescription that the patrimony of the colleges was not to benefit the professed houses or residences, but only to support Jesuits working in and for a college. There is indeed danger in permitting the institute to pay a stipend to Jesuits, danger of over-paying, danger that the community may exploit the institute; but this danger already exists in the former regime of the colleges. The best that can be done is to prescribe vigilance of provincials, facilitated by the requirement of an approved community budget.

In the matter of capital endowment and revenue from it, every apostolic community is assimilated to the professed house or residence of old. It may have no capital for revenue but must find its support from alms or remuneration which the institute can afford with the approval of the provincial.

All communities dedicated to pastoral work or to any other functions are equated to professed houses in what pertains to poverty (*ibid.*, no. 22; Norms, V, 1).

Seminaries for our members retain their own regime of poverty. Houses or infirmaries for our aged or sick are equated to the former (*ibid.*, no. 23, Norms, V, 2).

But not only may communities of the sick and aged be supported by a foundation or patrimony; the sick and aged in any of our communities may

have such support. It is another instance of the principle of sharing throughout the province. Hitherto the sick and aged could be supported from the fixed revenues of the *Arca Seminarii* or Seminary endowment, through an extensive interpretation of a privilege granted by Julius III in 1552. The recent Congregation permits the establishment of a distinct fund, separated from the *Arca Seminarii* for the support of the retired.

Provinces are permitted to provide insurance for old age and for sickness, either through their own arca, or with other provinces, or by participation in national or in private plans (*ibid.*, no. 30; Norms, VIII, 8).

As for the budget of the community it was judged best to involve both community and superior in an effort at self-discipline, while requiring the approval of the provincial.

In each community the responsible administrators will draft each year at the appointed times and according to the norms established by the provincial, a projected budget as well as a statement of revenues and expenses. These will be communicated to the community as soon as convenient and are to be approved by the provincial (*ibid.*, no. 24; Norms, VI).

The preamble of the decree had called for community discernment in this matter of its budget and had declared that the standard of living should not be higher than that of a family of slender means whose providers must work hard for its support. Given the variety of apostolates in the Society, diversity of regional conditions, and the like, it was felt that nothing more definite could be prescribed.

Experience of the last few decades, however, has shown that a community can sometimes live rather well, and still show a surplus at the end of the year. An example would be a Jesuit school, college, or university, in which Jesuits are paid normal salaries by the government. The legislation of General Congregation XXXI (Decree 18, no. 15) permitting this remuneration was open to danger, and human nature being what it is, such a situation could exercise pressure for a rising standard of living. Besides budgetting for a desirable frugality, the new legislation provides that each community must, yearly, dispose of any surplus, except for a reasonable contingency fund.

Here again there were options. The disposal of such surplus could be left to the community or provided for by a provincial structure. There

are advantages and disadvantages in each. By a great majority the Congregation elected to commit this distribution to a provincial structure to be approved by the general. In sharing such surplus of the community, special consideration will be had of the needs of the apostolic institute served by the community, but beneficiaries can also be needy communities or works of the province, of other provinces or of externs. The effort is uncompromisingly to regard material goods as merely means for frugal support and for the apostolate.

. . . the surplus of each community will be distributed yearly . . ., except for a moderate sum to be approved by the provincial for unforeseen expenses (ibid., no. 25; Norms, VII, 1).

According to the norms to be established by the provincial and approved by Father General, there is to be provision for the distribution of the community surplus mentioned in Norm VII, for the benefit of those communities or works of the province which are in greater need (ibid., no. 27; Norms, VIII, 1).

In this sharing of resources, the needs of other provinces, of the whole Society, and of non-Jesuits will be considered (ibid., no. 28; Norms, VIII, 2).

The Statutes of 1967 had provided for the possibility of an *Arca Fundationum* or *Arca Operum Apostolicorum*, that is, funds for the support of new foundations or of apostolic works of the whole Society. Statute 89 read:

The Society as a whole may have productive property and stable fixed revenues only for the purpose of promoting certain general apostolic works or of helping the missions or the provinces.

This was merely a permission, not a command; and no means were proposed as to how such a fund might be established. It intended a fixed and permanent fund, using its income in aid of the works proposed. The new decree on poverty promotes the idea of sharing not only within the provinces, but prescribes that a fund is to be established, the property of the Society as a whole, for the benefit of communities and works of the Society, and for externs as well. This is not to be a permanent foundation, whose income only is to be distributed. It is a rolling fund, to be continually nourished and continually used. Father General is to determine the sources of this fund, and its mode of administration, with the assistance of advisors to be drawn from different parts of the Society (ibid., no. 31; Norms, VIII, 5).

The Norms are fewer and less detailed with regard to apostolic institutes, given the diversity and complexity of the latter. Apostolic institutes may possess revenue capital, if the major superior judges this necessary for their ends. Churches of Ours are excepted, for which there is specific prohibition of such revenues in the Formula of the Institute, [5(7)], as in the *Constitutions* [555]. Revenues of an institute are of course reserved for its apostolic ends, without benefit to the community, beyond approved remuneration for services rendered.

The standard of living of a religious community should be simple and austere. The standard of operation of an apostolic institute can hardly be measured in the same way; the criterion will be functionality, the effective achievement of the end for which it exists. Even here however, the decree reminds superiors and directors of such institutions, that an apostolic simplicity should characterize such works, and that there is an important distinction between technical efficiency and apostolic efficacy; that a certain poverty should characterize such institutions, having its own efficacy of a higher order.

The principle of the greater apostolic good is also applicable to such institutes. While legitimate statutes and the intentions of benefactors must be respected, nevertheless major superiors must see to the best possible deployment of material resources for the work of evangelization. The integral dedication of the goods of an institution to apostolic ends, and not to the benefit of communities, is to be observed also in the event of the suppression of an institute. Its assets are to be devoted entirely to other apostolic purposes (*ibid.*, no. 36; Norms, IX, 5).

During the discussion of the proposed decree, a number of the delegates expressed the fear that this distinction between community and apostolic institute, as proposed, violated probably or certainly, the law of the Formula of the Institute and of the *Constitutions*. Though the community is not permitted to use the institute's capital or revenues for its own benefit, the community or religious house remains the owner of the institute and the ultimate subject of its rights, civilly and in common canon law (see *ibid.*, no. 22); and this seems to contradict the Formula of the Institute:

. . . nor can any house or church (of the Society) acquire any civil right to any profits, fixed revenues, or possessions, or

to the retention of any stable goods, except those which are proper for their own use and habitation (*Exposcit debitum*, of 1550, no. [5(7)]).

And the *Constitutions* state in [555]:

In the houses or churches [i.e., as opposed to colleges] . . . , it should not be licit to have any fixed revenue, even for the sacristy or building or anything else, in such a manner that any administration of this revenue is in the control of the Society.

By a vote of 4 to 1, the Commission on Juridical Affairs judged that the proposed legislation did not contradict the Formula or the *Constitutions*. But other canonists and historians in the Congregation disagreed. The matter was discussed, not in very great depth, and a majority voted that the point was uncertain. In such doubt, the Congregation has from the Formula of the Institute [3(2)] the unquestionable right to declare the sense and meaning of both the Formula and the *Constitutions*, and could have determined that in the future both the Formula and the *Constitutions* were to be interpreted as congruent with the new legislation. Another procedure, however, was chosen. By an overwhelming majority, the Congregation decreed the legislation, with the proviso that it be submitted to the Holy See for confirmation.

This is a very complex point of our law and its history, and one into which I hardly think it profitable to penetrate further here.

Such are the Norms which are to guide Father General's commission in the revision of the Statutes on Poverty. The legislation is completed by four other provisions, not really integral to the reform envisaged by the Norms, though not without their own importance. For the sake of brevity, I shall not expound these now, but if there are questions I shall try to answer them.

In judging the Norms, it must be remembered that they are only guidelines. The commission must flesh out the principles in a series of coherent statutes, structures. The aim is a poverty which will be more real, conducive to a genuine frugality; a poverty of sharing with poorer communities, works, and externs; a poverty which will improve the quality of our fraternity and community life; a poverty which will be apostolic, aiming at giving a Christian testimony to the values of the beatitudes. Hopefully, too, it will be a poverty bringing us closer in sympathy with and love of the innumerable victims of injustice and oppression; a poverty

which will therefore influence the choice of our ministries, liberating, and inspiring a greater mobility and availability to engage in any work which promises the greater service of God and of others,

### III. The Hopes and Fears regarding the Decree

What is the prognosis? Reform of poverty will require a deep spiritual conversion--and like all such, on different levels of causality, altogether in God's hands, and altogether dependent on human correspondence. Procedures will be a dead letter, absolutely inefficacious, without a penitent resolve to reorder our lives according to the ideals of the *Spiritual Exercises* and of the *Constitutions*. The instinct for possession, for an area of proprietorship, independence, security, dominion over things--things which are mine--for comfort, for use, for security, as extensions of my personality, to make a greater me--this instinct is as deeply rooted and as intractable as the sexual instinct. And it is roused to appetite by continual stimulation.

It is tautology to say that everything depends on implementation. But if implementation arises only because of vigorous action of provincials and/or local superiors who impose new structures and exercise perseverance in that imposition, then nothing much will have been accomplished. That does not endure; and it begets grave danger of division within communities and between communities. The history of religious families is filled with examples of schisms and divisions, temporary or permanent. It might be argued that it would be better not to risk such detriments, to confine oneself to exhortation. I think that view neglects the fact that spiritual ideals have to be incarnated in structures, and I think the alternative to a reform of structures is drift with a current which takes us further from a gospel and Ignatian ideal.

Very much will depend on the spiritual animation and preparation of this program of reform. Section number 7, in part A of the decree, affirms that the standard of living of our houses should not be higher than that of a family of slender means whose providers must work hard for its support. This must be discerned by communities and individuals, in sincere deliberation with their superiors, looking to food and drink, lodging,

and clothing, travel, use of automobiles, villas, recreations, vacations, leisure, and the like.

Anyone who has experience in government will recognize the difficulty of the process. Every member of a community has his own sensitivities, his own taboos: "Don't touch me in this or that." And so there is a tendency to lapse into an indulgent common denominator of bourgeois living. If the community discernment which must prepare and initiate the reform is rightly inspired, generously undertaken, in a good measure of freedom, of willingness to follow where discernment and the Holy Spirit lead, then we can hope for an effective response to the deep anxiety manifested by so many provincial congregations. If this effort at discernment fails, then the changes of structure, will become so many administrative procedures, lifeless regulations, uninspired complications, probably harmful and a source of discord, until quietly buried, conveniently forgotten.

When the decree was passed in the Congregation, one of the delegates, a professor of theology said to me, "You know, I think this is probably our last chance to do something really significant about purifying our practice of poverty." Well he was too good a theologian to mean that literally. There is never a "last chance" for the efficacious grace of God. But it does become harder to recover from past failures, to try again after disappointed hopes. Father General Janssens wrote an urgent letter on Poverty in 1951 with little apparent effect. Father Arrupe did the same in 1968, the year after the promulgation of the Statutes on Poverty. His address of 1973 in Turin on Simplicity of Life has been widely circulated. The Thirty-first General Congregation spoke beautifully and eloquently on poverty, calling to authenticity, "a real, not pretended poverty;" and ten years later the disappointment of many provincial congregations was manifested in their appeals to the forthcoming General Congregation. It might be dangerous to dismiss this lightly, to say, "Well, after all, generals and general congregations have always bewailed decay in poverty." There are too many convergent phenomena suggesting decline, decline in religious life, and decline in the Society, for anyone to be complacent. And the question becomes insistent, what sacrifices are we prepared to make to revitalize the life of the counsels in the Society?

### III. DISCUSSIONS

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by Michael J. Buckley, S.J.

The Freedom to Be Poor

by William J. Connolly, S.J.

On Becoming Poor

by David L. Fleming, S.J.

On How to Become Evangelically Poor

by George E. Ganss, S.J.

Good News Poverty

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On Growing in Poverty

by Daniel F. X. Meenan, S.J.

The Context and Mood for Reaching Decisions

by Charles E. O'Neill, S.J.

Paradoxes of Religious Poverty

by Ladislav Orsy, S.J.



## On Becoming Poor

by

Michael J. Buckley, S.J.

One of the greatest hindrances to a reform of poverty in the American Society is the collective weariness with the topic. The discussion has been going on for some time--and many Jesuits are frankly sick of it. The decrees of the Congregation fit squarely on top of other decrees of other congregations, and these in their turn lodge upon letters from numberless generals, forgotten custom books, resolutions from ministries commissions and the reports from community meetings. The pile makes a large heap upon the floor. Still the problem persists and gnaws at our conscience: The affluence of our lives has perceptibly grown over the past ten to fifteen years, and this great volume of prose has not been able to stop its growth. The contrast between the literature and the life remains wide--greater here than we would ever tolerate with the other vows. The endless discussions and resolutions seem futile. Busy men turn away from it, not having the energy to waste in this easy guilt.

Added to the sense of the unproductive argument is the inflated quality of the prose. Poverty in our discussion has become everything: It is availability; it is openness to others; it is our stance before God and the embodiment of our creatureness. Poverty is the careful use of our time and our interior detachment from places and things. Poverty is the incarnation; it is the death and resurrection. It is the mystery of our solitude and the expression of our community. Who would disagree? But poverty so spiritualized becomes comprehensive enough to mean everything--and to mean nothing, vague enough to challenge only the very refined. On the other hand, Jesuit poverty is said to render us "destitute" if we are "serious about our poverty." If we would only "stop kidding ourselves," we would become "indigent," identified with the poor in a solidarity of insecurity, sensibility, and experience which neither our education nor our social history could ever realize. Since realization

is impossible, cynical remarks and collective criticism take its place, a bitterness and alienation which can grow in hearts aggressively given to this kind of prose--as the insight into the gospel turns into hostility and widens the circle of those to be repudiated.

Perhaps we should simply drop the term, as some have suggested. "Poverty" comes out of medieval Europe into the tradition of religious life, and perhaps we need some other word to designate what we are about.<sup>1</sup> For the inflation of the vocabulary tells upon our life: "Poverty" made everything or "poverty" made impossible. If our language corrupts, becomes unrealistic, our relationship to what we are and what we must be corrupts. Heidegger puts it perfectly: "It is in words and language that things first come into being and are. For this reason, the misuse of language in idle talk, in slogans and phrases, destroys our authentic relation to things."<sup>2</sup> Is it possible to go beyond slogans and endless argument, and to determine in a serious way what our poverty must be? Can poverty possess a determination which bears directly upon choice rather than upon further protracted discussions and which justifies our continued use of this term?

I think so, and I should like to sketch a response from the original articulation of Ignatian poverty and from the determinations of this General Congregation.

1. In the *Formula of the Institute*, poverty is not so much opposed to riches as it is to avarice. In the opening lines with which Ignatius introduces this poverty into the Society, he does so in terms of two coordinates: It is to be "as far removed as possible from all infection of avarice," and "as like as possible to evangelical poverty." Jesuit poverty was to be grafted as a function of these two specifications, one negative and the other positive. And the reasons for this poverty were threefold, coming out of the prolonged experience of Ignatius and his companions. It makes life more joyful (*iucundiozem*), more pure in its dedication (*puriozem*), and more apostolically telling (*ad proximi aedicationem*).<sup>3</sup> Jesuit poverty in this original understanding was a statement about Christian happiness, about the integrity of purity of heart, and about the vitality of apostolic service. Poverty's purpose, in this original articulation of Ignatius, was

apostolic, but not simply (or simple-mindedly) apostolic. It also effected a happiness within a life that had become common, and it realized a purity of intention in its attempt to serve God for himself alone. The focus of poverty was on its triadic result within life: *iucundiozem, puriozem, et ad proximi aedificationem.*

The two coordinates of Jesuit poverty remained through their continually changing embodiment within Ignatius' subsequent legislation: The Jesuit was not to gain for himself from the gospel that he preached, and his life was to be as evangelical as possible in its simplicity and frugality. The three purposes of his poverty provide an extraordinarily apt criterion for the success of its practice: Does our poverty *de facto* make for a life that is more joyful, more pure of heart, and most apostolically effective?

2. The decrees on poverty of this Congregation have attempted to restore something of these original coordinates and purposes. Individuals could never gain for themselves. Now no house may possess more than it needs for current expenses; the rest must be given away. The vocabulary of our legislation now bears much more immediately upon the realities of our lives with not much talk about "professed houses" and with recognizable entities such as communities and apostolic work described, with acknowledged sources of income attended to, and with concrete determinations about budgets and monies to be given away. On the other hand, the purposes of poverty are again articulated in the simplicity and joy it works within a religious community, in the atmosphere of detachment that it embodies in our search with other men for God, and in the approach it makes possible to the poor, the exploited, and the suffering in a readiness for any service.<sup>4</sup> What the legislation of the Congregation has done is to transpose the legal arrangements from the sixteenth century to the idiom of our own social structures, and to specify their apostolic orientation to include "the necessity of commitment to the cause of justice and to the service of the poor."<sup>5</sup>

3. Yes, but can't we say what our poverty means as a result of all of this, and then go about our work? Have we decided finally about a common meaning to our poverty, a common atmosphere in which to live

and in which to support one another? I think so. I think that this document has drawn the outline of the poverty to which every Jesuit is vowed as a life whose characteristics are:

(a) Simplicity and Frugality: One in which he uses and consumes what is needed for a life like a person in very modest means.<sup>6</sup>

(b) Common Life: He keeps nothing acquired for himself. What comes to him is given to the community. The community becomes both that to which he contributes whatever he is given and from which he obtains whatever is necessary for his life and work: What the document calls, "the double law of common life."<sup>7</sup>

(c) Hard Work: As poor men have to work hard to sustain themselves and their families: "the common law of labor."<sup>8</sup>

(d) Solidarity with the Poor: A life and a community style of life which will give the Jesuit an unembarrassed access to the poor--his manner of life not being so starkly in contrast with theirs that the contrast is shameful--and which will wordlessly offer the challenge of the gospel to a life given to ease, gain and consumption. For "every Jesuit, no matter what his ministry, is called 'to preach in poverty.'"<sup>9</sup>

(e) Commitment to the Causes of Justice and to the Service of the Poor--one of the constituent foci of every Jesuit apostolate and one which bears directly upon the vocation to poverty.<sup>10</sup>

4. Why is it so tough to pull this off? Many factors enter, I suppose. Most radically, the failure in poverty is symptomatic of something much deeper: a failure in the interpersonal depth of a Jesuit's life. It has long been recognized that poverty has a profound symbolic value (with symbol understood as a sign which embodies a value beyond itself). Poverty is symbolic of our commitment to the Lord in purity of

heart, of our commitment to one another in common life, and of our commitment to apostolic service rather than gain. Poverty is an assertion that our security and happiness is not found in amassing things, but in loving persons.

Poverty becomes hard to impossible when the personal fails, when the interior integrity and freedom that is situated within God, within our service of others, within our life with one another weakens or collapses. Poverty in its decline is just as symptomatically important as it is in its practice. When the decline begins, levels of attachment are indicated in which things are made to function where the personal should have been. The decline suggests an emptiness in which things are substituted for persons or in which a faster and more expensive pace quiets feelings of depression, boredom, and apathy.

The restoration of poverty can be only minimally aided by legislation—though this minimal contribution is critical and indispensable. It is much more a question of interpersonal freedom and interiority. The quality of joyful, pure, and life-giving poverty points beyond itself to an underlying integrity with God, with others, and with our community. It is here, at the level of this communion, that the issue must now be engaged, as it is this communion which Jesuit poverty embodies and effects.

## The Freedom to Be Poor

by

William J. Connolly, S.J.

When the first Jesuits wrote in 1539 about poverty in their description of the scope and purpose of their community, they had an advantage we lack and sorely miss. They wanted to vow themselves to poverty, they wrote, "since we have learned from experience that a life as far removed as possible from every taint of avarice and as close as possible to evangelical poverty is more joyful, more pure, and more appropriate for the edification of neighbor and since we know that our Lord Jesus Christ will provide what is necessary for food and clothing for His servants seeking only the Kingdom of God. . . ." <sup>1</sup> In other words, they had been poor, had been happy with the experience, and wanted to continue it.

We find discussions of poverty boring and inconclusive, it seems to me, because we have not had an experience like theirs, or if we have, we have not freely chosen it. So we have never gone through the process of recognizing, enduring, and overcoming our fears of being poor and powerless. Thus when the issue of being poor is pushed upon us we do not realize that we are afraid. We discuss the rationale and expediency of poverty, and we are puzzled to see that the discussion always remains inconclusive.

Ignatius in his early pilgrim days was poor in ways that he later abandoned, but those early practices, eccentric as they seem, had the effect of enabling him to work through his internal resistance to being poor. He discontinued some of the practices, but before he did he had dealt with, or had let the Lord deal with, his fear of the powerlessness and humiliation of being poor.

In the Society that emerged from the desires and decisions of the first Jesuits, the hospital and pilgrimage experiences enabled novices and tertians to come to grips with their own internal resistances to being poor, and thus left them more free to adopt the practices of a poor lifestyle when those practices would best serve the glory of God and the requirements of the apostolate.

Everyone with a normal psyche and a normal spiritual life resists subjecting himself to the powerlessness and humiliation of being poor. There is a risk there that is not unlike the risk of dying. While discussions of poverty are often boring, few experiences are as engrossing as being in the company of someone who is deciding whether to respond to the Lord's personal call to be poor. Prayer and decision-making for him become a battleground in which fear, self-doubt, illusion, the action of the Lord and the appeal of His people mingle, struggle, and clash. And the strength with which they engage makes it clear that this is no minor issue for the life of the person involved or for the life of the Church.

The struggle is much like the conflict many have experienced, particularly in directed retreats, in recent years, when it became clear that if prayer was going to be significant for them they would have to stop trying to control it, and let the Lord act. The same sequence of reactions takes place in both struggles: discussion, argument, frustration, followed by retreat or acceptance.

We seem to need, if we are ever to be free to be poor, the opportunity, in the tertianship particularly, but at other times in our lives too, for short-term experiences of a poor life that have one object: to let the Lord deal with our resistances to being poor. They would have no more direct apostolic purpose than the pilgrimage had. They would aim simply at helping us to be more free to choose to be poor in the future. They could not be legislated, I think, nor should they. But they would take place more frequently if their importance were more generally recognized.

## On Becoming Poor

by

David L. Fleming, S.J.

We American Jesuits have had some months now to make ourselves familiar with the documents of General Congregation XXXII. The document on poverty stands out both because religious poverty is recognized as a witness area of concern in today's world and because the Congregation tackled the question of Jesuit poverty and produced concrete norms and directives. Yet I sense an unease in myself and among many Jesuits with the document itself despite--no, rather because of--its importance and its concreteness. Such a response, I believe, is typically American. I also hold that an acknowledgement of a certain sense of dissatisfaction is not to be feared as "un-Jesuit." In fact, I want to reflect on this kind of a response, especially as it can be used for our growth both as individuals and as communities. The documents of the 32nd Congregation are an accomplished fact; the question for us now is: Where do we go from here (or how do we grow) as American Jesuits in an American setting?

Nurtured in the American environment, we Jesuits strongly resent any kind of legislation which does not coincide with our Anglo-Saxon experimental tradition. We grumble about our literal interpretation and application of decrees coming out of Roman congregations, and yet we seem unable to accommodate ourselves to an understanding which can adapt itself to these other legislative models. By way of example, already there are reverberations among American formation personnel of how to interpret and apply the 32nd Congregation's formation directive about the degrees of licentiate in philosophy and theology. In an approach similar to our ideas on legislation, we Americans have always been concerned with a product "that works" and, moreover, one that functions ever better than a previous model. "To build a better mousetrap" has become a wry epitome of our kind of national industriousness. These two tendencies present in us as American Jesuits come into play when we try to live out our religious vow of poverty. On the one hand, pious exhortations or legislated ideals do not find us a



receptive audience; on the other hand, any legislation which does not obviously provide a model with promise of better performance does not meet with ready acceptance either.

Until fairly recently, the model "that works" for our life of religious poverty has been commonly identified as being one of dependence. Whatever our superiors approved or our communities provided assured us of our good observance of the vow. Within the previously more rigid lines of community housing, dress, and travel, this model of poverty observance lived up fairly well to American judgments about performance. Because of the change in the standard of living in American society in general, along with the adaptation of religious life fostered by Vatican II, we have discovered that a reassessment of this working model has now been called for from all the provinces. But as we read the Congregation's document and its accompanying applications, we may feel personally untouched by all the tinkering with community funds and uneasy with the comfortableness of budget-setting. Yet I think that a dissatisfaction among us, which we find typified in these two examples of response to structural changes, should be embraced as a necessary part of a healthy Ignatian life of poverty.

I believe that the roots of our contemporary response can be traced to an irreconcilable tension in St. Ignatius of Loyola--a tension with which he lived and died and passed on to us as his legacy. The Ignatius who groped his way through his own spiritual odyssey (the experiences which form the basis of the *Spiritual Exercises*) was idealistic. He attempted to live poverty in its extreme, modeling his life on the young Francis of Assisi. He dressed in rags and had no care for cleanliness or physical appearance in terms of his hair and fingernails; he ate erratically and begged his food wherever he could. He was the "poor pilgrim." Even when he was given some money for his travels to the holy land, he scrupled over it and finally gave it away so that he could more perfectly live out his trust in God's provident care.

This idealistic form of material poverty was mitigated in his student days at the University of Paris. Here, as he relates in his *Autobiography*, he worked for his support and watched carefully over his personal expenses. This kind of practical poverty continued to show development in Ignatius'

lived experience with the first companions, from the taking of their vows at Montmartre in 1534 to the time of the Deliberation of the First Fathers in 1539. Of course, most striking was Ignatius' struggle to formulate the legislation on poverty for the young Society. From evidence in his *Spiritual Diary*, the areas touching on poverty which eventually would find expression in the *Constitutions* caused him great anguish originally and eventually proved to be troublesome throughout his years as superior general. In a Society which from its first days had the wealth of educated men and of beautifully structured houses and churches, the deep peace of a God-given discernment in the area of religious poverty was not easily come by, even for Ignatius. The practical poverty which he differentiated for our colleges, churches, and professed houses was the result of Ignatius' own sense of a religious poverty applied and adapted from a foundation of spiritual ideals.

Imbued with the gospel adage that "it is the spirit which gives life, the flesh is useless," Ignatius saw poverty as a life-giving source for the Society, and so poverty was properly called a "mother" in the *Constitutions*, [287]. The spirit of poverty, because it was the spirit of Christ poor, had to be life-giving and enriching, not enervating or depriving. This had been the experience of the first companions, and Ignatius expressed the desire in the *General Examen* [81] that every candidate for the Society should grow through a comparable experience. Ignatius himself had learned from his early mistakes of applying too literally his spiritual ideals, and yet the ideals must provide the necessary foundation and be the source of all lived poverty for every member of this least Society.

At the same time, the poverty his Society was meant to live was a "wall"--not only a bulwark or a defense but also something understood more prosaically as solid, practical, and with definable boundaries just as we find it described in the *Constitutions*, [553-581]. And so Ignatius did become quite concrete in his detailing of the measure of support which the members of different kinds of houses would receive. Standardization in the *Constitutions* was never presented as an ideal, and yet poverty as a practical "wall" for *all* houses, with the recognition of the varying needs and tasks of their members, was a necessary essential. I believe

that we have evidence enough that Ignatius allowed the poverty ideal which we find in the *Exercises* and the specification of our lived poverty in the Formula of the Institute and in the *Constitutions* to remain in tension, both for his own life and for the life of the Society.

Some practical consequences for us today would seem to follow.

1. We should be grateful for the 32nd Congregation's tackling once again the practical application of poverty according to the spirit of our *Constitutions*. We should expect an uneven application of these legislative guidelines in view of Ignatius' own lifetime experience with his original poverty legislation.

2. We should not presume that the poverty legislation of the 32nd Congregation is timeless or ultimate and has solved all our problems. It is not the last word to be said about our poverty but only the most recent, and the document will undoubtedly produce its own set of new problems. We would be spiritually naïve if we attempted to put any other face on it. Realistically, the document attempts to outline an ambit, an environment, a "wall" for our Society and for our community life first of all, and consequently for our personal lives. Without an interior filling-in of the space enclosed by the "wall," there is only a new ruin, not a structure. And so Congregation XXXII does not present a goal to be reached, but a structure in which we Jesuits are meant to grow and develop.

3. Although the newness and stress of the document may center more on the structure of our communal poverty and our identity as a Society with the poor of the world, I would see that it provides a special appeal for us as Americans to spell out some practical details of personal religious poverty today. The explicit linking of poverty to work rather than to alms brings home to most of us the ideal of "laboring with Christ." Because of the oftentimes twisted values of American life, the obvious danger for us as Jesuits lies in making work an only value or judging work by income. American culture needs examples of work performed out of love, work not limited by time clocks or by salary, as well as examples of leisure shared in companionship, leisure that can be restful, cultural, and spiritual.

4. The very existence of the document on poverty reinforces the necessity of our continual effort to imbue ourselves with the poverty ideal which Ignatius sets before us in the *Exercises*. What is implicit in our following of Christ in the contemplation of the Kingdom becomes explicit in the triple colloquy of the Two Standards as we pray not only for spiritual poverty, but actual poverty if it pleases the divine majesty. Ignatius will never let us escape this spiritual ideal of actual poverty since he repeats it as the permeating leitmotif of Jesus' life in the third degree of humility. Yet here in the Exercises, Ignatius founds the call to an actual poverty, even in its most extreme identity with a despised and humiliated Christ, upon the essential attitude of the third class of men--an openness and a readiness to be able better to serve God no matter what. It is this interiorization of detachment which ultimately forms the unity point of the poverty ideal and the practical poverty of the Society and which Ignatius presents before every Jesuit who has recognized the call to actual poverty by his vocation.

5. Beyond the practical guidelines for our communities given by the 32nd Congregation, the greatest effort among us American Jesuits should be focused on our own interpersonal calling and support. Not only must we pray for the grace of realizing such a poverty (it is a grace!), but we should allow the spirit of Congregation XXXII to form the societal attitude which will strengthen and inspire our prayer and our interpersonal effort. I believe that the witness of our Jesuit poverty in the United States will not be broadcast ordinarily through so-called "poverty houses," but rather the witness for most of us will spread through a setting forth of our own religious poverty ideal--first of all by the daily kind of lived example to one another, by a simple sharing of our own God-given discernment in matters touching on poverty, and by reflective homilies in our community Eucharists. The Ignatian poverty of detachment is very individual and yet communal. Because it is a poverty of detachment, it keeps us as individuals from establishing our own standard as the measure of another man's poverty, and so too one house's standard for another's. Still on the interpersonal level, we must continue to call forth and support one another in our observance of actual religious poverty as our common

Society vocation. To do such calling, honesty and trust among ourselves are essential. It is only a Jesuit who is detached even from his own ideas who can both call and support a fellow-Jesuit in his practical realization of our shared poverty ideal.

From the Ignatian Principle and Foundation to the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God, all of us formed by the *Exercises* know that the spirit which is meant to be life-giving to ourselves and through us to others is one of "freedom from" (or detachment) and "appreciation for" (or attachment). We Jesuits are meant to call trustingly to one another because we are detached even from our own standard of poverty, and we can support one another because we can appreciate how God's grace is being lived out in varying ways by men honest in their religious dedication. The sharing of such an approach is of utmost value in our American scene today.

6. Finally, there is also a requirement of individual effort that logically precedes the interpersonal call and support, but often in practice follows upon it. Our individual practice of religious poverty demands that we do have an appreciation for all of God's gifts, a real love for them--in all the practical aspects of our life: food, drink, clothing, housing, travel, education, culture, and sports. It also demands that we practice a true detachment so that we can eat what is put before us, have a pre-dinner cocktail or not, expect to wait and shop for clothing sales, claim no privileges in the classroom or in travel, and be available regardless of the TV football game or the symphony. If we can test our own personal life of poverty, it is found in the detachment which unites the ideal of poverty with the practice of poverty. A question which might remain a part of our daily examen can be expressed: do I find myself possessive this day, saying "I want . . ."? General Congregation XXXII has allowed such a question to be raised in a revised context, but the job of becoming poor remains with the effort of the individual Jesuit.

The life-giving mother which religious poverty is meant to be must be prayed for and sought out by each of us, then, or the wall which the 32nd General Congregation has attempted to "tuckpoint" will prove to be only an empty enclosure.

## On How to Become Evangelically Poor

by

George E. Ganss, S.J.

Our discussions during our meeting of last December 6 had been announced to deal with the Jesuit evangelical poverty of the new decree, and with the two papers of Fathers de la Costa and Sheridan as clarifications of that decree. But spontaneously and almost instantly the observations expanded into the whole range of evangelical poverty and the perennial problems connected with it. Finally those present agreed, in some bewilderment, to reflect on the whole matter and write their resultant opinions for further discussion on January 31, 1976. After slow progress through some weeks, the present writer reached an opinion, which is focused chiefly on Jesuit evangelical poverty but is perhaps proportionately valid for other religious institutes of men and women too. With some danger of oversimplification, this opinion can be expressed in one compressed paragraph as follows.

Just as there are indefinitely many ways of becoming holy which vary according to personalities and circumstances, so too there are many ways of becoming evangelically poor within Jesuit legislation (or that of other institutes too). Each person must endeavor, through serious study as well as honest prayer, to discern the style of evangelical poverty by which he, with his personality and circumstances, is likely to bring greater praise and service to God from himself and from others, and then he must faithfully and peacefully live out that style in practice. Assuredly he must consult his superiors and also take care to build up or edify his brethren rather than pull them down. But since God leads different persons to himself by different ways, no one ought to pressure his neighbor into accepting his own style of religious poverty rather than another legitimate way by which God may be leading that neighbor. There must be considerable willingness to live and let live. Unless we accept this pluralism of legitimate ways of practicing evangelical poverty, we are sure to remain discouraged, frustrated, disturbed, and debilitated in our apostolates.

That is the core of thought which slowly formed in my mind after our agreement of December 6 to write and pool our reflections. But that core-thought also has many connotations, overtones, nuances, and qualifications which are very complex. Perhaps the best way to convey them is to retrace the circuitous path by which they were formed,

As mentioned above, our exchanges of opinion quickly veered away from the announced subject and bounced to the anomalies, inequalities, difficulties, and practices which some regarded as legitimate uses and others as abuses. We had, as several complained, the same rehash of problems, dirges, and charges about the widespread infidelity of Jesuits to their poverty which we have been discussing in innumerable meetings for ten or fifteen years unto weary satiety and without convincing or satisfying solutions.

For example, some spoke in favor of a widespread and even morally imposed style of living which approaches destitution and insecurity like that of St. Francis of Assisi or Charles de Foucauld. Among their examples they could claim St. Ignatius, at least in one period of his life when he begged alms and then left them on a park bench (*Autobiography*, no. 36). Others thought that such poverty of near-destitution had indeed been tried at least for a time by many holy persons, who then found, however, that they must temper it in order to please rather than irritate those with whom they were dealing or else fail in more important apostolic goals. Here too St. Ignatius could be claimed as an example. He always retained a love of a poverty of near-destitution as a beautiful ideal or velleity, something which he wished could be practiced at least at times, and which he expected his men to be willing to accept if in some concrete circumstances it seemed likely to issue in greater praise of God. But he also saw that such practice, if universally imposed, would be incompatible with his other apostolic aims (see, e.g., *Constitutions*, [81, 287, 331, 556, 575, 576]). Hence too he devised his system of colleges with fixed revenues, or visited dukes or wealthy persons to beg large endowments for his schools or universities, and urged his rectors and provincials to do the same (*EppIgn*, IV, 5-9).

Some of our interlocutors were worried that living in large communities

in a university or high school might be fostering too comfortable a life style, though they also pointed out and granted that the Jesuits actually living in some communities of this type were spending themselves generously even to exhaustion, remaining for more long hours in friendly association with students than in their own rooms, and winning Christ's way into the hearts of students or parishioners more effectively than other Jesuits who, seemingly by their rigorous poverty, had let themselves over the years become dour, unattractive, and unwelcoming. Still others of our members were equally worried that, at least in many instances, the small communities which were set up to replace the large ones turned out to require greater expenditures per man per day than the large ones, and soon generated their forms of "luxuries" too. The effort to save the appearance of poverty was resulting in a destruction of its substance. Another pointed out that a continual barrage of charges or insinuations, coming from every quarter, that Jesuits widely disregard poverty is psychologically unhealthy and damaging to both individual and corporate morale. (This impressed me deeply. For admission of guilt where there has been a deliberate violation of a clear principle or law is indeed a virtue much to be sought; but a guilt complex, consisting of an exaggerated apprehension of blameworthiness over cases where the principles, statutes, or directives are fuzzy and sometimes questionable--that is indeed something different and much to be avoided. It is untrue, debilitating, and likely to be productive more of timid or even scrupulous personalities than of clear-sighted apostles.) Many interlocutors, too, expressed disappointment that the papers under discussion really contained no ideas of moment which had not been stated before Congregation XXXII and did not resolve the disagreements of that time. Why then publish them?

So here we were again after General Congregation XXXII, face to face with the same baffling pluralism of opinions about what evangelical poverty is and how it should be practiced. And I found this situation frustrating, depressing, and disconcerting. These interlocutors were men of extensive learning, wide experience, open minds, and good will. Manifestly they had been stating their opinions with sincere conviction. Yet manifestly also, few if any had that day abandoned or substantially altered their previous



opinions because of some new light received from an interlocutor here, or the papers we were discussing, or the decree itself of Congregation XXXII. In fact, despite the ten years of effort the wrangles and statements differed in little or nothing from those before, during, and after the 31st Congregation. And that further reminded me about the rather similar wrangles which dragged on in the "poverty controversies" and "poverty movements" a few years after St. Francis and could not be truly settled even by the decree of Pope Nicholas III in 1279, or Clement V in 1312, or John XXXII in 1317. It further called to my mind the controversies about the poverty of the Jesuit colleges for externs which divided the Society from 1571 through General Congregations III, IV, and V until Congregation VI settled the matter in 1608. Pretty much throughout history, or at least from the time when "poverty" was made the object of an explicit vow with the rise of the mendicant orders in the 1200's, each measure devised worked somewhat for a time and then became the occasion of new difficulties and conflicts in practice and terminology. It seems morally impossible to eliminate the crippling disagreements on the topic. Probably the pluralism of opinions will be present until judgment day. Our most profitable task, then, may well be to learn how to live in spiritual peace within a legitimate pluralism.

It was in this state of being somewhat bewildered and sad that I began the reflections which we had agreed to make and write. But how in the world, I wondered with dismay as I mulled the matter through many days, can I write anything presentable on a topic as complex and baffling as this?

Gradually, however, some thoughts came. God has not seen fit to reveal any one concept, either of what evangelical poverty is or of the details of life styles by which it can be lived out, so clearly that its formulation has as yet won agreement and acceptance among enlightened men of good will. In Scripture he has praised the *anawim*, the lowly and humble people poor in spirit who, having little of this world's goods but not in complete destitution either, turned to him with confidence greater in him than in material possessions. But those broad pen strokes do not descend much or clearly into details. Broad variations in practice are found among

the lowly and holy persons of the Bible.

All the founders of religious institutes too have esteemed the evangelical poverty counselled by Christ. But within his teaching Benedict, or Bernard, or Francis, or Dominic, or Ignatius, or Theresa, or Charles de Foucauld have found different ways of living it out, ways usually more adjusted to the people among whom he or she was working than to an abstract ideal. Within the broad boundaries set by each legislator there was room for individual differences.

Some constant elements, however, seem to be always present in the bodies of legislation which have been approved by the Church and stood the test of time. There is provision to have some material goods, which are to be used as means to spiritual objectives and with frugality proper to the circumstances, and that in such a way that the religious gives a sign to those among whom he is working that he values these spiritual objectives more than the material goods which are means. He must be willing to sacrifice any or all material possessions, as Christ taught the rich young man, in order to follow the Lord who, as he put it metaphorically, had no place to lay his head (Luke 18:22; Matt. 8:20). But to be apostolically effective he must also cultivate prudence with farsighted planning, and heed the Christ who pointed out that no king goes to battle without carefully planning to have the necessary means (Luke 14:31); and who also taught: "You must be clever as serpents and simple as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

Like other founders Ignatius through experimentation gradually developed the legislation on poverty found in the Formula of the Institute and the *Constitutions*; and he left different ways of living out the poverty as legitimate and possible within the broad boundaries he established. He expected any Jesuit to be willing to accept extreme penury for a short or even long while if that would lead to greater praise of God (*Constitutions*, [81, 287]); but he did not prescribe such an indigent life style universally. Xavier felt that he had room to adopt a rather elegant style of living in his efforts to win the influential Japanese nobles; that this was adapting his life style to the concrete circumstances of the apostolic work in hand. Ignatius in his legislation regarded the poverty indeed as a good to be sought for its own sake because of its results, likeness to Christ and a

fostered trust in Providence, but also and always as a means well calculated and adjusted to result in greater praise to God in the concrete circumstances. He made moderation a characteristic of his *Constitutions*, desiring his men to be "free from anxiety" ([602; see also 822]).

Throughout the history of evangelical poverty, then, there has always been a plurality of legitimate practices and life styles. God, by the varying circumstances in which he places sincere individuals, often signifies to them his greater pleasure in regard to the types of poverty chosen more ingeniously as means to the true end, greater praise of the Divine Majesty. Each of us, then, had best figure out, as studiously and prayerfully as he can, what type of evangelical poverty is best for him in his circumstances, and allow his neighbor to do the same in peace.

Unless we recognize the pluralism of legitimate styles of Jesuit evangelical poverty, anyone of us may fall into attitudes or practices unfortunate for the kingdom of Christ. We may urge or even pressure a neighbor to accept our concepts and ways, rather than his own by which God is leading him and by which he can serve God better. Under such pressure he may feel threatened, yes, and discouraged; but that may well be chiefly out of concern for what is spiritually best for him and for his apostolate. For us to attribute his reluctance to accept our concept to his lack of spiritual courage, or to tepidity, or to mere love of creature comforts--that may be a case of our indulging rash judgments or flaunting the Presupposition of *Spiritual Exercises*, [22]. Worse still, if one of us should urge his own style or concept of poverty so strongly that he rather continually spreads charges or insinuations of infidelity by others in their practice of poverty, he may seriously damage Jesuit apostolic morale. He may tend to spread discouragement, wrangling, and guilt complexes grounded more in emotions or apprehensions or even human respect than in sound reasoning, all of which debilitate his brothers and their apostolic energy. He may run the risk, too, of absolutizing poverty, and of sacrificing greater goods to some narrowly conceived type of it, rather than of adjusting the type of poverty to the supreme criterion: What is likely to bring greater glory to God from myself and my neighbors?

Rightly, of course, it will be asked: "What opinions or practices

fall within the pluralism which is legitimate? Briefly and in present available space, those which fall inside the walls or boundaries set by the *Constitutions* and authoritative decrees or statutes on poverty when they are clear. For Jesuits after the 32nd General Congregation, they will be pretty much along the line of what Father Buckley has indicated above on pages 76-78. In cases where principles or statutes conflict (and such conflicts occur in all codes or their application), the ordinary principles should be used to discern which should prevail, under the supreme criterion, God's greater glory. If pushed too far, recognition of pluralism could of course lead to laxity. There will always be some matters clearly right or white, some clearly wrong or black, and some with varying shades of grey. In the practice of any virtue one must keep oneself on guard against laxity and cling to the middle course suggested by good judgment and prudence. But the danger here in regard to evangelical poverty hardly seems greater than that pertaining to chastity or obedience.

St. Ignatius himself was much aware that God leads different persons to holiness by different ways, styles of living included. He was aware, too, that a pluralism of legitimate life styles was unavoidable, as two of his intimate associates have testified. Pedro de Ribadaneira wrote that Ignatius "was accustomed to censure severely directors (*gubernatores*) and teachers who in regard to the spiritual life took themselves as the pattern for measuring all others, and tried to bring these others to the same manner of living or praying as they had experienced to be useful to themselves. He said that this was highly dangerous, and characteristic of a person who did not know about God's gift of many-faceted grace or the Holy Spirit's varied distributions; characteristics too of one who did not sufficiently understand the diversities of graces coming from the same Spirit. For [as 1 Cor. 7:7 states] 'each one has his own gift from God, one this and another that'" (*Vita Ignatii Loyolae*, V, x, 135, in *Fontes narrativi*, IV, 854). Gonçalves da Câmara too wrote, in similar vein, that "Ignatius thought that there was no worse mistake in spiritual matters than to desire to lead others as oneself" (*Memoriale*, no. 256, in *Fontes Narrativi*, I, 677).

Pretty clearly, then, it seems to me, Ignatius loved evangelical

poverty because and insofar as it made men like to Christ, testified to their frugal use of material goods as means to spiritual objectives which they valued more highly, and thus was a valuable means toward achieving his chief goal and criterion, greater praise of God. In the living out of the poverty he recognized legitimate differences according to persons (those practicing the poverty and also those they dealt with for the sake of Christ), places, and circumstances. He did not set up as an absolute ideal either (1) a manner of living comfortably adapted to the mores of the wealthy and retaining only dependence on superiors, or (2) continual destitution, or (3) anything in between these two extremes. Rather, his supreme, concrete, and practical criterion was: in the present circumstances facing me, what procedure or option is likely to issue in greater praise and service of God, from myself and my neighbor? To that goal and criterion, everything else was means, the style of practicing poverty included. He knew that its details could not be determined wisely and permanently by detailed legislation or commands enjoined on all alike, without danger of converting the means, poverty, into the end, and the true end, God's greater glory, into a means to the poverty.

In this outlook he, whose genius was chiefly in the practical order, was not far different from another genius, more of the speculative order, whom he admired, St. Thomas Aquinas. Thomas wrote: "Perfection does not consist essentially in poverty, but in the following of Christ. Therefore each religious institute will be more perfect in regard to poverty in proportion to its having a poverty adjusted to its end" (*Summa theologiae*, II-II, Q. 188, a.7).

Those are the reflections which led me to my present opinion--still open to better judgment--which is expressed in a compressed manner in the opening paragraph of this paper as the "core of thought." By now, I hope, at least some of its connotations, overtones, and qualifications are more apparent. It seems to furnish a program by which one can become evangelically poor, and allow his brethren to do the same each in his own proper way, and still possess one's soul in spiritual peace.

## Good News Poverty

by

Robert F. Harvanek, S.J.

The good news that Jesus announced in Galilee carried with it two difficult requirements. The first was faith, and the second conversion. Both of course are intimately related, for faith in Christ and his mystery is a kind of conversion, and both represent a call to turn from the world of everyday knowledge and action to the divine world of spirit and truth, to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven.

The conversion called for by the good news is multi-faceted. It is expressed principally in the paschal mystery, in the Death-Resurrection of Christ. It is expressed by Ignatius in the *General Examen*, [101]:

. . . it helps and profits one in the spiritual life to abhor in its totality and not in part whatever the world loves and embraces, and to accept and desire with all possible energy whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced. Just as the men of the world who follow the world love and seek with such great diligence honors, fame, and esteem for a great name on earth, as the world teaches them, so those who are progressing in the spiritual life and truly following Christ our Lord love and intensely desire everything opposite.

In other words, the conversion of the good news is a *detachment* from "this world," and an *attachment* to the world of God through the imitation and following of Christ our Lord. The call to conversion admits of degrees of detachment from this world. Students of the good news have distinguished three classes of persons who believed in Christ: those who remained at home with family and possessions, and adhered to Christ interiorly and manifested this adherence in their everyday life; those who left family and possessions to follow Christ; those who became apostles and preached the good news to others and called them to conversion.

The second class has inspired the Christian life that came to be known as the life of the evangelical counsels. As Aquinas has said, the counsels strictly speaking are not virtues, because they go beyond the mean. Rather they flow out of charity and are a kind of excess. Foundational in the life

of the counsels are poverty and chastity (leaving possessions and family), especially poverty, which most basically expresses detachment from this world,

Both of these counsels, as the whole life of the counsels, cause difficulties for man, because they involve leaving what is most natural to him, in fact, what is most necessary. For that reason the evangelical life, as it was called, was said to be, in a former theological language, a supernatural life, supported only on supernatural foundations.

Our present concern is with good news poverty. The difficulties which it raises can perhaps be grouped under three questions: 1. What is the meaning of "poverty" in the good news? 2. Is good news poverty possible? 3. Is good news poverty good?

The first question arises because of the difficulties expressed in the second and third questions. For obviously absolute poverty, that is, poverty without qualification, is not possible for man. Without food, shelter, clothing, and the like, man cannot live. Therefore the poverty of the good news must be qualified in some way, and the question of its meaning arises. As a result we have all the multitudinous suggestions that good news poverty is not this, not that, that it is a purely interior poverty, that it is not really poverty, that it is something else, and so on.

When a working and workable definition of poverty has been arrived at, the question still remains as to whether it is good. Possessions are necessary to man and seem to belong to his nature. There is nothing inherently evil in possessions. In fact, they contribute to his well being; through possessions he is able to become more human. Poverty on the other hand seems to limit man's potential for growth and development. Witness the value and the cost of education in the modern world. The question consequently is always raised rhetorically whether anyone would want to say that poverty is good in itself. If it is enjoined by the good news, it must be good because of some reason or reasons extrinsic to itself. The reason is then sought in its relationship to the good news and to the mystery of Christ, and that again raises the question about what kind of poverty good news poverty is.

A Jesuit has an added problem, A Jesuit is in the third category of "converts" to the good news. He is an apostolic follower of Christ, and the apostolate introduces other values and needs. Moreover he is a member of an apostolic community, and as community increases the potential of service through corporate action, it also increases the need for possessions. Community also introduces all the complexities of personal differences. Further, a Jesuit is a member of an apostolic community that has historically entered into total education, and education at the higher levels, as a characteristic apostolic work. Institutional education is expensive, particularly in a highly developed culture of science and technology. Poverty seems to inhibit the effectiveness of apostolate, especially of institutional apostolate. Poverty is not attractive to the unconverted. The personal poverty of Jesuits is not visible when it is externally identified with apostolic institutions, and perhaps even it lacks some reality when it shares the benefits of the apostolate.

The 32nd Congregation took a step towards providing some sort of solution to the problem of apostolate and poverty. It made a decision to separate apostolic institution and Jesuit community. The purpose of that action was to free the Jesuit community to be poor in some way that would be real and acknowledged by both the community and the world around it as authentic good news poverty. At the same time the apostolic institution would be free to pursue its goals with whatever means were necessary, free to develop its own form of poverty. For this reason the Congregation recommended as much of a separation of the community from the apostolic institution as local and regional situations would permit. The hope of the Congregation was that our communities would both be really poor in some true sense, and also appear poor. For this reason it opened up the possibility for a community to live in a poorer neighborhood, if its apostolic institution were in a more affluent neighborhood. However, because of the differences of national circumstances, the Congregation mandated only a strict financial distinction between the apostolate and the community, and took steps to insure that the community would not prosper financially if its apostolate should prosper.

This does not solve the problem however, even in theory, since the



apostolate itself is not free of the good news call to poverty, especially since its apostolic purpose is to communicate the good news and call its hearers to conversion. The Congregation noted this, but did not have the time to develop this aspect of Jesuit poverty.

Moreover the move to distinguish apostolate and community for the sake of poverty creates another ambiguity, for Jesuit poverty is understood to be apostolic. This was strongly asserted in the 31st Congregation, and repeated in the 32nd. This assertion, which is certainly true, tends to encourage the idea that Jesuit poverty is only apostolic, that is, that the only reason for Jesuit poverty is the apostolate, which is doubtful. There is good evidence to think that Ignatius understood all candidates to the Society to have already chosen to follow Christ on the second level, that is, on the level of the good news counsels. In his Directory to the *Spiritual Exercises*, he says that the first election of the exercitant is whether he will follow Christ in the life of the counsels or not. The second election is whether he will do it in a religious order or not, and the third election will determine which religious order. This suggests that the election to follow Christ in poverty and chastity is prior to the election to enter an apostolic institute.

The *General Examen* [53], states that it was the mind of the founders that candidates to the Society should *already* have decided to be detached from the world and to serve God totally. *Before* they begin to live in the Society under obedience, they should have "sold all they have and given it to the poor," that is, "distributed all the temporal goods they might have, and renounce and dispose of those they might expect to receive,"

It would seem then that in poverty as in all aspects of the Society of Jesus it is not possible to collapse the Ignatian doublet on the end of the Society (*General Examen*, [3]) into one simple formula, and that a Jesuit gives glory to God in poverty both by seeking his own sanctification and the salvation and sanctification of souls.

## On Growing in Poverty

by

Daniel F. X. Meenan, S.J.

Religious poverty is a complex subject that is capable of moving at once on several different levels. More readily than chastity (which deals with the heart and with mores), more even than obedience (which deals with the will and with deeds), religious poverty, precisely because it involves material things, admits of a variety of dimensions which can be made the object of formal legislation. In its treatment of the subject, our 32nd General Congregation has explicitly opted to deal with poverty on the level of our corporate and institutional poverty--at least in good part. In doing so, it has arrived at a more or less radical approach on this level. On the individual level, too, if not radical, it has formally inaugurated changes which are profound in their implications.

But, as with every approach to problem-solving through institutions and/or through legislation, the approach of the Congregation is fraught with ambiguity--unless its determinations be informed with the interior dispositions which alone can make of these lived and living realities.

The Gospels themselves take up the matter of "evangelical poverty" on a multi-dimensional approach. In them we find a kind of common-sense approach that rejects undue concern for material things: "Sufficient for the day . . ." or, "Consider the lilies of the field . . ." or, "The very hairs of your head are numbered. . . ." In this vein, the gospels urge upon us a kind of aloofness from things material lest we become possessed by that which we have: the rich man and his crowded barn; see, too: "What doth it profit . . .?"

These gospel approaches lead in their logic to reliance on God's providence and to the kind of indifference envisioned by Ignatius in his First Principle and Foundation--the principle of *tantum-quantum*. And this, in its turn, leads to an authentic "poverty of spirit"--so necessary for religious life--but just as necessary for any authentic Christian life.

Yet it is not on these grounds of indifference that religious poverty becomes a pivotal point of progress in religious life explicitly understood as such. It is not on these grounds that evangelical radicalism is to be met.

And so it is not on these grounds that so pregnant a topic as growth in poverty should be approached. Rather these grounds should be subsumed as given.

The "first principle and foundation" for a deeper and more earnest consideration of religious poverty might well be: if poverty does not grow from love and lead to love, it is nothing. If poverty does not become a divinizing--and thus a humanizing--dynamic principle, it offers nothing meaningful for the religious as such.

If poverty is merely an exercise in asceticism, it is nothing more than that--an exercise in humanistic gymnastics that can, after all, become a counsel for an atheist as easily as for a religious.

If poverty is nothing more than an enterprise in good fiscal management, it is nothing more than an exercise in good stewardship such as lies at the base of any successful business, indeed of any reasonable human life.

If poverty is nothing more than a life-style characterized by simplicity, it is merely a contemporary form of stoicism--or even a kind of neo-puritanism; but hardly a principle of religious life itself.

All of these aspects are important. None of them is central. All of these are characteristic (*mutatis mutandis*, according to differences of persons, and the like). None of them is essential. All of them are ambiguous. None of them possesses that degree of univocity which one might expect of poverty if it is to become a cardinal principle of religious life.

We have often heard and come to believe that religious poverty, our Jesuit poverty, is not a poverty of destitution, but one of dependence. Lately, however, I have begun to wonder how true, how real this tidy distinction is in fact, especially on the level of the individual person.

The 32nd General Congregation states: "The Jesuit vocation to poverty draws its inspiration from the experience of St. Ignatius and the Exercises and is specified by the Formula of the Institute and by the Constitutions." Well, what do these say?

In the Kingdom we see that the offering involves "real poverty" (*asi actual como spiritual*), if such be God's will. In the Two Standards, Christ sends his apostles to preach in poverty, and to draw *all* not only to spiritual poverty, but to actual poverty as well, if his Divine Majesty will be served by this, and if he chooses to draw them in this way. And the Third Degree of Humility invites to poverty with Christ poor--presupposing that perfect poverty of spirit which is formulated in the principle of *tantum-quantum* and in the Second Degree (*incluyendo la . . . segunda*) --and this simply so as to imitate and to appear more really like Christ our Lord.

The Formula of the Institute "specifies" our poverty along these same lines of actual poverty--of deprivation. And the Constitutions reinforce this same understanding.

In point of fact, as illustrated by repeated instances, it was by deliberate choice rather than by necessity that our founding fathers actually opted for a poverty of deprivation: substandard food, substandard housing, substandard clothing; absolute insecurity before the prospect of tomorrow--and this from the cave at Manresa through the hospital of Venice to the first houses in Rome and (for two, at least,) the hospices of Trent.

At the same time, almost from the beginning this pure determination and lived experience of deprivation was mitigated *by the requirements of the apostolate*. It was for the sake of the apostolate that Ignatius chose to undertake studies; that accommodations were re-arranged in Paris; that colleges for scholastics were "founded"; that exceptions were made in the discipline of professed houses. Yet, despite these mitigations, the ideal of privation was never lost to sight. In those early days, Ignatius wanted all of Ours to experience from time to time the effects of deprivation--to share in the liberating, divinizing, and humanizing experience of the founding fathers.

Thus it was that our poverty became *apostolic*. Mitigation was countenanced, not for our sake, for our ease and comfort by way of creeping laxity, but for the sake of others, for the sake of the apostolate, in perfect fulfillment of the explicit proviso of the Third Degree of Humility: ". . . there being equal praise and glory to the Divine Majesty."

Mitigation, then, does not result in an attenuation in the Ignatian scheme, but in the establishment of a tension--a tension between the spiritual ideal and apostolic necessity, a tension with which the Society has had constantly to deal--not always successfully--from the day of its founding. And it is this same tension which has characterized the most recent determinations of the Society in its shift away from alms and towards wages as *the* mode of apostolic self-expression in today's world, a tension evident in the caution expressed by the Congregation: "Such work is to be chosen only as a more effective means to the communication of the faith, without thought of remuneration or of the privileges attached to an office." Thus our latest legislation is entirely compatible with the original tension. But the ambiguities of all external legislation are sufficiently broad that the law can quite comfortably be met with a variety of internal responses.

What is finally demanded, then, to remedy the "vulnus profundum contra paupertatem" is each one's personal *metanoia*. There remains now the problem of the individual heart, and through the sum total of individual hearts, the problem of the corporate heart. If, now, we are to grow in poverty, it is no longer the problem of a general congregation. It is each one's problem within the community to vivify and give an explicitly religious dimension to the norms of the Congregation. It is the individual's problem to make his own return to his sources, to make unambiguous in our day what the Congregation could only leave polyvalent because law cannot reach into the heart. If our vow is to become a principle of growth for us, it will not be by reason of more legislation. It will be because we, corporately and individually, have passed beyond legislation and have become that which the legislation presupposed. Legislation and institution can only support, they can never substitute for, the personal response demanded by a vocation.

In point of fact, the Jesuit is called to an actual poverty--to a poverty that includes in its logic his deprivation. If he accepts this fact, then there has to be a notable shift in his focus of interest, in the gravity-flow of his thought and movement. If he accepts this fact, the Jesuit must become jealous of his state of being dispossessed. Within the parameters demanded by this frame of mind, the concrete mitigations

that are actually imposed by apostolic necessity tend to become the endpoint of discourse, not the starting point upon which are built up further exemptions better suited to the individual's convenience than they are to the apostolate. In this state of tension in which his spiritual ideal, to be dispossessed, is confronted by apostolic necessity imposed on him for the sake of others, precisely because the tension must be worked out in his heart, the Jesuit will resolve more purely and honestly the various difficulties of the practical order that beset him, whether it be a matter of privilege of office, of wages, or of a style of life.

Ultimately what makes this hunger to be dispossessed become humanly and divinely valuable is that other dimension of evangelical poverty implicit in the gospel in such well-worn phrases as: "The birds of the air have their nests . . ."; "Go, sell what you have . . ."; "Rising up from his table. . . ."

The Jesuit possessed by this frame of reference (as opposed to any masochistic bent) will possess that "single eye" of which the gospel speaks, in terms of which he can see only one thing: the service of God and of His Kingdom. And, if it is the Jesuit who interiorly dispossesses himself--rather than suffer the imposition of external legislation--he will have emptied himself (in that kenotic love of which the Congregation speaks) of everything that is not God, and he will be filled only with God ("thereby coming to love all creatures in God and God in all creatures.") Such a Jesuit will truly have left "father and mother . . . and all things else for My sake."

Thus, reaching out to God in Christ and through Christ, the Jesuit's self-dispossession arises from love. And thereby possessing only Him, the Jesuit's self-dispossession leads to love. And because his act is enveloped in love, it becomes humanly fulfilling, enriching him with that freedom of sons by which he can say, "Abba."

If the Jesuit lives this, he can arrive at that richness of personhood and of personal response by which he can say with Charles de Foucauld: "Dear God, I don't know whether some men are capable of beholding You poor while they remain rich. I cannot conceive of a love without an imperative need of conforming, of resembling, and especially of sharing all the pains

and hardships of life. To live pleasantly on things that are mine, when You have been poor, molested, living arduously in difficult labor--for myself, I cannot love that way." And this, after all, is what the Third Degree is all about. And this, after all, is what makes poverty become sense in religious life.

## Context and Mood for Decisions on Becoming Poor

by

Charles E. O'Neill, S.J.

These paragraphs of commentary are intended as aids for the setting of the context and mood in which we reach decisions on being and becoming poor.

1. The Jesuit's practice of poverty should begin with a contemplative insight within the Spiritual Exercises. Seeing the Incarnate Son, identifying with him in his kenosis, in his want, in his helpless power, the one who has had this prayer experience will see the world and its wealth in a different way forever after. He will not only not yearn for wealth; he will rather prefer to keep a distance from luxury in order more to resemble Jesus.

The novice is to ask for the grace to be moved with this insight-experience. Here is the beginning of the Jesuit's thinking, vowing, living of poverty. And the veteran must constantly return to this point of departure.

This is the level at which Jesuits should be in communion with the Lord and with one another. When this insight is experienced by an individual, he is ready to begin to live and to discuss poverty as understood by Ignatius and the Society of Jesus. As the experience is repeated in subsequent prayer and retreats, the living, thinking and talking will grow deeper and fuller. General Congregation XXXII begins here. So too must each community and individual.

2. Discussion of poverty should add dimensions to the fundamental insight acquired in the Spiritual Exercises. Ideas and motives as well as phenomena and data should be contributed by all for the deeper understanding and living of the intuition grasped in the identification with Jesus. Ideas: Such as how lack of possessions prompts one to be more dependent on God, makes one psychologically less proud, and leaves one freer to move and to speak in the apostolate. Data: Such as the worldwide



statistics on hunger, information on disproportionate use of natural resources, tabulation of hours of labor per week in comparison with salaries, rates of disease and mortality among poorer nations and poorer groups within wealthier nations. Although these ideas and data cannot substitute for the contemplative insight mentioned above, they should be advanced for a fuller understanding of our Ignatian school of Christian spirituality and for a fuller grasp of our apostolic role in contemporary world society.

Only after lengthy heaping up of affirmations that "our poverty is also . . ." should we begin to admit affirmations that "our poverty is not . . ." If we proceed the opposite way, we reach an impasse in which we are voicing only negatives. Knowing perfectly what "our poverty is *not*" may not indicate what "our poverty is"--let alone help us to live it.

3. The root prayer insight mentioned in Number 1 is the one poverty experience universally shared by all Jesuits through the centuries. In setting out from that insight and beginning to apply it concretely, the Society enters the realm of this way or that way, this degree or that degree, this precise why or that precise how. In other words, we must with patience acknowledge that there is in our way of life an element that does not come fully formed out of the gospel or out of the Exercises. There is something that must be settled by choice, that must be arbitrarily (but not capriciously) fixed by human decision.

However, that decision or choice cannot be merely an individualistic design. In order to have a corporate existence, the Society must define ranges within which the root insight is to be lived in the Society of Jesus. The legislation of the General Congregation provides the Society-wide obligatory parameters. The statutes on poverty to be promulgated by Father General will, on a still more practical level, apply the legislation. Further precision or concretizing is called for from provinces, communities, and individuals.

4. Every Jesuit has a share in the responsibility to maintain poverty as the firm wall Ignatius intended. Although superiors will have specific roles in decision making, the individual Jesuit cannot abdicate personal function in fostering poverty. He ought not pressure superiors

toward laxity; nor, in rigor, can he require that all live identically and precisely his own pattern. There is a sort of public opinion in provinces and communities, which can support the General Congregation and superiors, and shore up poverty--or can undermine directives and soften poverty. Between the condition of the multi-millionaire and the comfortable middle class and the salaried manual laborer and the starving destitute, there is an infinitely indefinite number of points or gradations. Given the fact that the Jesuit is choosing a way of life, the gradation in which he lives will have to be thought out and chosen by a human process. His standard of living is not thrust upon him by the force of circumstances. Hence the shared responsibility of determining precisely the communal and individual living out of the legislated norms.

5. The way we live affects the way we think--and pray. A too comfortable standard of living will lull us into a way of thinking alien to our vowed vocation. If we do not "feel the effects" of poverty, we are not living the way of life to which we are called. An affluent life style will choke out the primitive intuition received in the second week of the Exercises, that Christocentric intuition which launched us on our actual way of Jesuit poverty. Assuming that we are inspired by the primitive intuition and are willing to cooperate in the corporate search for concrete fidelity to norms, we must lean toward the less lest we be overly influenced by things possessed or enjoyed.

6. Two pragmatic rules of thumb are apostolic witness and apostolic function. The rules are applied within the context of the root intuition, for this intuition is the fundamental motivation lying far deeper than the level of the pragmatic criteria and the motives from which they are derived.

(a) Apostolic Witness: Does my personal and community way of life differ from what I could acquire if I and my brethren had not freely chosen to follow the call of Jesus? At times we will have more than those we serve, at least in what we can ultimately call upon; at times, more generally, less. Whatever the economic level of those we minister to, they must be allowed to perceive that we have chosen to be emptied, to have less rather than the

more we could have grasped. The 32nd Congregation emphasizes the "be seen" as well as the "be"--not for ostentation, but rather for sincere witness. (An individual Jesuit may be called to a poverty beyond the level of his observant community, just as exceptions may be granted to an individual whose health does not permit him to live the austerity of his community.)

(b) Apostolic function: Is my use of goods measured by the needs of my service in ministry? When I make my personal decisions, when I join in community consultation, is my criterion my ministry to others or gratification of selfishness? My nourishment, rest, recreation--are they according to that Ignatian sense of detachment and of development of the apostle for the sake of the Lord and of the neighbor?

7. Just as local communities and individual Jesuits must cooperatively apply the common legislation, major superiors will have to exercise self-restraint in utilizing the new broad powers granted them to tap local communities for funds. Doubtless the statutes on poverty will establish checks which will prevent any "dilapidating" alienation and which will insure that any drawing off of surplus not violate our basic gratuity of ministries.

## Some Paradoxes of Religious Poverty

by

Ladislav Orsy, S.J.

Ever since the process of renewal began the subject of poverty has proved a troublesome one. In fact, some ten years after Vatican Council II, we do not seem to know more about poverty than we did at the beginning of our discussions. Moreover, the effort put into finding its meaning often appears to be out of proportion, sometimes even somewhat scandalous. So much time and money are being expended in this rather endless search. In communities, too, the discussions are going on, although more and more persons are becoming weary of them.

Our recent discussions made me think anew that there will always be paradoxes in the practice of religious poverty. This paper will merely offer a few reflections on some of these paradoxes.

1. No one becomes a poor man in the evangelical sense because he has no material possessions; but to have possessions does make it more difficult to become a person evangelically poor.

To be a poor man means a personal quality, a movement of life that leads someone to give away all that he has. Sheer destitution cannot confer such a personal quality, nor can it initiate such a movement. Experience confirms that a person can be greedy and possessive to an excess even when he lives in misery. His mind and heart can be set on what he desires but cannot get; he can still take possession of his own person to an extreme that denies God's sovereignty over him. Even the devil knows that: He pointedly challenged the Lord about his servant Job. "And Satan answered the Lord and said, 'All that a man has will he give for his life. But now put forth your hand, touch his bone and his flesh, and surely he will blaspheme you to your face.' And the Lord said to Satan, 'He is in your power; only spare his life.'" ( Job 2:4-6). Yet we have Christ's words too: "Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to

enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples could only marvel at his words. So Jesus repeated what he had said: 'My sons, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'" (Mark 10:23-25).

The root of the problem is that evil fascinates the heart of man. Moreover material things have a direct impact on our senses. They keep one interested, involved, and satisfied to the point that his attention turns away from deeper and more subtle spiritual things which he cannot directly see and hear, touch and feel; and consequently he forgets about things that are of a higher order than external works. When the weight of personal property is present, it is difficult to resist. It can destroy a Christian personality.

2. Justification does not come through law, but law is necessary for community. In other terms, laws about poverty do not make any person a poor one, but poor persons living in a community of poor men need intelligent laws to support their unity.

The history of religious communities right from its beginning to our days bears strong testimony in favor of the fact that reforms do not come through laws but through persons who inject a new stream of life into a community. The reason is obvious. Laws cannot add an inch to the stature of a person. Laws can take away or can grant material possessions but they cannot take away the greed of a rich man. Neither can they give the spiritual grace necessary for one to become a poor man. Therefore even good laws flounder unless the community has already the internal disposition to receive them. And such disposition cannot come from the law, it comes from the grace of God.

Yet a community of men or women who wants to be poor will search for some well-reasoned norms that will express and uphold their internal dispositions and intentions. Out of their own internal resources they will bring life into the external norms. But in themselves laws are no more than the bones that covered that famous field described by the prophet Ezechiel. They need the breath of the life-giving spirit.

3. Romanticism is the enemy of sensible decisions. But sensible decisions in Christian life are not the result of human calculation alone.

Romanticism is disregard for the real; often, in fact, it is "enthusiasm." Let us explain this statement by an example. For St. Francis of Assisi, carrying material poverty to an extreme was not romanticism, it was his real but highly personal vocation. It brought the message of the gospel alive among the people of Umbria. But even if he did not notice the fact, his minimal sustenance was assured by the medieval custom which imposed on the community the support of the poor through almsgiving. If a Christian college of the 20th century should try to imitate the improvident and improvising way of St. Francis, it would be indulging in romanticism. The real situation of a college requires not the care-free ways of a bird but the shrewd cunning of a serpent. One way is no less evangelical than the other, but each is suitable to particular circumstances.

A good way of avoiding romanticism for communities discussing the issue of poverty is to begin with the text of First Principle and Foundation in St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, [23]: "The other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him in attaining the end for which he is created. Hence, man is to make use of them in as far as they help him in the attainment of his end, and he must rid himself of them in as far as they prove a hindrance to him."

But the *Exercises* do not end with the Foundation. They speak of the following of Christ; of being poor with the Christ's poor. The conclusions, sensible as they may be when reached on the basis of the Foundation, should be submitted to a second check: Whether or not they should be corrected in the light of the ideal preached by Christ. Such step by step approach may afford justice to both human prudence and reliance on divine providence.

4. When material poverty is pushed so far that a person is not able to absorb and enjoy the beauty and glory of this creation, his personality becomes stifled and twisted; when someone becomes fascinated by the material creation so much that he does not see

in it the glory and beauty of its Maker, he will never grow to the full stature of a child or God.

This statement is more suited for personal meditation than for an explanation.

5. In the history of Christian spirituality, poverty and enrichment go together in the life of the same person.

Man was created for riches in one form or another; there is nothing wrong with that. God is the richest of all beings. We have a personality similar to his. But in this earthly life someone can be rich on one level and poor on another one--as Christ himself was. It is interesting to note that those who understand Christian poverty the best are among the greatest mystics of the Church: St. Francis Assisi, St. Theresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, and many others. Interesting consequences can be drawn for the renewal of religious communities. Where should it begin, with poverty or mysticism? Can one be there without the other? How should they balance each other? How far do the *Exercises* include this double trend?

## FOOTNOTES

- I. On H. de la Costa, A MORE AUTHENTIC POVERTY (pages 45-49 above)
- 1 "By the law of the Society there is to be established a distinction between communities and apostolic institutes, at least with regard to the destination and usufruct of their goods and between the financial accounts of each" (Decree on Poverty, B, III, 1). Apostolic institutes are defined as "those institutions or works belonging to the Society which have a certain permanent unity and organization for apostolic purposes, such as universities, colleges, retreat houses, reviews, and other such in which our members carry on their apostolic work" (ibid., B, I, 2). "The goods of apostolic institutes of the Society may not be diverted to the use or profit of our members except for a suitable remuneration, to be approved by the provincial, for work in such institutes or for services rendered to the same" (ibid., B, IV).
  - 2 Ibid., A, IV, 11.
  - 3 Jean Cardinal Villot to Father General Arrupe, 2 May 1975, no. 5, on p. 154 of *Documents of the Thirty-second General Congregation of the Society of Jesus: An English Translation* (Washington: The Jesuit Conference, 1975).
  - 4 Decree on Poverty, B, VII, 1.
  - 5 Ibid., B, VI.
  - 6 Ibid., B, VII, 1.
  - 7 Ibid., A, III, 7.
  - 8 Ibid., A, V, 13.
  - 9 Ibid., A, II, 4, citing Vatican Council II, On Religious Life, no. 13; see also Pope Paul VI, "Adhortatio Apostolica, Evangelica Testificatio" of June 29, 1971, no. 17, in *AAS*, LXIII (1971), 506-507.
  - 10 Decree on Poverty, A, III, 8.
  - 11 Ibid., A, II, 3.
  - 12 Ibid., A, III, 7.
  - 13 Ibid., A, II, 5; A, III, 10.
  - 14 *Constitutions*, [287].
  - 15 Decree on Poverty, A, III, 7.
  - 16 Ibid., A, III, 10.
  - 17 General Congregation XXXII, "Our Mission Today," no. 71; "The Formation of Jesuits," no. 22.
  - 18 "Jesuits Today," no. 19.
  - 19 "Union of Minds and Hearts," nos. 21-24,
  - 20 Formula of the Institute, [3(1)].
  - 21 *Constitutions*, [287, 553].
  - 22 "Our Mission Today," no. 2.



- 23 Decree on Poverty, A, II, 5; A, III, 10.
- 24 See *Spiritual Exercises*, [23].
- 25 Decree on Poverty, A, II, 3-5; A, III, 7.
- 26 Ibid., A, II, 3.
- 27 Ibid., A, V, 14.
- 28 Ibid., A, II, 5.
- 29 Ibid., A, II, 3; A, V, 14.
- 30 Ibid., A, II, 5.
- 31 Ibid., A, III, 9; cf. *Spiritual Exercises*, [155].
- 32 Decree on Poverty, A, V, 14.
- 33 Ibid., A, V, 14.

II. On M. J. Buckley, ON BECOMING POOR (pages 75-79 above)

- 1 Decree on Poverty, no. 7.
- 2 Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*. Translation by Ralph Manheim. Anchor Books (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1961), p. 11.
- 3 The full text reads: "From experience we have learned that a life removed as far as possible from all infection of avarice and as like as possible to evangelical poverty is more gratifying [joyful], more undefiled [pure], and more suitable for the edification of our fellowmen" (Formula of the Institute, [5(7)]). The translation is taken from St. Ignatius, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus: Translated, with an Introduction and a Commentary*, by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), p. 69. I have indicated with the square brackets an alternative rendering of *iucundiozem* and *puriorem*.
- 4 Decree on Poverty, nos. 3-5, 10, 14.
- 5 Ibid., no. 10.
- 6 Ibid., nos. 7, 14.
- 7 Ibid., no. 8.
- 8 Ibid., nos. 4, 7.
- 9 Ibid., nos. 5, 10.
- 10 Ibid., no. 10.

III. On W. J. Connolly, THE FREEDOM TO BE POOR (pages 80-81 above)

- 1 The First Sketch of the Institute, no. 4, on page 108 of *The Autobiography of St. Ignatius Loyola, with Related Documents*. Translated by Joseph F. O'Callaghan. Edited with Introduction and Notes by John C. Olin (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

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