

3



**WAY OF LIFE
VOW OF POVERTY**

**FORMATION MODULES
2025/2026**

Presentation

This year's materials continue along the path already begun in previous years, following the guidelines of the Fifteenth General Chapter. The theme that will guide us is the vow of poverty.

By professing it, the religious proclaims that God is the one absolute good: the One who fills life and gives it meaning. With Saint Paul we can say: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). And again: "Though he was rich, he became poor for your sake, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8:9).

The vow of poverty is not only a renunciation, but a positive choice: to adopt the gaze of Christ towards the poor, the suffering and the defenceless. It means allowing ourselves to be challenged by their experience, sharing what we are and what we have – goods, talents, spaces, tools – in order to give a voice to those who have none, and to contribute to a world where no one is excluded. Like Peter with the lame man, the consecrated person can say: "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I have I give you" (Acts 3:6).

In this way, poverty becomes a witness of hope: the ability to walk together, to trust more in God than in human resources, to discover the beauty of life and of each one's vocation. Pope Francis reminds us that those who profess poverty but live as if they were rich, wound the Church. For this reason, the vow calls us to true freedom: not only from material possessions, but also from the functional and consumerist mindset that reduces everything to calculation. It is a journey of trust and surrender, which frees us from what is superfluous and leads us to Christ, our only treasure.

Gospel poverty challenges every disciple: "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." (Mt 5:3). Jesus invites us to transform our relationship with things: not to accumulate, not to possess, but to share. This is the way to build fraternity, according to God's dream for humanity.

Once again this year, the materials have been prepared with the collaboration of the Vicars of the Provinces: Brazil, Chile and Spain, the two Provinces of French-speaking Africa, Kenya, Italy and the Philippines.

To all, we wish a fruitful journey.

Fr Maurizio Macchi and Fr Fausto Franceschi

MODULE N. 1

**GO, SELL WHAT YOU HAVE AND GIVE IT TO THE POOR,
THEN COME, FOLLOW ME!
JESUS, HIS DISCIPLES – AND DON ORIONE AT THE FOREFRONT.**

Invocation to the Holy Spirit



Spirit, who hover over the waters,
calm within us the dissonance,
the restless waves, the clamour of words,
the whirlwinds of vanity;
and let there rise, in the silence,
the Word that recreates us.

Spirit, who in a breath whisper
to our spirit the Name of the Father,
come, gather all our desires,
bind them into a sheaf of light,
that they may be answer to your light,
the Word of the New Day.

Spirit of God, living sap of love
of the vast tree into which you graft us,
let all our brothers and sisters
appear to us as a gift,
within the great Body where ripens
the Word of communion.

(Fr. Pierre-Yves of Taizé)

Presentation of the theme

All the vows are rooted in the way of life of Jesus. He lived a poor life – marked by simplicity, by letting go of what was unnecessary, always on the move so that he could meet people – in order to make his incarnation more real and effective. By taking on the condition of the poor, he was able to confront more directly the misery of those who lack what is essential, a misery that robs people of their dignity. From his very first discourse at Nazareth he declared: “I have been sent to bring good news to the poor, liberty to prisoners.”

When he sent his disciples out to preach, he told them to take only the bare minimum with them and to place their trust in Providence. To the rich young man, he asked the radical step of selling everything, giving it to the poor, as the condition for following him.

Don Orione understood that he could truly live in trust of Providence only if he fully embraced renunciation: letting go of comfort and financial security, and sharing everything with those dearest to the Gospel – the poor.

And we, as followers of Christ, children of Don Orione, with what way of life do we carry out our apostolate in service of the poor?

Illumination

Constitutions article 26 - The poverty of Jesus



We have always before us the example of the divine Master, who, though rich, made himself poor for us. He declared that he had come to bring the good news to the poor and to make them the first citizens of his kingdom.

His invitation: go, sell what you have and give it to the poor and you will have a treasure in heaven; then come and follow me, is a constant invitation to a poor life, totally dedicated to the poor.

The Word of God



From the Gospel of Matthew (8:20-21)

Jesus answered him, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.”

Another of [his] disciples said to him, “Lord, let me go first and bury my father.”

The word of the Church

From the document *Vita Consecrata* (82 or 90)

82. At the beginning of his ministry, in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus announces that the Spirit has consecrated him to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to captives, to give sight back to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to declare a year of favour from the Lord (cf. Lk 4:16-19). Taking up the Lord’s mission as her own, the Church proclaims the Gospel to every man and woman, committing herself to their integral salvation. But with special attention, in a true “preferential option”, she turns to those who are in situations of greater weakness, and therefore in greater need. “The poor”, in varied states of affliction, are the oppressed, those on the margin of society, the elderly, the sick, the young, any and all who are considered and treated as “the least”.

The option for the poor is inherent in the very structure of love lived in Christ. All of Christ’s disciples are therefore held to this option; but those who wish to follow the Lord more closely, imitating his attitudes, cannot but feel involved in a very special way. The sincerity of their response to Christ’s love will lead them to live a life of poverty and to embrace the cause of the poor. For each Institute, according to its charism, this involves adopting a simple and austere way of life, both as individuals and as a community. Strengthened by this living witness and in ways consistent with their choice of life, and maintaining their independence vis-à-vis political ideologies, consecrated persons will be able to denounce the injustices committed against so many sons and daughters of God, and commit

themselves to the promotion of justice in the society where they work. In this way, even in present circumstances, through the witness of countless consecrated persons, there will be a renewal of that dedication which was characteristic of the founders and foundresses who spent their lives serving the Lord in the poor.

90. Even before being a service on behalf of the poor, *evangelical poverty is a value in itself*, since it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in the imitation of the poor Christ. Its primary meaning, in fact, is to attest that God is the true wealth of the human heart. Precisely for this reason evangelical poverty forcefully challenges the idolatry of money, making a prophetic appeal as it were to society, which in so many parts of the developed world risks losing the sense of proportion and the very meaning of things. Thus, today more than in other ages, the call of evangelical poverty is being felt also among those who are aware of the scarcity of the planet's resources and who invoke respect for and the conservation of creation by reducing consumption, by living more simply and by placing a necessary brake on their own desires.

Consecrated persons are therefore asked to bear a renewed and vigorous evangelical witness to self-denial and restraint, in a form of fraternal life inspired by principles of simplicity and hospitality, also as an example to those who are indifferent to the needs of their neighbour. This witness will of course be accompanied by *a preferential love for the poor* and will be shown especially by sharing the conditions of life of the most neglected.

The word of the Father

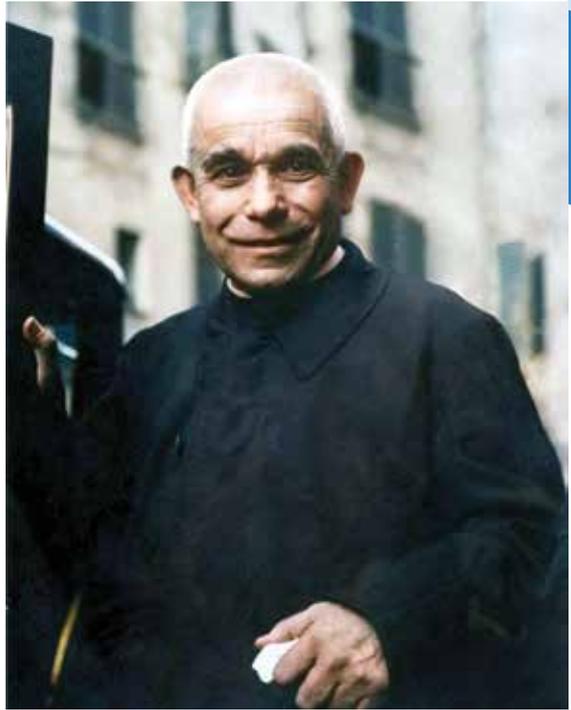
“One of the main points of our rules, of our religious life, is holy poverty. Poverty, in fact, is the first of the evangelical counsels given to us by Our Lord Jesus Christ: poverty, chastity, obedience.

More than one spiritual director has said that poverty is the shortest and safest way to reach holy Paradise.

God, not finding poverty in Paradise – since Paradise is abundance and infinite richness of every good – came to seek it and to clothe himself with it here on earth. And Jesus was the first to practise it: *coepit facere et docere*

– he began by doing, by giving the example, and then by teaching; but first he began by doing, because the most effective word is example. Verba movent, exempla trahunt – words move, examples draw. Of Jesus it is said: *coepit facere et docere* – he began by doing, and then by teaching.

Before proclaiming on the mount: “Blessed are the poor”, he chose to be born poor, in a cave. He lived his whole life in poverty – a life of poverty, of great poverty, of labour, of labour and poverty together. During the three



years of his public life, of evangelisation, it is written that he did not know where to lay his head: the birds have their nests, the foxes their dens, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head. And he died in utter poverty, upon a cross, stripped of everything, and even in death was laid in a tomb that was not his own.

And to all who asked him what they should do to reach perfection, he said: ‘Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, and follow me.’ Thus he demanded the stripping away of earthly possessions. That is why one day Saint Peter said to him: ‘*Reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te*’ – we have left everything: house, boat, family, everything, even our dearest loved ones – for this stripping extends even to natural affections – everything!

Now it is this poverty that you and I must live and practise. We must truly practise it and truly live it. We must not be content to profess it in our vows, but live it in reality, detaching ourselves even from what may seem necessary. We must not be content with professing it by vow alone. The periods of Christianity in which the Lord triumphed most, in which the glory of God shone most brightly and the Gospel spread most widely, are

the periods, the ages, in which the priest was poorest, in which the religious orders were truly poor.”

(From a discourse of 19 February 1940, *Par.* XII, 122 s.)

Witnesses of Poverty

The First Missionaries of Tocantins

If you visit the sacristy of the cathedral in Tocantinópolis, you will find the tombs of some of our confrères. They were among the first missionaries in this region. Others rest in the local cemetery. The evangelisation of the Tocantins mission was entrusted by the Holy See to the pastoral care of our congregation in 1952 and, since then, various confrères have taken turns working not only in the district centre, Tocantinópolis, but also in all the surrounding villages.



Their story, though little known, has the features of an epic. After years of hard work, some were assigned to other houses of the Brazilian province, while others returned to their homeland. Those who are buried here remained until death. In what was then the district of Tocantinópolis – now the state of Tocantins – everything had to be created, not only from a religious point of view but also socially. The city of Araguaína, for example, is now a flourishing town with all the comforts of modern life, yet its development came about through the works of Don Orione: from the parish to the schools and the hospital.

In every village the same pattern was followed: arriving among the people, living with them, building with them a church at the centre – the focus of unity – and beside it a clinic, as a sign of present commitment, and a school, as a seed for the future.

These missionaries came here just like the disciples of the Gospel, carrying with them only a small suitcase with a few personal belongings, and quickly adapting to live like the local people. To travel from one village to another, they used horses or boats, and in many cases walked for hours.

The creation of the diocese of Tocantinópolis/Araguaína was one of the fruits of this labour, and it was also a way for the universal Church to acknowledge that these people, though poor, were rich in apostolic and social activity. This reality grew up around the witness of simplicity and poverty given by the Orionine priests. It is worth recalling that the first two bishops of the diocese were Orionines.

It would be beautiful to make a list of all the confrères who dedicated some years of their lives to this mission, but the list would be long, and many of them would deserve entire pages of remembrance.

Points for Reflection

- What are our priorities in life? Do they concern ourselves, or the people whom God has entrusted to us?
- Jesus asked the rich young man to give up his possessions and share them with the poor. Peter said: “We have left everything to follow you.” What are we called to renounce in order to be fully at the service of the poor?
- We often say that we must choose the poorest among the poor. Who are, today, in the place where we live, the people who are unprotected, overlooked, unable to live a life worthy of a human being? What can we do for them?
- Our first missionaries showed courage, resourcefulness, creativity and adaptability. Are we able to share the lives of the poorest and work from within their situation to help them improve it?



Final Prayer

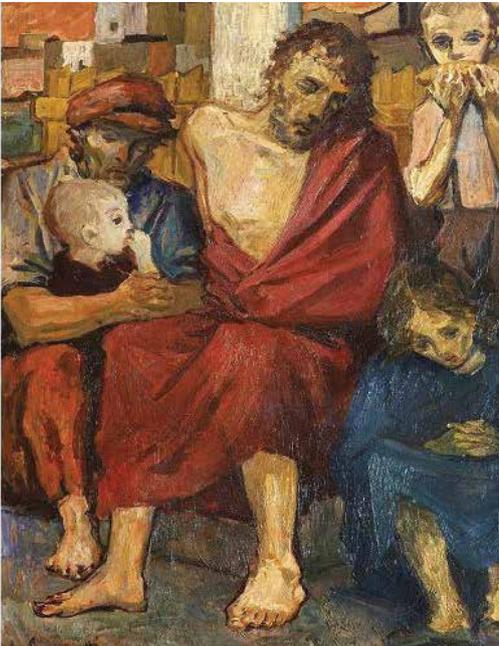
Lord,
teach us not to love only ourselves,
not to love only our own dear ones,
not to love only those who love us.

Teach us to think of others,
to love above all those whom no one loves.

Grant us the grace to understand that at every moment,
while we live lives that are too comfortable,
there are millions of human beings,
who are also your children and our brothers and sisters,
dying of hunger without having deserved to die of hunger,
dying of cold without having deserved to die of cold.

Lord, have mercy on all the poor of the world.
And no longer allow us, O Lord,
to live happily on our own.

Make us feel the anguish of universal misery,
and free us from our selfishness.



Other Biblical Texts for Personal Reflection



- ✓ God's Providence: Mt 6:19–34
- ✓ God has chosen the poor: Lk 6:20–26; Lk 4:16–21
- ✓ God will defend the poor: Am 2:6–8; Lk 1:51–53
- ✓ Jesus invites us to care for the poor: Mt 25:31–46
- ✓ Jesus and the use of money: Jn 6:5–7; 12:1–8; 13:27–30
- ✓ The Beatitudes: Lk 6
- ✓ Poverty as a way of life for human promotion: Is 61:1–3; Am 8:4–14; Acts 6:1–7; Mt 5:3–11
- ✓ God uses the poor as his instruments: 2 Cor 4:7–12; 2 Cor 12:6–9; 1 Cor 1:17–31
- ✓ Vita Consecrata 21; 82; 87; 89; 90.

MODULE N. 2

EVANGELICAL SIMPLICITY IS OUR WEALTH: GOD, OUR ONLY GOOD

Invocation to the Holy Spirit



Holy Spirit, Fire of Love,
breathe upon our souls
and burn away all that is superfluous,
that we may seek only the Essential:
Jesus Christ, our one true Good.

Teach us the poverty of heart,
that nothing may weigh us down on the path of the Gospel.
Free us from the chains of selfishness
and the vanities of the world,
so that we may live for God alone
and in His Love.

Spirit of Truth,
let us not be led astray by empty words,
but let our one desire be to follow Christ –
poor, humble, and crucified –
and to recognise in Him the one Treasure that does not fade.

Grant us strength to renounce all that is not of God,
to love without measure,
to serve without calculation,
to live each day with our hearts set on Heaven,
where God alone suffices,
where God is our only Good

Amen.

Presentation of the Theme

Poverty is linked with the virtue of hope, which leads us to seek God as our only Good. The practice of evangelical poverty means giving up reliance on material and human resources, in order to place “all our hope in God”, like the widow in the Gospel who gave all she had to live on (Lk 21:4). Every choice for poverty is also an act of hope, a sign of trust in God who truly cares for our lives.

Illumination

Constitutions, article 27 - The meaning of poverty



Let us try to deepen ever more our understanding of our profession of poverty. Through it, in fact:

- we mean to search for God as our supreme value and only necessary good;
- we entrust ourselves to the Providence of our Heavenly Father, who knows what we need and takes care of those who are seeking his kingdom above all else;
- we share in the redemptive stripping of Christ, by accepting the renunciations that effective poverty brings with it;
- we free ourselves of every excessive earthly worry by affirming the primacy of spiritual goods;
- we are an evangelical reproach to those who lust after money and power and keep for themselves selfishly the goods God entrusts to man for the good of all mankind.

The word of God

From the Gospel according to Mark (6:7-13)



He summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits.

He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick—no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals but not a second tunic.

He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave from there. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them.”

So they went off and preached repentance. They drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

The word of the Church

Pope Francis (*Angelus* 14th July, 2024)



Today the Gospel tells us about Jesus who sends his disciples on mission (cf. Mk 6:7-13). He sends them “two by two”, and recommends something important: to take with them only what is necessary.

Let us pause a moment on this image: the disciples are sent *together*, and must take with them *only what is necessary*.

We do not proclaim the Gospel alone, no: it is proclaimed together, as a community, and in order to do so, it is important to know how to preserve sobriety: to know how to be sober in the use of things, sharing resources, capacities and gifts, and doing without the superfluous. Why? So as to be free — the superfluous enslaves you — and also so that we may all have what

we need to live in a dignified way and contribute actively in the mission; and then to be sober in thoughts, to be sober in feelings, abandoning our preconceived ideas and abandoning the inflexibility that, like useless baggage, weighs us down and hinders the journey, fostering instead discussion and listening, thus making witness more effective.

Let us think, for example, about what happens in our families and our communities: when we are content with what is necessary, even with little, with God's help we are able to go forward and get along, sharing what there is, everyone, renouncing something and supporting one another (cf. Acts 4:32-35). And this is already a missionary proclamation, before and even more than words, because it embodies the beauty of Jesus' message in the tangibility of life. Indeed, a family or a community that lives this way creates an environment rich in love around itself, in which it is easier to open oneself to faith and the newness of the Gospel, and from which one starts out better, one starts out more serene.

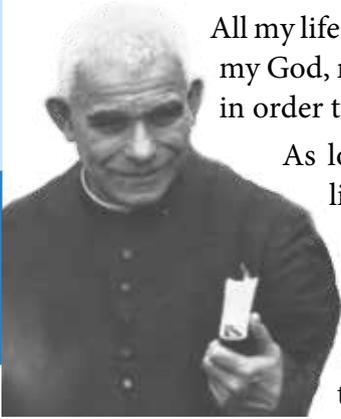
If, on the other hand, everyone goes his or her way, if only material things matter — which are never enough — if one does not listen, if individualism and envy prevail — envy is something lethal, a poison! — the air becomes heavy, life becomes difficult, and encounters become occasions of restlessness, sadness and discouragement, rather than occasions of joy (cf. Mt 19:22).

Dear brothers and sisters, *communion and sobriety* are important values for our Christian life: communion, harmony among us, and sobriety are important values, indispensable values for a Church that is missionary at all levels.

We can ask ourselves, then: do I taste the pleasure of proclaiming the Gospel, of bringing, where I live, the joy and light that come from an encounter with the Lord? And in order to do this, do I commit myself to walking together with others, sharing ideas and skills with them, with an open mind and with a generous heart? And finally: do I know how to cultivate a lifestyle that is sober, a lifestyle that is attentive to the needs of my brothers and sisters? They are questions that it is good to ask ourselves.

May Mary, Queen of Apostles, help us to be true missionary disciples, in *communion and sobriety of life*. In communion, in harmony among us and in the sobriety of life.

The word of the Father



All my life and all that I have are consecrated to Jesus Christ, my God, now and for ever. I will be everything to everyone in order to belong wholly to Jesus crucified. (cf. LII, 154)

As long as we are, not only in name but in reality, little and poor children of Divine Providence, the Lord will be with us. It is unfitting for someone who loves comfort to be called a child of Divine Providence. As long as poverty is present in our houses, we shall be blessed by God. Hold firmly to the spirit of poverty. (*Riunioni* 77)

Witnesses of Poverty

Don Fausto Santella

He was born in Barbarano Romano on 9 August 1908 and died in Rome at the age of 98, having lived 77 years of religious profession and 72 years of priesthood. At the age of 14 he was welcomed into the Congregation by Father Risi on 1 October 1922, and from that day his life became completely bound to Don Orione, whom he was able to know personally for many years, and to the Congregation, which he loved as a mother.

Those who had the chance to know him still remember the prophetic tone with which he spoke of Don Orione: recalling what Don Orione expected of his sons, reminding them of the spirit of poverty, of the life of prayer, of charity, of the will of God, of obedience and love for the Pope.

On 15 August 1924 he received the religious habit from Don Orione at Villa Moffa. Afterwards he studied at secondary school in Venice with the Cavanis Fathers. His years as a sem-



inarian were years of fire and sacrifice: at the seminary of Montebello he served as assistant and teacher while at the same time studying theology. Even then his health was frail. Don Orione, who saw how generous and self-sacrificing he was, wrote on 29 November 1932 to the director, Don Camilla Bruno:

“See that he (Santella) has very, very nourishing food, otherwise things will end badly and we shall bear him on our conscience. These are people who do not spare themselves in work and who spend themselves completely; the Congregation can never spend too much for those who spend themselves for it. Besides a more nourishing diet and real extra nutrition, let him have an egg with milk in the morning, and hot milk with a beaten egg in the afternoon. And see that it is done immediately, without delay.”

After his priestly ordination on 24 February 1934, he received various assignments in houses of formation. A small man, delicate in health, but always lucid and active, always attentive to others and open to relationships. He constantly struggled with poor health, but never complained; he accepted treatment obediently; he offered himself generously to others without worrying much about his own ailments. He later resided for a long time in the communities of Rome, where he served as spiritual father and confessor to several Orionine communities as well as to others who sought him out. He became a point of reference for the confessions of seminarians, religious, priests and lay people who would come looking for him in his little room. It was a very poor room, containing only the essentials: a bed, a small wardrobe, a chair, a kneeler, a crucifix, and a very small cardboard suitcase that he had used when moving from one community to another. That was all he needed, as someone who saw himself as merely passing through this life. In fact, some confrères who went to visit him shortly before his death found him standing by the window, praying the rosary as he looked out. The room was neat and clean, like that of someone who wants to leave everything in order because he is about to set off elsewhere. After the first greetings, Father Santella, with great calm and serenity, said to them: *“I am here waiting for the Lord to come and take me on the last journey.”* The little suitcase was placed on the table, closed — perhaps only a symbol of the journey, empty of belongings but overflowing with goodness. To the very end he lived with a profound desire to meet Jesus, the one thing necessary.

Generous in self-giving, ready for sacrifice, he embodied that poor, sober, and essential way of life so dear to the Lord and to Don Orione.

Another confrère, who at that time was Superior General, recalled how one day Father Santella had asked to see him. In fact, he wanted to hand over an old pocket watch, and with tenderness, as he passed it to him, he said: “*Don Sterpi gave me this, at Don Orione’s suggestion, in 1936 when I was at Montebello. How many hours it has marked — all for the Lord.*” And after giving it to him he added: “*This watch has measured almost seventy years of my religious life.*”

That was the watch of fidelity. It no longer marked time for Father Santella, but it continues to recall what is essential: the meaning and value of our consecrated life — that the hours we are given are *all for the Lord*.

Domande per il dialogo

Living poverty in a genuine and profound way leads us towards greater freedom to love God and our neighbour.



- Reflect on this point: does living poverty nurture in me the virtue of hope, that is, a trusting and total abandonment to God as the one supreme Good?
- When I make decisions, do I put “my own interests” first, or am I able to discern what serves the common good — the good that fosters communion and makes the sharing of goods authentic?
- In managing time and material resources, do I go my own way, or am I able to engage in dialogue with those who guide the community and with my brothers?
- As a community, can we identify a small step that might help us grow in an attitude and a way of life that is essential, simple, and sober, so as to be a witness among ourselves and to those around us?

MODULE N. 3

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE VOW OF POVERTY: WORK, MORTIFICATION, AND AN AUSTERE LIFE

Invocation to the Holy Spirit

Come, O Holy Spirit, hear us.

Spirit of the Father, give us life.

Spirit of the Son, save us.

O Eternal Love, fill us.

With your fire, set us ablaze.

Shine on us with your light.

Living fountain, quench our thirst.

Wash us from our sins.

With your anointing, strengthen us.

By your comfort, console us.

With your grace, guide us.

Through your angels, protect us.

Never allow us to be parted from you.

God the Holy Spirit, hear us.

With the finger of your grace, touch us.

Pour into us the torrent of virtue.

Strengthen us with your gifts.

And with your fruits, refresh us.

Deliver us from the evil foe.

In the final battle, anoint us.

At the hour of death, defend us.

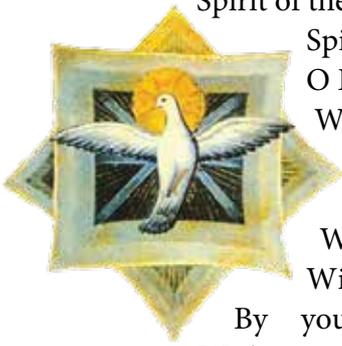
Then call us to yourself,

that with all the saints

we may praise the Father, the Son, and you,

O gracious and eternal Comforter.

Amen



Presentation of the Theme

Don Orione's Call to Evangelical Poverty

As we well know, Don Orione urged his followers to embody and embrace poverty by imitating the life of Jesus, the Master. On Christmas Day in 1935, he addressed his former pupils, benefactors, and friends, reminding them to love and live with humble and simple things.

From the very beginning of the Congregation, our Founder desired religious who were humble and who placed their trust solely in Divine Providence. Even in great works of charity, he insisted on using modest means and poor resources. He once advised: "The day we become rich, we shall write: finis! (it is the end)"

This call from Don Orione regarding our poverty invites us—and indeed urges us—to reflect on our lifestyle today, in the context of the times we live in. Seeking comfort and ease is always a tempting path, as the history of consecrated life teaches us.

The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* speaks clearly on the theme of poverty: "*In reality, even before being a service to the poor, evangelical poverty is a value in itself, as it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in imitation of Christ poor. Its primary meaning is to bear witness that God is the true wealth of the human heart... Consecrated persons are therefore called to offer a renewed and vigorous evangelical witness of self-denial and simplicity, in a fraternal lifestyle inspired by criteria of simplicity and hospitality, also as an example to those who remain indifferent to the needs of others.*" (VC 90)

We hope that the fruit of our shared reflection on this third sheet will be a renewed commitment to use personal and communal goods in a way that is more evangelical and more faithful to the spirit of Don Orione.

Illumination



Constitutions:

Article 33 - Work: Both as individuals, each one according to his position and office, and as a community we obey the common law of work;

thus, we are all called to work. This great law is fulfilled today just as on the first day of humanity. Hard work is required for both material and moral progress.

Article 34 - Austere Life: With a spirit of poverty, which is most joyful and generous, let us be content with what is necessary, using material goods with gratitude as a gift of Providence.

Let us avoid any seeking after comfort, every desire for money and the accumulation of goods and even the slightest appearance of luxury as well as useless expenditure and waste.

Let us accept serenely the deprivations which the circumstances of life impose on everyone, especially the poor. We shall observe poverty even in sickness and death.

Article 35 - Mortification: Our Congregation will become great and will do great good as long as its members mortify themselves in eating and drinking. Let us commit ourselves to giving witness to evangelical poverty and mortification in food, drinks, clothing and in our houses.

Likewise, following the tradition, which comes from our Founder, let us abstain from smoking and from the easy use of luxury goods or voluptuous commodities.



The word of God

From the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 6,25-34)

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat [or drink], or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of

them.

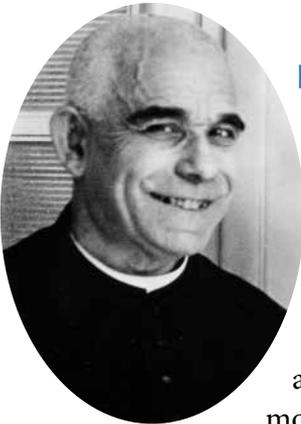
If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or ‘What are we to drink?’ or ‘What are we to wear?’ All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil.

The word of the Church

Pope Francis

The most important thing to do, said the Holy Father, is to ask yourself: “What is my treasure?”. It certainly cannot be riches, as the Lord has said: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, because in the end you will lose them”. What is the treasure that we can take with us to the end of life? The Pope gives a simple answer: “You can take what you have given, and only that”.

(*Homily*, Santa Marta, 21 giugno 2013).



Don Orione

Let us now revisit what Don Orione wrote on 7 February 1923, in a letter sent to his confrères in the Holy Land, reflecting on the need for a renewed witness of simplicity, mortification and an austere life:

“And now I move on to recommend temperance and work. Prayer, work and temperance are three most precious pearls, which must shine upon the brow and in the life of every Son of Divine Providence. Prayer, work and temperance: these are what will truly make our beloved Congregation flourish. *Oratio, labor et temperantia!* ...”

I received your Christmas greetings, and I thank you for them. But how could I truly appreciate them, knowing that life is not being lived as it should be? That poverty is loved only in words? Yes, the vow of poverty—but only as long as nothing is lacking and one can live a comfortable and tranquil life. Poverty, however, means sacrifice and also frugality: poverty means not wasting what we have; poverty means being careful in looking after things and avoiding waste. ...

We are nothing more than stewards of the goods of the Church and of the poor, and we shall have to give an account of them to God, to the Church and to the poor. I am not speaking of miserliness, of pettiness, or of avarice; I speak of, and I recommend, holy poverty, together with frugality and order.” (Lettere I, 466.473).

Witnesses of Poverty

The Orionine Priest Juan Dellalián, according to the account of Father Pedro Ferrini

Eight Armenian orphans had asked to enter the Congregation. Two of them became priests. Father Juan Dellalián was ordained on 12 July 1942, in the midst of the Second World War, at the shrine of Our Lady of Caravaggio in Fumo. Generous and outgoing, very confident in his vocation, he was always deeply grateful to Don Orione, to his Superiors, and to the Congregation.

During the first ten years of his priesthood, he dedicated his apostolic work to young people and orphans in different parts of Italy. Later, he expressed his desire to become a missionary in South America. The Superiors granted his request, and in the first days of 1952 he left Italy. He landed in Brazil and, after a short stopover, continued his journey by plane. He arrived in Chile on 11 February 1952. Two weeks later, on 24 February, he reached Los Ángeles, in southern Chile. He is regarded as the “first Chilean” among the Orio-



Don Dellalián, armeno, missionario in Cile.

nine priests. For more than thirty years, he served the Congregation in this country with enthusiasm and fidelity, working in various missions.

In just one month of intense labour, Father Dellalián prepared the way to open a boarding school. He rolled up his sleeves and worked hard like a manual labourer, climbing onto the roof to replace and repair tiles. The miserable state in which an earthquake had left the building discouraged him so much that he decided to return to Santiago. Fortunately, he met the architect Belloni, a great friend and benefactor of the mission, who restored his courage and enthusiasm, and also helped him financially. On 24 March 1952 he was able to welcome several orphaned and poor children from the countryside, offering them the chance of a home. Father Juan had himself known orphanhood and understood abandonment well. From his earliest childhood he had experienced what it meant to belong to no one, to have no one to rely on, no one to entrust with his tenderest feelings.

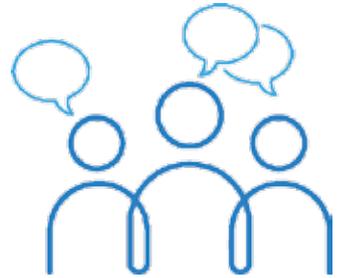
He too wished, like Don Orione, to be both father and mother to hundreds of children, to make them feel the affection and warmth they had not known in their own homes. It shocked the city to see him working like a farm labourer in the fields, sowing and harvesting, so that his orphans would not lack what was necessary. Mrs Maruja recalls that Father Juan needed a quick means of transport for all the times he had to go out for the needs of the school. With a smiling face and great simplicity, he asked her father to buy him a bicycle. The man could not refuse such a request and gave him the money. It was not common to see a priest riding a bicycle, but he was never ashamed to move about the city in this way, even if it seemed somewhat undignified for a minister of God. He used it for many years until he was able to afford a more suitable means of transport. His manual work, sometimes heavy, such as ploughing and sowing while driving a tractor himself, made a great impression on the city.

He was a teacher, and he fostered the choir and music. People were struck by his extraordinary strength as a “country priest,” by his cheerful and lively character, but he was also a man of great culture: he was an honorary member of the Rotary Club, of the fire brigade, of the “huasos” (Chilean cowboy) club, and a military chaplain. He was the founder of today’s Don Orione College in Los Ángeles, which, like all good works, arose under the protection of Divine Providence.

On one occasion, when there was no firewood for cooking and nothing to put in the pot, Father Juan lined up the boarding students and took them to church to ask help from Divine Providence. While they were praying, the sound of the doorbell was heard. A man in a poncho, a typical countryman, asked for the priest in charge of the school. “He’s in church with the children,” replied Mr Winsler, who had gone to answer the door. “Don’t call him,” continued the stranger. “I’ll leave this note so that he can go and collect some firewood.” They went at once to fetch it. Along with the firewood came some sacks of potatoes, pumpkins, and “a little money for petrol.” The lorry had been lent by the electricity company.

Points for Reflection

- In what ways is our community particularly challenged by the call to sobriety? What changes are needed to embrace a truly poor and Gospel-centred way of life?
- Do we genuinely live from the work of our own hands, and is our lifestyle truly austere? Are we willing to accept sacrifices and small mortifications?
- How do we embody trust in Divine Providence within our community life?
- Do we sincerely love and live by humble and simple things, as Don Orione desired?
- What can we say about our relationship with comfort and ease?
- Do we carry out our personal monthly financial review, as required by our rule of life?
- Are our confrères regularly and transparently informed about the financial situation of the house (*Norms 225*)?
- What can we say regarding the unified fund (*Constitutions 224; Norms 199, 202*) and the common fund (*Norms 220*)?



MODULE N.4

TO MARRY POVERTY

Invocation to the Holy Spirit



Holy Spirit, Spirit of Wisdom, of Knowledge, of Understanding, of Counsel, make us overflow, we beseech you, with the knowledge of the Father's Will; fill us with all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Open our hearts to the consolation of your gift, so that we may come to know the mystery

which in time is being revealed, the mystery prepared from ages without end: the glory of Christ in humankind alive.

And you, Mary, first privileged fruit of this glory of Christ, make our hearts sensitive to the ways of God, to his manner of manifesting himself in our History. Help us to walk in his truth, so that we may meet him and welcome his mystery. Amen

(Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini)

Presentation of the Theme

The theme of “poverty” is decidedly out of fashion today. The biblical verbs—leave, abandon, lose, detach—found in the story of Abraham (Genesis 12) rarely find listeners, and even more rarely do we encounter people with the courage and willingness to put them into practice.

On the other hand, wealth is no longer seen merely as a way out of pover-

ty. It is actively sought after and regarded as a status symbol. It has become synonymous with power, control, and worth (in the sense of being valued). It is the yardstick by which everything is measured—even human relationships.

The mistake lies in confusing means with ends, possession with being. It lies in the relentless pursuit of ever-increasing wealth, surrendering to the illusion that full happiness can finally be found there.

Today, people are quickly confronted with the dilemma: “to have or to be.” Every life choice ultimately comes down to this question. And it is deeply dangerous to allow possession to triumph over being—to let our identity become enslaved to what we own.

For us Orionines, the challenge lies in our commitment to be a poor presence among the poor. We are bound to use and manage economic resources not as owners, but in dependence on our Superiors, according to the Constitutions. We commit to maintaining a lifestyle befitting true poverty, in the spirit of the Gospel—aware that religious poverty is not only about being subject to our Superiors in the use of goods, but also about practising both external and internal poverty (Const. 29).

Illumination



Constitutions , article 28 - Poor for the poor :

Convinced that to espouse poverty means, for the Sons of Divine Providence, to incarnate the life of the poorest:

- let us pay continued attention to the cry of the poor, which rises up from the world, hearing it as an invitation to continuous conversion and to put at their disposal, following the directives of the Church, whatever Divine Providence wishes to send us;

- let us also give a communal witness to poverty, taking into account the conditions of the places in which we are called to work, and being aware, however, that our poverty cannot be simply conformity to the customs of the local ordinary people, but rather a generous response to the Gospel.

The word of God



From the Gospel according to Luke (Lk 4: 16-21)

The means that Jesus used in the manger at Nazareth and on the cross are these: poverty, rejection, humiliation, abandonment, persecution, suffering, the cross.

These are our weapons—the very weapons of our divine Bridegroom—who asks us to let him continue his life within us: he, the one true loving Bridegroom, the only Saviour, the only Wisdom and the only Truth.

Let us follow this “one true model”; then we can be sure of doing great good, for it is no longer we who live, but he who lives in us. Our actions are no longer our own—weak and human as they are—but his, divinely effective. (Charles de Foucauld).

He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.

He said to them, “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.”

The word of the Father

What does it mean to marry poverty?

Does it mean simply to accept poverty in theory? Does it mean taking a vow of poverty? More than that!

Does it mean practising poverty? More!

Does it mean clinging to poverty? More!
More! More!

To embrace poverty means to make one's whole life a sacrifice for the poor, for the humble, for the lepers...

What does it mean to marry poverty? Ah, if only the poor Sons of Divine Providence truly embraced poverty! If they knew how to embrace poverty in the spirit of the Little Work, then none—not the Franciscans, not the Capuchins—would embrace poverty more than us!

To embrace poverty means to make real within ourselves the life of the poorest, the most abandoned, the rejected, the afflicted. That is what it means to embrace poverty!

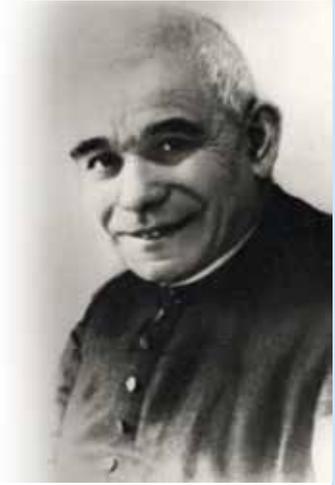
It is not enough to say: we live poorly. It is not enough to say: we have promised to be poor. It is not enough!

To embrace poverty is to love poverty—as the image of Christ in our brothers and sisters—and to love it deeply, and to live it fully!

And if the Sons of Divine Providence, with the help of the Lord (for by ourselves we can do nothing), truly become what the breath of Divine Providence has raised us up to be, then among all the Religious, none more than us will be called to live and embrace poverty in its truest, greatest, and holiest sense.

None more than us, who are called to dedicate our lives to the poorest, to so many afflicted and rejected brothers and sisters, to those whom the world treats as scraps, as society's refuse, almost to be shunned as people not even worthy of being looked at.

(Meditation of 6 October 1939, Tortona-Paterno; *Parola* XI,142)



Witnesses of Poverty

Bishop Enemésio Ângelo Lazzaris

One of the most remembered religious figures of the Province of *Our Lady of Fatima* (Northern Brazil) is undoubtedly Msgr. Enemésio Ângelo Lazzaris. He



served as director of various communities, provincial superior, vicar general, and later as bishop of the Diocese of Balsas, in the state of Maranhão.

Msgr. Enemésio left a deep impression on everyone who met him, thanks to his many virtues, and all recall his austerity and simplicity of life. On one occasion, when he was already Bishop of Balsas, he confided to a young Orionine priest:

“Some religious have so many problems with money! And life is really so simple! I, for instance, receive my pension and hand it over to Mrs Maria Amélia (who was then the diocesan bursar). When I travel, I ask her for a sum of money, and when I return, I account for everything... And this gives me such freedom.”

Everyone remembers his evangelical generosity! When travelling by bus, he would always bring something to eat with him to avoid unnecessary expense.

Another important aspect of our confrere’s life was prayer. He faithfully observed the Liturgy of the Hours, celebrated Mass, and prayed the Holy Rosary. Perhaps his life of prayer is the key to understanding the source of his truly evangelical poverty.

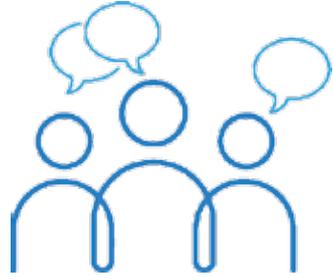
In this regard, it is worth recalling the testimony of a confrere about his intimacy with the Lord. The priest recounted:

“Once, we were travelling with a group of religious to a Provincial event. At the time, he was the Provincial Superior. During the journey, one of the car’s tyres punctured, and we had to stop for repairs. We all stood around chatting and watching the mechanic trying to fix it. Then I realised that Dom Enemésio wasn’t with us, so I started looking for him. Suddenly, I saw him a

little apart, with his breviary in hand, praying Vespers. That gesture deeply inspired me and reminded me of how Don Orione had once described Don Sterpi, saying that he was truly a priest who looked like a priest. And so it was with Dom Enemésio: a priest who truly looked like a priest, in every sense.”

Points for Reflection

In the document of the 15th General Chapter we read: “*We dream of a Religious Family that moves ever more from works of charity to living charity itself; that places greater emphasis on a way of life poor among the poor, which gives credibility to our mission.*” and again: “*We dream of leaving behind our comforts in order to face new realities in the image of Christ.*” (Pastoral Guidelines 8, no. 53)



- How are we personally and as a community living out this invitation of the Chapter?
- What concrete attitudes help us to bear witness to the vow of poverty in our apostolic reality?
- The General Chapter suggested the creation of an “observatory of poverty” to encourage and, ultimately, to organize new responses. Have we taken any concrete actions in the light of these indications of the Chapter?

MODULE 5

POOR AMONG THE POOR

Invocation to the Holy Spirit



Holy Spirit, breath of Jesus the poor,
 come and free my heart from all vanity and pretence.
 Teach me to live lightly, unbound by possessions or
 honours,
 so that my only treasure may be the Gospel.
 Spirit of generosity,
 make me able to give without measure what I have
 received,
 to seek out the least, and to dwell among them as a brother.

Spirit of strength and gentleness,
 protect the Little Work of Divine Providence from the danger of becoming rich yet empty;
 keep it a pilgrim, poor, and in love with Christ.

Fill our hearts with the joy of those who know that all is grace,
 and make us a living sign of the Kingdom
 that belongs to the poor in spirit.
 Amen.

Presentation of the theme

The Heart of Evangelical Preaching: A Spirit of Gratuitous Love

At the heart of Gospel preaching lies the principle of gratuitousness: what we have received as a gift from God must be given freely, without calculation, as a sign of gratitude and love. This is how Jesus and the apostles lived—poor among the poor, free from material wealth and worldly security, placing their trust entirely in Divine Providence. Evangelical poverty is not merely the absence of possessions; it is a deliberate way of life that bears witness to the truth that God alone is our true wealth.

Pope Francis reminds us that when the Church loses this spirit of gratuitousness and becomes preoccupied with accumulating wealth, it risks becoming a non-governmental organisation devoid of spiritual life. Poverty, on the other hand, becomes a guarantee of authenticity. It protects us from becoming entrepreneurs of the sacred and keeps our hearts free for the proclamation of the Gospel.

This spirit, reaffirmed by Don Orione, calls us to dwell among the poorest, to share in their lives, and to renounce forms of luxury or privilege that distort our mission. The Church was born poor and for the poor. Returning to this source means weaving together, inseparably, love for Christ and love for the poor—recognising in them the very face of the Lord.

Illuminazione

Costitution:



Article 30 - Renunciation of radical right of ownership: Profession of the vow of poverty allows us to have ownership of goods bequeathed to us and the capacity to acquire others lawfully.

However, for a reasonable motive we can, after having made perpetual vows, give up our inheritance or what we may inherit in the future, with the permission of the Superior General, having received the consent of his Council. This renunciation should be written down, if possible, in a form which would be valid also according to civil law.

- Article 31 - Everything in common: The Little Work of Divine Providence is our family; we bring to it the contribution of our ideas and our work. Therefore, among us, as in the early Christian community, everything must be considered as belonging to all and put in common for the needs of all.

It follows that whatever we do, acquire and receive by our activity with regard to the Congregation or through our apostolate, through insurance and social security or as a gift, is done, acquired and received for the Congregation.



The word of God

From the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 17: 22-27)

As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” And they were overwhelmed with grief.

When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax* approached Peter and said, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?”

“Yes,” he said.* When he came into the house, before he had time to speak, Jesus asked him, “What is your opinion, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take tolls or census tax? From their subjects or from foreigners?”

When he said, “From foreigners,” Jesus said to him, “Then the subjects are exempt. But that we may not offend them, go to the sea, drop in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. Open its mouth and you will find a coin worth twice the temple tax. Give that to them for me and for you.”

La Parola della Chiesa

The preaching of the Gospel is born of generosity, from the wonder of the salvation that comes to us. What I have received freely, I must also give freely. From the very beginning it was like this. Saint Peter didn’t have a bank account, and when he had to pay the tax, the Lord sent him to the sea to catch a fish and find the coin inside it to pay. [...] Everything is grace. Everything.



And what are the signs that an apostle is living this generosity? There are many, but I will point out just two. First, poverty. The proclamation of the Gospel must follow the way of poverty. The witness of this poverty: I have no riches, my only treasure is the gift I have received—God himself. This

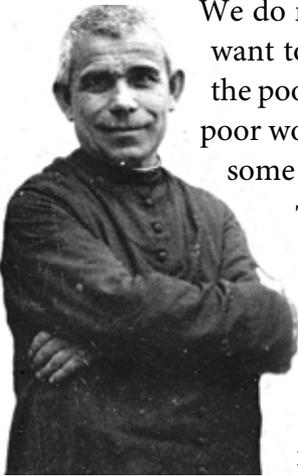
generosity: this is our wealth! And this poverty saves us from becoming mere organisers or businessmen... The works of the Church must go forward, and some are quite complex; but with a heart of poverty, not with the heart of an investor or entrepreneur, no? [...]

When we find apostles who want to make the Church rich, without the generosity of praise, then the Church grows old, the Church becomes an NGO, the Church loses life.

Today let us ask the Lord for the grace to recognise this generosity: “You have received without cost; give without cost.” To recognise this generosity, this gift of God. And may we too go forward in the preaching of the Gospel with this same generosity.

(Pope Francis – *Homily* at Santa Marta, 11 June 2013)

The word of the Father



We do not want ranks or honours. We want the poor. We want to be poor. We want to live among the poorest, and the poor love us. Even if the churches were to be closed, the poor would remain with us, and we would still be able to do some good.

The communists came and brought us sacks of rice to distribute to the refugees, because they trusted us. ... If we remain with the poor, they will let us be and they will respect us. But we must return to the source, and as soon as possible, give away those wealthy institutions... We are for the poor, for the poorest. Never forget this—make it the very blood in your veins, the very life of your life. This is the life of the Congregation. As long as in our houses you will not find sofas, modern lounges, and the like, we will keep the spirit of the Congregation alive. We must dedicate ourselves to orphans, to the elderly, to the weak...

The Church was born with the poor; the Gospel is for the poor (and also for the rich, but for those who are poor in spirit).

The deacons of the Church cared for the poor. We must become poor again, and above all, return to what we once were. What business have we with summer holidays in the mountains or by the sea!

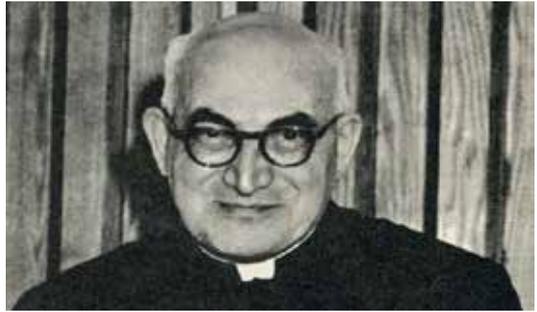
We want to be a strength in the hands of the Church, tirelessly so, but we must bind together love for Christ, love for souls, and love for the poor.

(Don Orione: *Spiritual Exercises Meetings*, 7–14 August 1934, Montebello della Battaglia)

Witnesses of Poverty

Don Gaetano Piccinini: poor with the poor, free for love.

Don Gaetano Piccinini (Avezzano 1904 – Rome 1972) carried from childhood both the mark of fragility and the seed of hope. Orphaned by the Marsica earthquake of 1915, he was taken in by Don Luigi Orione, who became for him both father and guide. In the Orionine Family he found his path: to live poor among the poor, faithful to the Gospel and to boundless charity.



A graduate in Literature, he served as headmaster and school principal, general councillor of the Congregation, a man of intelligence and organisation. He placed every gift at the service of the most fragile, never seeking honours. His strength lay in faith, in friendship, in concrete love for the least. He would often repeat that the true wealth of a priest is “the smile of someone who feels loved.”

This conviction guided him above all in the most dramatic years of the war. In Rome, during the Nazi occupation, he hid and saved dozens of persecuted Jews, sharing with them hunger, fear and uncertainty. He did so without calculation or show, with the naturalness of one who sees good as a simple and necessary duty. Yad Vashem recognised him as “Righteous Among the Nations”, but for him it was only a debt of love towards Christ and towards the weakest.

Those who knew him describe him as a man with a great heart, able to welcome without judging, to protect without making his authority felt. With discretion, he restored dignity and helped each person feel loved, without superiority or condescension. Don Giuseppe Sorani remembered him as a man of great serenity of spirit, able to welcome without questions and to face every situation naturally, as if it were the simplest thing in the world.

His dedication did not end with the war. After 1945 he devoted himself to orphans and disabled children, founding and directing educational and welfare institutions, among them that of Monte Mario. He was present in every emergency of his time: from Polesine to Irpinia, from Vajont to Belice, organising relief and works of charity together with Orionine priests, sisters and lay people.

His tireless life and activity came to an end on 29 May 1972, leaving a lasting memory of his priestly integrity, his farsighted and enterprising apostolate, his profound inner life, his care for friendship and his promotion of the laity.

Points for Reflection

- What is my true wealth? Do I rely more on possessions, roles, recognition—or on trust in God?
- *Generosity of the gift.* Do I recognise that what I have received (faith, life, talents) is grace and not merit? How am I freely sharing what I have received?
- *Simplicity of life.* Are there signs of luxury or comfort that prevent me from living the Gospel with freedom?
- *Style of mission.* Does our community proclaim the Gospel with a spirit of poverty, or with the mindset of organisers and entrepreneurs?
- *Presence among the least.* Are we truly rooted among the poor of our area?



- *Use of goods.* How do we manage what we possess? To what extent does our use of goods express trust in Providence?

Final Prayer



Lord Jesus,
 you who chose the way of poverty
 to share the life of the least,
 grant that we too may learn to walk
 lightly,
 without relying on riches or human se-
 curities.
 Give us a free heart,
 able to welcome and to give without cal-
 culation,
 to see your face in every poor person,
 and to serve with joy those who have no
 voice.

Holy Spirit,
 keep alive in the Church the flame of gener-

osity,

preserve us from becoming entrepreneurs of the Gospel,
 and make us faithful companions of the little ones.

Good Father,
 lead us back to the source,
 so that our proclamation may be clear,
 our life simple,
 and our only wealth your love.

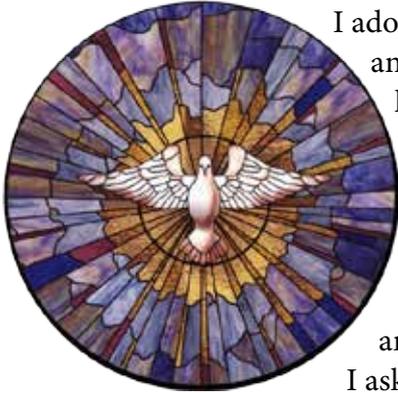
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Amen.

MODULE 6

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT: MARY, EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY AND SERVICE

Invocazione allo Spirito Santo



Lord Jesus Christ,

I adore you as the Son of God,
and through the intercession of your most
loving Mother, I implore you:
send upon me, from the abundance of
your heart filled with love,
the grace of your Holy Spirit,
that he may enlighten my ignorance,
purify and sanctify my guilty heart,
and confirm me in your sacred love.

I ask this through the abundance of your in-
finite mercy

and through the merits of all your saints.

Amen.

(St. Arnold Janssen)

Presentation of the theme

The theme of this sixth formation guide, entitled “Blessed are the Poor in Spirit: Mary, Example of Humility and Service”, invites us to live out the virtues of humility and service, following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord (cf. Lk 1:48). She fully welcomed and lived this Beatitude of Jesus:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3).

Through her example of a life totally given to God, the Virgin Mary shows

us that the holiness of life to which the Lord calls us is indeed possible. She reveals how vital these virtues are in our Christian life and in our vocation as Orionine religious.

In fact, during the Angelus of 15 August 2021, Pope Francis highlighted the role and importance of humility in the life of the Virgin Mary and in each of us:

“The secret of Mary is humility. It was humility that drew God’s gaze to her [...]. For us too, humility is always the starting point, the beginning of our faith. It is essential to be poor in spirit, that is, in need of God.”

In today’s world, where strong ideologies increasingly exalt power and greatness and influence so many men and women, there is a real risk of losing sight of the meaning and value of these Christian virtues of humility and service.

Reflecting and meditating on these virtues – which are by no means signs of weakness – can help us not only to rediscover their meaning and role in our lives, but also to grow each day in the total gift of ourselves to God as we face the challenges of our times.

Illumination

Constitutions, article 29 - The vow of poverty :

With the vow of poverty:



- we take on the obligation of using and administering economic goods, not as owners but depending on the Superior according to the Constitutions;
- we commit ourselves to maintaining a style of life suited to the truly poor, according to the Gospel, aware that with regard to religious poverty, it is not enough to be subject to Superiors in the use of goods, it is also necessary to practice external and internal poverty.



The word of God

From the Gospel according to Luke (Lk 1:39-56).

During those days Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
 my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
 For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;
 behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.
 The Mighty One has done great things for me,
 and holy is his name.
 His mercy is from age to age
 to those who fear him.
 He has shown might with his arm,
 dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
 He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones
 but lifted up the lowly.
 The hungry he has filled with good things;
 the rich he has sent away empty.
 He has helped Israel his servant,
 remembering his mercy,
 according to his promise to our fathers,
 to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

The word of the Church

Pope Francis

Dear brothers and sisters,
Buongiorno and happy
feast day!

In today's Gospel, the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, the Magnificat resounds in the liturgy.

This hymn of praise is like a “photograph” of the Mother of God. Mary “rejoices in God because he has looked on the humility of his handmaid” (cf Lk 1:47-48).

Mary's secret is humility. It is her humility that attracted God's gaze to her. The human eye always looks for grandeur and allows itself to be dazzled by what is flashy. Instead, God does not look at the appearance. God looks at the heart (cf 1 Sam 16:7) and is enchanted by humility. Humility of heart enchants God. Today, looking at Mary assumed into heaven, we can say that humility is the way that leads to Heaven. The word “humility” comes from the Latin word *humus*, which means “earth”. It is paradoxical: to arrive on high, into Heaven, what is needed is to stay low, like the earth! Jesus teaches this: “he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Lk 14:11). God does not exalt us because of our gifts, because of our wealth or because of our skills, but because of humility. God loves humility. God lifts up those who humble themselves; he lifts up those who serve. Mary, in fact, attributes no other “title” except servant to herself: she is, “the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38). She says nothing else about herself, she seeks nothing else for herself.

Today, then, let us ask ourselves, each one of us in our heart: how am I doing with humility? Do I seek to be recognized by others, to affirm myself and to be praised, or do I think rather about serving? Do I know how to listen, like Mary, or do I want only to speak and receive attention? Do I know how to keep silence, like Mary, or am I always chattering? Do I know how to take a step back, defuse quarrels and arguments, or do I always want to stand out? Let us think about these questions: how am I doing with humility?



In her littleness, Mary wins Heaven first. The secret of her success is precisely that she recognizes her lowliness, that she recognizes her need. With God, only those who recognize themselves as nothing can receive the all. Only those who empty themselves can be filled by him. And Mary is the “full of grace” (v. 28) precisely because of her humility. For us too, humility is always the point of departure, the beginning of our having faith. It is fundamental to be poor in spirit, that is, in need of God. Those who are filled with themselves have no space for God — and we are often full of ourselves — but those who remain humble allow the Lord to accomplish great things (cf v. 49).

The poet Dante calls the Virgin Mary, “humbler and loftier than any creature” (Paradise, XXXIII, 2). It is beautiful to think that the humblest and loftiest creature in history, the first to win heaven with her entire being, in soul and body, lived out her life for the most part within the domestic walls, in the ordinary, in humility. The days of the Full of Grace were not all that striking. They followed one another, often exactly the same, in silence: externally, nothing extraordinary. But God’s gaze was always upon her, admiring her humility, her availability, the beauty of her heart never stained by sin.

It is a huge message of hope for each of us, for you whose days are always the same, tiring and often difficult. Mary reminds you today that God calls you too to this glorious destiny. These are not beautiful words: it is the truth. It is not a well-crafted, beautiful ending, a pious illusion or a false consolation. No, it is pure reality, living and true as Our Lady assumed into Heaven. Let us celebrate her today with the love of children, let us celebrate her joyfully but humbly, enlivened by the hope of one day being with her in Heaven!

And let us pray to her now that she may accompany us on our journey that leads from Earth to Heaven. May she remind us that the secret to the journey is contained in the word humility. Let us not forget this word, and that lowliness and service are the secrets for obtaining the goal, of reaching heaven.

(Angelus on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Peter’s Square, Sunday, August 15, 2021)

The word of the Father

The Example of Mary – The Power of Devotion to Her

Let us all rejoice in the Lord, dear brothers and sisters, and celebrate the virtues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose glory is the joy of the Angels.

Looking at the whole range of our moral tendencies, it seems to me that there are three virtues we especially need: humility, purity, and charity. To the excesses of pride we must oppose humility; to the excesses of the senses, purity; and to selfishness, the generosity of charity.

These virtues are so deeply human, so profoundly social, that society itself is upheld, in large part, by the measure of them that still remains. Yet an abstract ideal of virtue, suspended in the air, leaves us cold. We need examples, models to follow. Now, Mary is not only the sweet name that stirs the deepest strings of the heart, because she is the Mother of God and our Mother; she also fills our spirit with the gentlest emotion, because she offers us the unsurpassable model of virtue.

The beautiful ideals of humility, purity, and charity are all revealed in Mary, in those events which the Gospel, with such wisdom, has handed down to us. In her we find the most perfect example of humility. And Dante, when in the Purgatorio he needed an example of humility, turned to the scene of the Annunciation. He



could not have chosen anything more powerful.

Raised to a dignity that no pride could ever have dreamt of, Mary never lost her sense of humility. Placed above all women, blessed among them, and greeted with reverence by Gabriel, she does not forget her lowliness before God. She calls herself the handmaid, the servant of the Lord: *Ecce ancilla Domini!*

And when Elizabeth's words made her realise her great dignity as Mother of God, her response was not self-satisfaction but thanksgiving. Her thought rose up to bless God alone: *Magnificat anima mea Dominum!*

Magnificat!—that sublime canticle, breathing the fragrance of her pure modesty. No wonder Dante would call her: “Humble and exalted above every creature.”

May the Holy Virgin comfort and bless us! And blessed be you all, dear brothers and sisters—may you be ever blessed!

Ave Maria!

(For the Feast of Our Lady of the Guard, 29 August 1936 – Don Orione)

Witnesses of Poverty



Sac. Aldo Viti

Don Aldo Viti was born on 17 April 1923 in Fiastra (Macerata, Italy). He entered the Congregation in 1936 at our minor seminary in San Severino Marche, where he began his religious formation, which was brought to completion with his priestly ordination on 29 June 1951.

After various missions in Italy, at the age of seventy-four he was invited to go as a missionary to the Ivory Coast.

In Bonoua, where he lived for twenty-two years, he first served as Novice Master and then as tireless promoter of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. With great perseverance he suc-

ceeded in having the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Guard built in Bonoua, where he remained a devoted confessor until the end of his life.

He knew how to sow love for the Virgin Mary in the hearts of the novices of the Province of Our Lady of Africa and among the Christians of the Impérié district of Bonoua. Each evening he led the prayer of the Rosary at the foot of the statue of Our Lady of the Guard, together with the children of the neighbourhood.

He loved to share with the novices and the pilgrims to the sanctuary the experience and Marian spirituality of Saint Luigi Orione. Following in Don Orione's footsteps, Don Aldo Viti was a great devotee of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Thanks to his initiative, the “Charity Family of Don Orione” was established at the foot of the Sanctuary of Notre Dame de la Garde in Bonoua—a charitable Orionine work aimed at helping the poor and the most vulnerable, especially orphans, widows, and those in need.

Don Aldo Viti worked tirelessly, caring for the sick (often seen with his little medical case, dressing wounds), providing school supplies to students, food to widows and orphans, and setting up income-generating projects to support vulnerable people towards self-sufficiency.

In 2020, due to health reasons, he had to return to Italy, and on 18 December 2023 he returned to the Father's house.

Points for Reflection

- What place do you give to simplicity and humility?
- In what way does poverty of spirit help you to serve others better?
- How are you living out the spirit of poverty in practice today (in your community, in your choices, in your needs, etc.)?





Other Biblical Texts for Personal Reflection

- ✓ Don Orione. Lettere. Volume I e II
- ✓ Angelus, Solennità dell'Assunzione della Beata Vergine Maria, Piazza San Pietro, Domenica 15 Agosto 2021, sito vaticano
- ✓ La Vergine Maria, Serva del Signore – YouTube TV Bénis pour une nouvelle vie
- ✓



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