

Overcoming Our Flesh

September 24, 2019



Thank You, dear Jesus, for helping me realize how far I have slidden into self-indulgence. And helping me put an end to it. I know that through Your grace and help I will overcome these vices.

My dear family, what I have learned over these past two months is that I cannot afford to go without very substantial prayer every day. In the rush to get everything lined up and done on the Mountain before winter, I have compromised my time with the Lord, and I have lost much grace.

Please do not follow my example! See to it that Jesus comes first.

I am looking back on my vocation of 20 years ago as a Franciscan sister and missing very much its purity and simplicity. No longer do I like simple things. I have allowed myself to get attached to a few things that are not simple, but nice.

For instance, to accommodate visitors (which we have had so many of) I had to buy blankets. I could have bought old blankets at the thrift store and made do, but instead I got nice blankets, making the excuse that they were for others. But the bottom line truly is that even things for others should be very coarse and simple, so they don't have the wrong example, which could cause them to long for Egypt again.

And you've probably already guessed, I've also gotten addicted to my coffee drinks in the morning, which have not only caused me to gain weight, but suit my gourmet tastes very well.

I observed one of our brothers preparing his morning meal: tea and raw oatmeal with a little protein powder, raisins, milk and honey. Now, that is much more Franciscan, or let's say much more in line with what Jesus would have for breakfast: simple, poor and still nourishing—but not feeding the appetites of the flesh.

So, by his good example I am stopping the gourmet coddling I allowed myself. Time and time again the Lord has reminded me that appetites of the flesh are antagonistic to the spiritual life. They deprive us of sensitivities to the Spirit. And I know from experience, I just feel weighed down after I eat.

That is why fasting produces such good results. Our affections are turned to Spiritual matters rather than pleasing the flesh. There was a time in my life when I could walk by the most savory foods wafting through the air and be totally unaffected. But not anymore. Now I'd beat you to the baked chicken if we were in the store together.

I have allowed the Refuge to dominate my thinking all day and night. Researching heaters, getting roofing, and all kinds of distractions. Endless distractions that I have allowed to grip me and pull me away from prayer.

Of course, all of this preoccupation with the world has caused the Channel to suffer, as well. I am very sorry for this, dear ones. I really have neglected you.

So, with this confession and asking Jesus to give me the strength. And your prayers, which I'm really beginning to feel, by the way. I am committed to doing better. Because of these preoccupations and indulgences, my spirit is not healthy and strong, but rather struggling to let go of those things that do not profit a soul seeking God's wisdom and grace.

The truth is that we can live out our devotion to the Lord anywhere we are, if we really want to. We can eat simply, avoid entertainments that keep us up at night, dress modestly without being preoccupied with looking good to the world. And make an effort to detach ourselves from things that distract—even plants are a lovely distraction. Wanting to please the eye gate takes away from our spiritual longings. That is why the Lord never allowed me to have a garden.

Recently the Lord gave me a Rhema reading from "Lady Poverty", which is an allegory on simplicity and detachment from the world. Living the way that Jesus lived. It's a beautiful story. An allegory between Jesus, St. Francis and Lady Poverty.

<https://franciscantradition.org/francis-of-assisi-early-documents/the-saint/the-sacred-exchange-between-saint-francis-and-lady-poverty/977-fa-ed-1-page-530>

Here is an excerpt from it.

1Among the other outstanding and exceptional virtues which prepare in us an abode and a dwelling for God and which show an excellent and unencumbered path (1 Cor 13:1) of going to and arriving before Him, holy Poverty shines with a certain prerogative before them all.

By a unique grace, it excels the claims of the others. For it is the foundation and guardian of all virtues and enjoys a principal place and name among the Gospel virtues. As long as they have been firmly placed on this foundation, the others need not fear the downpour of rains, the rush of floods, and the blast of winds (Mt 7:25) that threaten ruin.

2This is certainly appropriate, since the Son of God, the Lord of virtue and the King of glory, (Ps 24:10) [Vulgate, Ps 23:10] fell in love with this virtue with a special affection. He sought, found, and embraced it while achieving our salvation in the middle of the earth. (Ps 74:12) [Vulgate, Ps 73:12]

At the beginning of his preaching, he placed it as a light of faith in the hands of those entering the gate, and even set it as the foundation stone of the house. While the other virtues receive the Kingdom of Heaven only by way of promise from Him, poverty is invested with it by Him

without delay. Blessed, he said, are the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (Mt 5:3)

3The Kingdom of Heaven truly belongs to those who, of their own will, a spiritual intention, and a desire for eternal goods, possess nothing of this Earth. It is necessary for those who do not care for the goods of the Earth to live for those of Heaven. Just as it is necessary for those who renounce the things of the Earth and consider them all as dung (Phil 3:8) to taste with pleasure during this present exile the sweet crumbs which fall from the table (Mt 15:27) of the holy angels. Thus might they merit to savor how sweet and delightful is the Lord. (1 Pt 2:3)

The Dignity of Poverty

19"The Son of the most high Father, enamored of your beauty (Wis 8:2) and clinging only to you in the world, proved that you were most faithful in everything. For before He came to earth from His radiant homeland, you prepared an appropriate place for Him, a throne upon which He would sit and a dwelling-place in which He would rest. That is, a very poor virgin from whom His birth would shine upon this world.

At his birth, you certainly greeted Him with faithfulness so that in you, not in luxuries, He would find a place that would please Him. He was placed in a manger, the Evangelist said, because there was no room for Him in the inn. (Lk 2:7a)

Thus, always inseparable from Him, you accompanied Him so that throughout His life, when He was seen upon Earth and conversed with human beings, (Bar 3:38) While the foxes have dens and the birds of the air nests, He nevertheless had nowhere to lay His head. (Mt 8:20) Then, when he opened His own mouth to teach—He who once had opened the mouths of the prophets—among the many things that He uttered, He first of all praised you, He first of all exalted you: "Blessed are the poor in spirit because theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." (Mt 5:3)

20Moreover, when He chose some of the indispensable witnesses to His holy preaching and to His glorious manner of living for the salvation of the human race, He surely did not choose rich merchants but poor fishermen, to show by such esteem that you were to be loved by all.

Finally, to reveal to everyone your goodness, magnificence, dignity and strength, how you surpass all other virtues, how nothing can be a virtue without you, and how your kingdom is not of this world (Jn 18:36) but of Heaven, you alone clung to the King of glory, when all the chosen and all His beloved abandoned Him, filled with fear. You, most faithful spouse, most sweet lover, did not abandon Him for a moment. Moreover, the more you saw Him despised by everyone, the more you clung to Him. For if you were not with Him, He could never have been so despised by all!

21You were with Him in the mockery of the Judeans, in the insults of the Pharisees, in the curses of the chief priests. You were with Him in the slapping of His face, in the spitting, in the scourging. He who should have been respected by everyone was mocked by everyone, and you

alone comforted Him. You did not abandon Him even to death, death on a cross. (Phil 2:8) And on that cross, His body stripped, His arms outstretched, His hands and feet pierced, you suffered with Him, so that nothing would appear more glorious in Him than you.

Finally, when He went into Heaven, He left you the seal of the Kingdom of Heaven to mark the elect, so that whoever yearns for the everlasting Kingdom would come to you.

And that's the end of the quote, from the Introduction to Lady Poverty.

This allegory brings to mind how very necessary it is to be detached from the riches of the world. I remember at my second conversion, how much our little family was scorned and despised. Not because of my habit, but because of holy evangelical poverty that we embraced. We were looked down upon, scorned, and rejected by everyone in the church who thought we had lost our minds.

But the sweetness of the Lord's presence so totally overpowered the scorn, that I actually enjoyed it. You know that Scripture says, "Rejoice, have a party, for in just this same way did they treat the prophets."

And then I looked that up. It says: Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in Heaven. For their fathers treated the prophets in the same way. But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Luke 6:23

And really, guys. The bottom line for me is that anything that draws my attention away from the Lord and puts it on the consolations of the flesh, including the eye-gate and beauty, that I am walking dangerously on the edge of the precipice of lukewarmness and presumption.

Presumption, because I think I need not sacrifice and fast for my spiritual health.

On the other hand, giving glory to God for His wondrous creation, is healthy as long as we don't seek to surround ourselves in this beauty, outside of His will. That has been my problem. I love beauty, natural beauty, creation and everything the Lord our God has spoken into existence.

It is ironic that the desert fathers fled from the world of beauty into the stark nothingness of the desert, so that nothing would distract them from prayer. Not only did they do violence to the desire to see and be seen by people and participate in the affairs of the world. They also sought out those places that had nothing to offer except scorpions and sand. This environment left them free to contemplate Heaven and Holy things, especially the beauties of the Son of God.

Lord, please help me with this. I know there are many who will disagree with this evangelical poverty.

Jesus began, *"My daughter, I have longed for you to come back to your senses on every level and embrace the simplicity of the life you once led. I know the temptations are myriad, and you are very weak. I also know the stress you have been under and how easily you turn to a sweet food to regain your balance. Part of that is chemical and part is the training you received as a child. When you cried, they gave you a cookie. Your mother did as her mother had done: she consoled her child with food.*

"This is a critical mistake mothers make with their children, giving them food to quiet them down. Later in life, it translates into eating for comfort, not nourishment. This also leads to many health problems, because those foods you crave in moments of stress are the worst for you.

"But enough on that. What I long for, Clare, for you and those you are guiding, is a sensible use of the things of the world and with an eye to simplicity.

"Do you remember how I hardened both of you off by sending you to northern Iowa in the dead of winter, and Florida in the heat of summer? I was training you to respond not to your flesh and the climate you preferred, but to respond to My needs for souls.

"I want My Brides to be totally detached from their preferences. I want them to have only one preference: My Will and only My Will.

"You have yielded to Me in this, by setting the hermitage aside for 15 years and living in town, even though it was very painful. Yet you did yield. This is the heart attitude I want you to have. And now I am sharing with you your heart's desire to live in the forest. Live there, My dearest, but do not be attached to it. Rather, be ready to go to the desert if I call you there. You know that none of these things matter at all. Only My preferences must dominate your thinking.

"Now, in all the preparations you are making for other souls, there are traps of entanglement with the world. And so, I have sent you helpers who are better suited to do that, so you may devote many hours to Me. What I have given you there is a reward and treat for the many years of hard labor you have given Me.

"But now, My Love, you must be solicitous for the souls I am sending you. And that means a better example, Clare. You saw how quickly one of these souls became attached to your elaborate coffee drinks? A better example is a simple cup of coffee and raw oatmeal, completely distancing yourself from your previous life of satisfying your taste buds.

"Be an exemplary example and keep it very simple and plain. In this way, you will all benefit and grow into deeper devotion and sensitivity to My Spirit.

"I am not asking you to do any of these things on your own, for as you well know from experience you would fail. Rather, I am strengthening you, My dear one, to be an example for

our children. Not only in what you eat, but in every department of life. Strive to separate yourself from fine tastes. This is a step by step process.

"Every time you make a choice for My Spirit, you climb the ladder of detachment and draw closer to a heavenly life. Every time you choose to satisfy your appetite, you fall backwards into the world, a few rungs on the ladder.

"Go from glory to glory, My spouse. Receive Me each day with this self-control in mind, and I will impart it to you.

"My dear ones, when you receive Me in communion, come as a needy beggar and state your need to Me, fully expecting that I will give to all who ask those things necessary to their sanctification.

"My Love, and all My Heartdwellers, what I wish for you is that you will be completely consumed with My Will from moment to moment without a thought for your own comforts or wants. This is the deportment of a Saint, and I want you all to become Saints."

Oh Lord...I could never accomplish this with my own will.

"And that is precisely why I am doing it in and through you. I have much for you to do, My spouse. I need you operating from the pinnacle of self-denial or you will not succeed.

"I am with you, Clare. And I am with every one of you that feels My Will is all that matters. I am not asking you to be totally perfect in this. Rather, I am asking you to be willing to be made perfect, and that you set your heart on the higher things. In this, I am with you 150% and will carry you through the rough spots until you are able to walk without crutches.

"I bless you now. Remember, I am with you in everything that you attempt to do for My Kingdom."