

12. Father Francis Jordan, a blessed in poverty, simplicity and humility

by Fr. Richard Zehrer SDS, Munich, 1 April 2021

“Blessed are the poor before God: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.”

(Mt 5,2)

Fr. Francis of the Cross Jordan:

“The members should possess nothing as their own; whatever they acquire they acquire for the Society. I admonish each and every one of you in the Lord to observe holy poverty faithfully and uprightly.”

From the Rule 1884

“Our Founder had an unshakeable trust in Divine Providence...”

“We live our personal and communal poverty in solidarity and responsibility with the poor of the world...”

(SDS Constitutions art. 313 and 315)

The exegetes point out that in the scriptural passages of Mt 5:2 and Lk 6:20, 24-25 two interesting accents have been set. The evangelist Matthew obviously emphasises more the spiritual side of poverty, being poor before God, while the evangelist Luke emphasises more the material side of poverty, i.e. above all our responsibility for the materially poor. Both sides of evangelical poverty were important to Fr. Francis Jordan, our Founder. And the responsibility for the materially poor is a great global challenge for all, especially today.

Pope Benedict XVI said on 8 January 2007 at the new year's reception: „Among the main problems, how can we not think of the millions of people who lack water, food and shelter? The scandal of hunger, which continues to worsen, is unacceptable in a world that has goods, knowledge and means to put an end to it.”

Added to this, more than ever, is the plight of the many millions of refugees of our time.

The well-known preacher and retreat leader Raniero Cantalamessa writes in his little booklet ‚Blessed are You ...’ (2010): „Blessed are the poor before God, ... Am I really poor before God, poor inwardly, do I rely on God for everything? ... Do I try to live a humble and simple life, as befits a witness of the Gospel? Do I really take to heart the problem of the appalling poverty in which millions of my fellow human beings live, not by choice but by force?”

Suggestions for further reflection:

- What is to be done to live up to this claim of Christ and Fr. Jordan?
- How can our Unit respond to the Founder's demand so that our life and our proclamation become more credible and effective in today's world?

Prayer:

Give us that spirit and that love of poverty,
through which you yourself, being rich,
became poor for us.”

(Handbook of Piety, 1950; from Morning Prayer, p. 7)