



MI Monthly Intention

*Immaculata,
please intercede...*

that Jesus' manifestation in poverty among men may inspire us to be humble, simple, and open to welcome the brethren we meet on our journey.

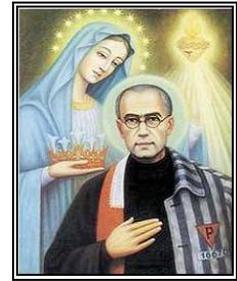
A Call to Poverty!

Dear MI Members and Friends,

Pope Francis is calling all of us to a renewal of our understanding and living of evangelical poverty. For this reason the International MI has chosen the theme, *Poor in heart, hands united*, as the apostolic theme for the social year 2014.

The following article of Bruno Forte, an Italian Bishop whose cause is up for sainthood, may help us all to enter into this spirit of poverty which *calls us to be sowers of hope*.

“Do not forget the poor!”: this was the invitation that a good friend, Franciscan Cardinal Claudio Hummes, made to Jorge Mario Bergoglio at the moment of his election to be Bishop of Rome and successor of Peter. **Pope Francis** has not forgotten this invitation, but has made it a priority of his magisterial teaching on the word and life. He offers these teachings faithfully and daily to the Church. It seems to me to be worth the effort to reflect on his call, which reveals a characteristic otherwise secondary to the pontificate of this Pope who “came from the end of the world.” In particular, I think it is important to consider three aspects of poverty: **the negative**, which expresses itself in the misery that inflicts a very large part of humanity, rarely seen in the “media”; **as a value and a life decision**; and **the solidarity that attention to the poor fosters**, with the various forms in which it



must express itself in order to be true and efficacious.

Poverty as a misery offends the dignity of the human being: as persons beaten and conquered. It is therefore necessary to know the conditions of privation and true misery in which so many live. Their faces, their stories challenge us.

Speaking to students in Italy and Albania, Pope Francis said: “One cannot speak of poverty, abstract poverty, it does not exist! Poverty is the flesh of Jesus Incarnate, in that little boy that hungers, in that sick, in those unjust social structures. Go. Go and look there at the body of Christ...” It is clear from these words that the poor and the miserable do not exist only as an abstract category of people to this Pope, who chose the name of the friend of “Lady Poverty.” When he speaks of the poor he is certainly remembering faces and concrete situations, those which he made his neighbors in his life as a disciple of Jesus, committed to follow him in the very complex context of Latin America. So we sense in the force of his words about this “body of Jesus” that he has learned to know and to love the poor.

Referring to the waste of food, great in the countries of “affluent society” and which seems to still characterize vast social groups, even in this “lean time,” the Bishop of Rome does not hesitate to say that **throwing away food is to steal from the poor**. While

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the welfare society seems to go down under the blows of the crisis and the lies that spawned it – starting from the illusion that the virtual economy of finance and the real economy of production were the same thing – this Pope with a big heart gives voice to those who have none. He reminds all of us, too often distracted because we are focused on our gains and losses, of the vast world of those who have nothing or very little to survive. Already this simple and concrete invitation to make our response to misery a litmus test to verify the truth of our values and our goals seems to me to be an extraordinary push to change our lifestyles and attitudes of the heart.



In this way Pope Francis helps us to discover poverty as a value. To thousands of young people, in the meeting mentioned above, he spoke these touching words: “Do not rob yourselves of the spirit of well-being, this will eventually lead you to nothing in life! Rather, have high ideals! But the hope? Where is it? In the flesh of Christ found in the poor and suffering. There is a link between the two.” That is to say: where your heart is, there your treasure lies, if you put your faith in Christ and orient your life decisions toward him, and do not make money the value which determines everything.



You will understand that there is a treasure greater than a bank account, and it is the gift of yourself lived for others, and the sharing of what you have with those who have not. There follows, from theological hope and lived charity, practiced moderation and the joy of giving. The false image of the successful person, identified by those who conform to the standard models of the consumer society, must give way to the true image of those

who live for others and do not hesitate to sacrifice for others. The satisfied and persuasive mask worn by the man or woman of “success” must fade before the humble courage of those who learn to know the poor and to love them by giving of themselves and feeling personally the offense of ostentatious richness and power. **It is not to seem poor, but to be poor in the choices made in the depth of the heart**, to give first place to the true treasure, the love received from God and lived for others.

There is, in the end, the active face of this poverty chosen for love: the solidarity with the weak and the commitment to the service of justice for all. It does not mean to follow ideological dreams that leave things as they are, or worse, to take up that violence typical of those who want to change the world to conform to one’s own ways. “Poverty” – Pope Francis said to the enraptured young people – “calls us to be sowers of hope. This seems a little difficult to understand, but I remember one time Father Arrupe said: You cannot speak of poverty without experiencing poverty.” To really want to do something for the other and to actually do it is the concrete challenge of solidarity.

The twentieth century has been generous with big words and mega promises. Now is the time to act: there is a need to revive the volunteer, the passion for the common good, the will to promote the persons in all their dignity and in every situation in which this dignity is violated. Listen to the words of the Pope in a homily a few days ago: “Do not procure gold, or silver, or money in your belt. This phrase means that the Reign of God is proclaimed with simplicity...that leaves space for the power of the



Word of God, and no human greatness whatever.

Service to the poor “is born from gratitude, from awe at the coming salvation... that

which I received at no cost, I ought to give freely.” “St. Peter did not have a bank account,” and when he had to pay the taxes, “the Lord sent him to fish in the sea.” Whoever gives witness to the Gospel ought to be able to say: “I am not rich, my wealth is the gift I have received: God.” This “poverty” is what “saves us from becoming merely an organization or business.” Also the works of the Church lived “with poor hearts... because the Church is born from this

gratuitous reception and proclamation.” A Church that becomes “rich” or that loses the “gratuitousness,” is a Church that ages, and in the end, dies. It seems to me that this is not only for the Church...

-Monsignor Bruno Forte – June 16, 2013

(October 14, 2013, the Archbishop was appointed by Pope Francis to serve as the Special Secretary of the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on "The challenges of the family in the context of evangelization", scheduled from October 5 to October 19 of 2014.)

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PONDER AND REFLECT

Watch www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJ_MGWio-vc the poor drummer boy. What will you bring to Christ in this new year?

How can you be more poor in spirit this year?

Some Village News:

*Village of the Assumption
Syracuse NY*

In June of 2010 the Village of the Assumption began, under the guidance of Fr. Eric de la Pena, OFM Conv. and Sister Nancy, OSF, with a small group of parishioners from The Franciscan Church of the Assumption who consecrated themselves in the MI.

We have grown to a group of twenty five members. Each gathering has a different activity: Mass, adoration, formation (with Fr. Eric), or a business meeting. We have consecrations on Marian feasts

that land on Monday throughout the year. With our moderator, secretary, and the help of all, we have a very fruitful and spiritual group experience. All meetings begin with the rosary and follow the format given by Marytown.

Seasonally we have different formats for our Holy Hours including the Holy Hour of the Militia of the Immaculata Mary, in September a Holy Hour with the Blessed Virgin, in October we pray the full Rosary, in November we have a prayer service that includes the Office of the Dead, and in December we have The Five Feasts of the Child Jesus prayer service and a cookie party. Through the generosity of the Knights of Columbus around the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe we host their Marian Hour of Prayer with the icon.



We have a full agenda each week and are working towards incorporating more Kolbe readings and discussion. The Village of the Assumption feels blessed to have the support of Fr. Eric and the visiting Friars from Marytown. We are devoted to St. Maximilian Kolbe and our Blessed Mother. All for Christ through His Immaculate Mother!

MI @ St. Mary Catholic Church
West Haven, Utah

A correction: Lenten retreat is Saturday, April 5. St. Mary Catholic Church hosted a vocation awareness weekend entitled *"Speak, Lord, Your Servant is Listening."* The event took place in the religious education classes, to which members of the parish as well as surrounding Catholic communities were invited. Led by St. Mary's pastor, Father Gustavo Vidal, ten consecrated persons, from across the Diocese of Salt Lake City, shared their testimonies and answered questions about the priesthood and consecrated life. Approximately 500 individuals participated in the event. Gift bags including medals, holy cards, and bookmarks were distributed, with additional vocational information. The parish, also, offers a Nocturnal Adoration for Vocations program in which 30 parishioners pray specifically for vocations once a month. It is hoped that these endeavors will inspire others to consider a consecrated vocation and be able to echo the words of Samuel, "Speak, Lord, Your servant is listening." (1 Sam 3:10) -Donna Masek

MI "Domus Mariae" Village
Houston, Texas

Twenty new members in the MI were consecrated to the Immaculata on December 8. To all the New MI Members a big, Welcome! (photo) Special Thanks to Fr. Alvaro Interiano for saying the Mass and celebrating the ritual and MI Members, Cody Castillo and Mike Day for helping out!
Maggie Brown



New Consecrants for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

www.midomusmariae.wordpress.com/current-events/

Walnut, CA

Carmen Denning sponsored the preparation for total consecration at her parish, San Lorenzo Ruiz. Fr. Kolbe Missionaries and Aspirant Fr. Kolbe Volunteers, Isaac Lopez, Vidal Gutierrez and Paul Estevez taught and shared with the 20 some participants. Twenty-two new consecrants stood before the altar reciting the prayer of total consecration.

MI at St. Joseph's
Modesto, CA

About twenty new Spanish speaking consecrants joined the MI.



Conference

February 8, **Mission Today 2014**, 9:30am-4:00pm
Dialogue and Enculturation: a symbiosis of culture and charism

Retreats/Retiros

February 1 Marian Retreat – Modesto, CA
Poor in heart, hands united

March 8 **Lenten Retreat** 9am-5:30pm

March 21-23, **Adults** - Prince of Peace Abbey, Oceanside, CA

29 Marzo **Cuaresma**, en Español, 9am-4pm

April 5 **Lenten Retreat** –
West Haven, UT

MI Teen Program – Escondido, CA

July 6-11: Teen Girls'
July 13-18: Teen Boys'

Preparation for Total Consecration
Preparación para la

consagración total

March 13 & 20 7-8:30 pm

2 & 3 Junio, en Español 7-8:30pm

January 1 Mary, Mother of God
A Mother's Reflection

I find as a new mom that I put a lot of pressure on myself to be a great mother. I want to give my daughter everything she needs and always do what is best for her. I don't mean materially, I mean physically and spiritually. The reality is, though, that moms aren't perfect. I am going to make mistakes and look back wishing I did things differently. All moms will at some point make a mistake...all but one that is. There is one woman who is the perfect mother. She is the definition of motherhood and as mothers we should look to her for guidance. But this reflection isn't really about mothers, it's about us kids. We need our mommy and we need this perfect mother the most. This mother I am referring to is the Blessed Mother, the Mother of our Lord.



Just like our earthly mother gives us life, so too does our Blessed Mother. When Mary said yes to bring Jesus to the world to save us, she opened the door to new life. Her fiat was the way that led to our Savior's sacrifice that gives us true life. Just as earthly mothers nourish us from their bodies so too does Mary. Jesus came from the body of Mary and in the Eucharist which is Jesus truly present (body, blood, soul, and divinity), we are fed and nourished. What an intense sacrifice of self was involved for Mary as she watched her son suffer and die so that we may live.

As we grow older we may think that we don't need Mary and we may even wander off like the toddler at the park but when we are in need she is a sure source of comfort. When we have fallen in our faith life and need help getting back up she will lift us up and wrap her mantle around us showing us that a mother's love never ends. She will lead us to the source of true happiness which is her Son. When we experience intense pain whether physical or spiritual, it is often the embrace of our mother that consoles us. During my pregnancy I experienced a lot of sickness and a good friend once told me to let mother Mary care for me the way she cared for Saint Elizabeth. What beautiful and true advice that was. In my sickest moments, reaching out to the Blessed Mother brought me the greatest strength. I knew that she was caring for me from heaven and with her arms around me I knew I could endure.

God chose to come as a little baby who was dependent on his mother. Mary's womb was the first tabernacle and her breasts were His first source of food for His precious body. It was Mary who taught Him how to walk and it was she who was there when He fell and needed a kiss on His boo boo. It was also the Blessed Mother who met Him on that painful road to Calvary. When He fell under the weight of the cross it was an encounter with His mother that encouraged Him as He pushed forward. And at the end of His life while He hung on a cross, Jesus led us to see the great power of His mother by giving her to us as our mother. Never forget how much you need your mother because she will certainly never forget you! The love I feel for my daughter is so intense that I can only imagine the love that the Blessed Mother must have for each of us her children.



-Robyn Gibson Mattson was a MI Teen leader in So. California. She and Eric welcomed their first child this year.

"In her womb the soul must be regenerated according to the form of Jesus Christ. She must nourish the soul with the milk of Her grace, caress and rear us in the manner in which She nourished and brought up Jesus. The soul must learn to know and to love Jesus at Her knees. Let us draw love for Him from Her heart. Yes, love Him with Her heart, and through love become like Him."

- St. Maximilian Kolbe