

Week 6: *Detachment*

Pray

Pray one decade of the Rosary, focusing on the mystery of the Nativity. Reenter the scene of the Nativity, this time focusing on the virtue of detachment, which can also be called poverty of spirit. At the end of the decade, ask to receive this spiritual gift.

Read

- Matt 5:3 – “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
- Matt 10:39 – “Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will find it.”
- John 9:39 – “I came into this world ... so that those who do not see might see, and those who do see might become blind.”
- St Faustina, Diary 751: “I desire nothing but You, O Love Eternal! It matters not along what paths you will lead me, paths of pain or paths of joy. ... It does not matter what the chalice holds for me. It is enough for me to know that it has been given to me by the loving hand of God.”

Reflect

Choose just one of the passages listed above (or perhaps an alternate passage about detachment with which you are familiar). If you are inclined to do so, look-up the passage and read it in context. Or if not, sit quietly with your passage and see if new meaning or inspiration comes from it. Reenter the scene of the Nativity. You can use *The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (attached) if needed, or enter into your own reflection. Look for and experience instances of detachment and spiritual poverty. Does the passage you chose give new light to your experience of the Nativity?

Enter into the Scene

1. From a worldly or outside perspective, there was probably nothing about Mary or Joseph that seemed prestigious or remarkable. From most people’s perspectives, they probably seemed very average (at best!). Why do you think they were chosen to be the parents of Jesus – the actual Mother and foster father of God? What does this have to do with detachment or poverty of spirit?
2. Abraham offered Isaac to God on the mountain of Moriah (Gen 22: 1-19); Moses’s mother placed him in a papyrus basket and floated him (and all Jewish people) to salvation (Ex 2: 1-10); and Hannah offered her only son Samuel to the Lord at the temple (1Sam. 1: 24-28). Do you see any parallels between these parents and Mary and Joseph? In what ways does Jesus’s birth invite Mary and Joseph into an ultimate display of detachment? Are parents called to imitate this sort of detachment in parenthood? How and in what ways?

Question

1. Why do you think detachment/poverty of spirit is associated with the mystery of the Visitation?
2. It seems that from our modern perspective, poverty of spirit is a very underappreciated and misunderstood virtue. If one took a random survey, asking neighbors, “Would you like to be poor in spirit?” I would guess that most people would answer with, “No.” Why is this? What do you think it means to be poor in spirit? Does one have to be monetarily poor to be poor in spirit? Do you know anyone who is both wealthy and poor in spirit? Why is this such an important virtue in our first-world, affluent, and modern context?
3. What is detachment? What/who are we called to be detached from? How is detachment different from apathy callousness? Are detachment and poverty of spirit the same thing?



Reflection: *The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

Your Mother remains at peace as hints and rumors of Her pregnancy circle. She has no reason to explain or defend Herself against the questioning looks of others. Her only desire is to please You; Her only purpose is to bear You to and for others. God the Father's plan for provision is not made known to Her, but Her trust is not dependent on circumstance. She reposes Herself within Your love and waits upon the Holy Spirit.

Joseph's initial reaction is both merciful and righteous. Moral law prohibits marriage in this situation; however, the law of charity within his heart prevents him from exposing Mary to shame or punishment. He finds a way to adhere to the law while protecting Your Mother, by planning to divorce Her in secret. By faith Mary remains fully immersed in Your presence, but this does not erase Her feelings of deep sorrow. She sees Joseph's distress and disappointment, and She carries his heavy burden in Her own heart.

I am reminded again of how dissimilar I am to Your Mother; I want to force my desired outcome with explanations of self-defense. But She is content to wait, and She calmly bids me to wait alongside Her. Mary is endlessly and joyfully submissive to You, to Her Heavenly Father, and to the Holy Spirit – Her Spiritual Spouse. Here, I find She is freely submissive to Her earthy spouse too. She waits for the Holy Spirit to guide Joseph and is happy to follow him rather than lead.

It is by Mary's docility and intercession that Joseph is able to hear Your plan spoken through angelic dream. With perfect obedience he accepts Your Mother in marriage and receives You as his foster Son. Without question Joseph believes all that You show him.

The timing of Your birth corresponds directly with the required census. I find myself wanting to intervene again. Why ought Your Mother to travel when She is so far along in Her pregnancy? Could the journey be dangerous for You and Her? But Joseph and Your Mother remain meek to this obligation. They see no dichotomy between God's will and human condition, and they do not do not crave comfort above affliction.

Your parents enter overcrowded Bethlehem. "No room," is their only greeting. I suddenly realize the deeper truth hidden in the innkeeper's refrain. There truly is no room for You here, not among busied and full people, all determined to be and do, all employed by agendas and pride. I take a moment to notice my own heart; I find myself as overfilled and preoccupied as Bethlehem. How I long to be more like the stable, uncontrived and simple, overlooked by others, open and waiting for You.

Your parents remain humble in trust, praising the Father's goodness when they receive their modest accommodations. Perhaps whatever preparations they made for Your arrival had to be left in Nazareth. It is with empty hands and open hearts that they enter the stable of Your birth. You are born into nothing, placing Yourself beneath rather than above.

You are born in perfect humility. The light from the night star unfolds above You, circling You in a halo of warmth and wonder. Though angelic choruses fill the December sky, Bethlehem is not quiet enough to hear. Though a large star rests itself above Your stable, only a few men from the east will focus their eyes to see.

Your mother wraps You in linens, kissing the palms of Your hands and the arches of Your feet before tucking each arm and leg into Your swaddling clothes. For a brief moment, I skip forward and see Your Mother receiving Your crucified body in a similar way. I see Her wrap You in linen grave clothes, binding You in Your humanity then as She does now, swaddling You in a love that You will not untie.

Infant Jesus laid in manger, make me as low and simple as You. Silence my heart that I can hear the angels' hymn; focus my eyes that I may see the light of Your star. Make me as lowly as the shepherds, that I may be your guest.

JOYFULLY PROCLAIMING, CELEBRATING, WITNESSING, AND SERVING *Together*