

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



In prayerful reading of the Gospels we quickly encounter Christ's loving dedication to the poor and those on the margins of society. His mission was to bring salvation to all of humanity, poor and rich alike. Yet, the poor, those who have nothing and no one to depend upon, were often the focus of Jesus' ministry, reminding us all that joy and security in life is found solely in God. It was the poor and outcast who often responded first and wholeheartedly to Jesus' ministry. They only had the Lord to count on because unlike so many others, God always cared. He was and is the faithful God.

In our walk of faith with the Lord, we are invited by God, our constant companion, to trust His faithfulness. In doing so, we need to examine what is necessary for life with God at our side. In reality, nothing but dependent faith in God's love is necessary for life's journey. This is what Jesus taught. It is the life He lived. This is the vow that Servites and all consecrated people profess. The vow of poverty is the promise to live life solely depending upon the faithfulness of God. Being empty of material things, habits and attitudes that keep one from totally depending on God is the work of living this vow. When we depend upon God, we have all that we need to witness the constancy and power of God's love. Our simple life of poverty is a prophetic call to the world that God and

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ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY

Vocation Newsletter



His love, not things, bring security and joy to our lives. In the history of the Servite Order many holy men and women have witnessed God's love through being poor and caring for the poor. One such person is Blessed James the Almsgiver whom we liturgically remember on January 15.

Blessed James was born in Città della Pieve, central Italy, about 1270, son of Anthony da Villa and Mostiola. A devout

young boy, he frequently attended services at the nearby Servite Church. There are indications that he studied both law and letters at Siena, gaining proficiency in both.

Even at that time he became concerned about the poor and the sick; he spared no sacrifice in defense of orphans, widows and the needy. Later, so as to fulfill better the commandment of the Lord, he gave all his possessions to the poor and dedicated himself completely to the care of the sick. As an example of his great love, the author of an early life of Blessed James did not hesitate to apply to him what we find in many other lives of the saints: during Mass one day James was struck by the words of the Lord: "If anyone comes to me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters, indeed his very self, he cannot be my follower. In the same way, none of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possessions". James felt that these words were addressed to him, and so he left all and dedicated himself to the service of God and his neighbor. This description, though a commonplace in the



lives of the saints, nevertheless testifies to his reputation for holiness.

He restored a church and hospice which had fallen into disrepair, and there he received the poor of the town. He fed them, treated their wounds, and cared for their needs. When a powerful man of Chiusi usurped the possessions of the hospice, James defended the rights of the poor at the Roman Curia and won his case. The usurper then invited James to come to Chiusi on the presence of desiring to resolve their differences. This avaricious man then arranged to have assassins attack and kill James on his way back to Città della Pieve. Thus James, defender of the poor and oppressed, died in 1304, giving a witness of justice and love with his own blood.

Some letters, documents and old paintings of Blessed James seem to indicate that he was not only a Servite tertiary, but that he was also a member of the Franciscan Third Order and an Oblate of the Hospice of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena. At that time it was not unusual for an individual to belong to several such groups.

In 1806 the Sacred Congregation of Rites approved the cult of Blessed James and in 1846 Pope Pius IX permitted the Servite Order to celebrate a Mass and Office in his honor.

In your discernment, how are you being invited by God to become poor for Him? The vow of poverty is God's invitation to live dependent upon Him. Our Servite

Reflection Questions:

1. How does the Servite definition of poverty assist you in discerning the call to the consecrated life? What do I find enticing about living poverty? What are my challenges to living poverty?
2. What ideas, habits and thoughts about the consecrated life do I need to give up to better discern the Lord's call in my life?

Vocation Director

Fr Donald Siple, OSM
donaldsiple@servitesusa.org

follow



tradition has always defined poverty, not as the absence of material goods, but as engaging in our daily work with joy, the common sharing of goods, and undertaking a simple lifestyle. All that we have and receive is given to the Lord through the community, to be shared by all. Poverty brings joy to life. As a faithful God, He never leaves us alone or in need. As you continue your discernment, ask yourself what is really necessary for a good, and joyful life? What might you need to give up to follow and serve the Lord more deeply? Know that we Servites are praying for you. God bless.

Called to Serve, #73

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