

8. Spirituality of Poverty 2

“Whenever You Did It for the Least Important, You Did It for Me”

“ I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me.’ The righteous will then answer him, ‘When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison, and visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘ I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me (Matthew 25: 35-40)! ’ ”

Grandfather Bae Dong-Soon (Peter)

Grandfather Bae Dong-Soon (Peter) lives in the House of Love at Kkottongnae. He experienced a poor and difficult childhood because he was disabled with cerebral palsy. For various reasons he left home and lived as a beggar until he came into Kkottongnae.

While his family members could not carry out the responsibilities of taking care of the sick little boy when he was young, Peter later helped his family when they were suffering from financial difficulty with the money he

had collected as a beggar. However, he never bore any resentment toward the world, nor hated his family, despite not getting any education, or money or health. Rather, he was so religious that he never stopped praying. And there was never a day when he missed a mass when he was living in a boiler room of Myeongdong Catholic Cathedral where he had lived for 28 years. Finally he had to leave the place at Myeongdong Cathedral when it was being renovated for the Pope’s visit and after that he came to Kkottongnae and so far he has lived here for 20 years.

Grandfather Peter gets up at 3 am every morning to pray the divine office and join in the Daily Mass no matter how sick he is or how many difficulties he has. Visitors often come to see old grandfather Peter to ask for religious advice or for his prayers. Whenever they do this he always prays for them with all his heart and God answers his prayers. Grandfather Peter, who lives no less a spiritual life than the religious, **often likens Kkottongnae to ‘a big treasure box of heaven’ and the forsaken to ‘a lump of gold.’** He says that only those who are open-eyed with love can immediately recognize these treasures (Please refer to Kkottongnae Bulletin No.8).



Cardinal Kim Soo-Hwan and Granpa Bae Dong-Soon, Peter

The VIP of Kkottongnae

In the worldly life, the rich are often treated well while the poor are despised.

There is an old tale that somebody treated a traveler in shabby clothes with heartwarming hospitality, and later he was found to be a noble person and he brought a great luck to the person who provided him hospitality. Worldly people often look away from or give unkind treatment to the least, unhelpful, or those people that are useless to them. For people become blind because of the greed of possessing and ruling, they cannot see the pain of their neighbors in need. They are not aware that the people in poor and shabby clothes are the real people of value who are being served by the angels of God. If in their lives they could have been aware that those who were forsaken and not having any place to go were the noble, and if they could have realized that God lived in them and what they had done to them was what they had done to God, then surely they should have scrambled to take care of the poor wholeheartedly.

It is those sick and forsaken brothers and sisters who have not been recognized properly and who were looked away from are the most precious VIPs at Kkottongnae.

The Poor Beggar Who Was Saved from Under the Cheongju Bridge

One day Kkottongnae got a report that a patient was dying under a bridge near Cheongju.

The Kkottongnae paramedics who traveled by ambulance found a beggar, who had suffered a second-degree burn on his leg but by not having received proper treatment, was

dying under the bridge. The beggar was an alcoholic. He had got his severe burn when, being drunk, he spilt boiling water while he was warming food. However, since he had not been brought to a hospital he had only bound his burnt leg with a dirty cloth. By now he was dying, suffering both from pain and high fever.

We had to go through a hard time bringing him into the hospital and treating him. His whole body was in a bad condition having ascites owing to liver cirrhosis as a result of his alcoholism. We did our best to treat him using high-cost medicine, such as Albumin. Far from expressing thanks for his treatment, the patient was difficult and gave hard time to the nurses and voluntary helpers by frequently complaining and using rough words. He sometimes turned over a food tray or called a helper all sorts of names and shook his fist when the helper removed his urine from the urinal drain.

Having passed the major crisis, the patient had been sent to and treated at a big hospital where he made a full recovery. One day when he was living at a nursing home after he was discharged from the hospital, he visited the nurse station of Kkottongnae Hospital and danced a spirited dance singing "Thank you so much for bringing my life back."

My Favor will Shine on You like the Morning Sun

People often lament their difficult and dark lives of living a miserable life and they sigh over the dark world. They live a life of resenting the world instead of reflecting on their own attitudes and conduct. God has presented



Kkottongnae families and sisters at the Ingok Jae hospital in Kkottongnae.

us a guide to the right direction toward achieving a happy life in a world of darkness where people are wandering around and losing their way, where we can be a bright light for ourselves and neighbors:

“The kind of fasting I want is this: Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives. Then my favor will shine on you like the morning sun (Isaiah 58: 6-8).”

The only way for us to be happy is by practicing love in serving the least important people. Whether these people are sick parents, physically or mentally disabled children,

insane people or even wandering spouses who have suffered financial failure, we should not look down on them or forsake them. Taking care of ‘strangers, the sick, and prisoners’ with all our heart is the way for all of us to achieve happiness following the will of God.

“Whenever you did it for the least important, you did it for me.”

Kkottongnae families, brothers and sisters at the House of Salvation (Sanatorium for the elderly) in Kkottongnae





The sisters of the Congregation of Kkottongnae Sisters of Jesus on their way to search for those who might be hungry, homeless and dying on street.



Praying for a dying patient