

The Spirituality of Poverty 3

You Have to Live a Poorer Life Than the Poor if You Want to Take Care of Them

“Take nothing with you for the trip: no walking stick, no beggar’s bag, no food, no money, not even an extra shirt (Luke 9: 3).” Why did Jesus ask his twelve disciples not to carry anything but their body when he dispatched them into the world? It is to emphasize the faith in God that they have to keep absolutely depending on God’s favor. Moreover, He wanted to present that only poor people can truly deliver the good news. The disciples, who lived a truly poor life, proclaimed good news and healed patients traveling around many villages.

Poor People Can Love Neighbors as Well

It seems that the rich would help the poor more, but there are more cases of where the poor help the poor.

We cannot forget the people who led a young prostitute dying of uterine cancer to Kkottongnae long time ago. They were those who were running a bar hiring barmaids but who were being scorned by people. They took care of a barmaid paying a lot of medical expenses by themselves after it was found that one of their barmaids had got cancer. As the cancer spread through the whole body of the woman they ran out of money, and so they

came to Kkottongnae with her and in tears they made a plea to us to help the poor prostitute.

We were deeply stirred by seeing their love. In this world where even a professor forsakes his sick old mother and put her into Kkottongnae, the humble barkeepers were helping a whore with no relation by emptying their purse. Not just those who are rich, who are educated, or who have power and fame practice love. We realized that it is rather difficult for the rich to practice true love, while the poor strive to share the pain of their neighbors and help them more.

A Person Who Won’t Buy Even a Cigarette for Himself

Father Oh Woong-Jin, the founder of Kkottongnae, **emphasizes the spirituality of poverty saying that it is inappropriate for those who are serving for the poor to smoke. We can serve truly when we are ready to use the money that we have saved without spending on cigarettes for the poor.** The common people might question if we have to go that far. However, a thoroughly miserly person to him/herself by not even buying a drink, can save money for helping poor neighbors; can



Fr. Oh Woong-Jin with Kkottongnae family member

deliver true love to the people in difficulty.

Kkottongnae spirituality, which emphasizes thorough poverty, does not allow any dowry from a new religious entering the convent. In case a religious leaves the convent, the person goes back out without anything in the same way as he/she entered.

St. Louis

St. Louis, one of the famous Catholic saints, was a good and wise king. He owned power and wealth, but he used them not for himself but for his people. Especially he truly loved poor people.

Everyday he brought three poor and sick people to his home and shared food with them. It was said that the king served food for those humble people by himself. He even happily ate or drank the leftovers, which the sick people had left. The saint owned the most power and wealth, but he lived a poorer life than the poor by serving them by himself.

On the other hand, grandfather Choi Gui-Dong who was the very originator of Kkottongnae was a sick person with high blood pressure, frostbite, and poor mental health.

He was only a beggar with mere power of begging. The life of grandfather Gui-Dong who took care of dying beggars for 40 years with mere power of begging is a living testimony that shows that not being wealthy and healthy is not a hindrance for loving the poor. Grandfather Gui-Dong is the person who revealed through his own life that poor people could better help the poor.

The Poor Life of the Founder, Father Oh Woong-Jin

Father Oh Woong-Jin who founded Kkottongnae was born at a poor farm house, went through poor life from his childhood, studied at a theological school and became a Catholic priest. About 30 years ago when Father Oh started Kkottongnae, he was a poor priest at a country church. He brought beggars and the seriously ill into the parsonage, let them sleep in his bed, gave them a bath by himself, treated their wounds from bedsores himself, and ate with them at a same table.

One day a parish priest visited Father Oh and they happened to eat lunch together. Then, a patient with a deformed figure in rags came in to sit at the dining table and fed himself dribbling. Looking at the person, the guest priest could hardly have lunch, but Father Oh savored the food the beggar patient was eating without any hesitation. The guest priest finished lunch and confidently realized that Father Oh truly loves the poor and he would always be dependable when working for the forsaken and sick.

Since then whenever others have worried about or said things against Kkottongnae, the priest has been an advocate and supporter of Father Oh Woong-Jin, by recollecting what Father Oh had done to a patient at a dining table.

Father Oh has lived a thorough poor life himself, never buying a cigarette or a drink for himself, and even a pair of socks and underwear. Yet, he has practiced true love for the poor who do not have anybody or any place to depend on and do not even have power to beg.

That is how he can confidently preach spiritual sayings from his experience.

“You have to live a poorer life than the poor if you want to take care of them.”

Sisters cultivating the soil share jokes in joy.

