

SCRUTINIUM PAUPERTATIS

Introductory Notes for the Rector / Leader

Purpose of Scritinium Paupertatis is

1. to promote prophetic austerity in our personal style of life and
2. to promote openness and accountability our community use of money and means

Personal Poverty is an experience of the Prophetic Austerity of the Beatitudes and an expression of the 'freedom of heart' one has in following the Poor Christ.

Communal Poverty is an experience of sharing and in solidarity, as work and temperance, austerity and openness in the use of money and as prudent administration

Suggested Process

Set aside at least an hour;

Have copies of the Scrutiny made for all the participants (at least the handout on pg 5)

Pray the Vespers and in the place of Scripture Reading have the Scrutiny

A. Read – from Scriptures

B. Reflect – Listening to the Salesian Constitutions, GC27

and silently pondering especially on 'Poverty as personal following of Christ'

C. Respond – by common sharing especially on 'Poverty as Communal following of Christ'

D. Resolve – Prayerfully asking: *What is the Lord asking me / us to do?*

E. Receive – the grace of poverty by praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy

(If it is done within the vespers, pray it in the place of intercession)

SCRUTINY ON POVERTY

A. READ

Scripture Reading from the Gospel of Mathew

Jesus said "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? "And why do you worry about clothes?"

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Mt 6, 19-34)...

'If you would be perfect, go, sell everything you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.' (Mt 19, 21)

Silent Pause

B. REFLECT

1. from the Salesian Constitution on Our Poverty (Art 72-79, 18.26)

Gospel significance of our poverty : We are aware of the generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ: though he was rich he made himself poor so that through his poverty we might become rich. We choose to follow “the Saviour who was born in poverty, lived deprived of everything and died stripped on the cross”.

Poverty and the Salesian mission: Don Bosco lived his poverty in detachment of heart and generous service of others; his manner was marked by austerity, hard work and much initiative.

Following his example we too live detached from all earthly goods; we participate with a spirit of enterprise in the mission of the Church and in her struggle for justice and peace, especially by educating those in need.

The witness of our poverty, lived in a common sharing of our goods, helps the young to overcome their selfish possessive instinct and opens them to the Christian sense of sharing.

Each one of us bears prime responsibility for his own poverty, daily living out by the frugality of his life the detachment he has promised. He accepts his dependence on the superior and community in the use of temporal goods, but he knows too that permission does not dispense him from being poor in spirit and in fact.

He is careful not to give way gradually to a desire for a comfortable and easy life, which poses a direct threat to fidelity and to apostolic generosity. When his state of poverty causes him some inconvenience or suffering, he is glad to be able to share in the blessings promised by the Lord to the poor in spirit.

Unremitting and self-sacrificing work is a characteristic left us by Don Bosco, and is a concrete expression of our poverty. "Work and temperance will make the Congregation flourish", whereas the seeking of an easy and comfortable life will instead bring about its death.

Temperance gives him the strength to control his heart, to master himself and remain even-tempered. He does not look for unusual penances but accepts the daily demands and renunciations of the apostolic life. He is ready to suffer cold and heat, hunger and thirst, weariness and disdain whenever God's glory and the salvation of souls require it.

Every community is sensitive to the conditions of its neighbourhood and bears witness to its poverty by a simple and frugal way of life in unpretentious dwellings. Our choice of works and of their location is made in response to the needs of those in want; the criterion for our buildings is that they be simple and functional.

In seeking and accepting help for the service of the needy, we imitate Don Bosco in his zeal and gratitude, and like him we retain the freedom the Gospel gives us. ***“Remember well,” he tells us, “that what we have is not ours; it belongs to the poor; woe to us if we do not use it well.”***

2. Further Reflections from GC 27: Witnesses to the Radical Approach of the Gospel - “Work and Temperance” (Art 9. 19-22)

We want to be a **Congregation of the poor for the poor**. Like Don Bosco we maintain that this is our way of living the Gospel in a radical way and being more available and relevant to the needs of the young, bringing about in our life a genuine exodus towards the most needy. **Migrants, refugees and unemployed youth** put a question to us as Salesians in all parts of the world: they invite us to find ways of collaborating and spur us on to concrete responses and a change to ways of thinking that are more open, supportive and courageous.

*To be SERVANTS of the young we need to move from a ministry of preservation to an **outgoing ministry** that starts with the deepest needs of the poorest young people from a family and social perspective. To bring about these processes we commit ourselves to:*

- a) Promoting a profound **evaluation of our significance for and presence among poorer youth** in our works and a shift towards new poverties.

- b) Promoting and defending **human rights and the rights of minors** through the innovative approach of the Preventive System, paying particular attention to child labour, the sex trade, drug dependency and all forms of exploitation, unemployment, youth migration and human trafficking.
- c) Sensitising communities and the young to respect for creation, educating them to **ecological responsibility** through concrete activities which safeguard the environment and sustainable development.
- d) Living the twofold *work and temperance*, seeing to a **visibly poor lifestyle**, eliminating waste and making ourselves available for domestic and community services.
- e) Practising **real solidarity** with those who find themselves in need, with the poor and amongst Salesian houses.
- f) Putting procedures in place, including *auditing*, which guarantee **transparency and professionalism in management** of goods and works.
- g) Carrying out a careful evaluation of the **building structures in the Congregation**, so that they are a clear and credible sign of our radical Gospel approach.

A. SILENT REFLECTION:

What are three points that touched my heart today as I listened to these readings?

Silently reflect on **Poverty as personal following of Christ: As an individual**

1. Christ is my model. At the present situation of my life, as a Servant of the young, what does Christ's poverty mean to me?
2. In what practical ways has the gospel beatitudes of poverty influenced my attitudes, my daily choices and my style of life, especially with regard to use and acquisition of goods/modern gadgets? Am I able to detach myself from things, even necessary things, and be happy with minimum necessities?
3. Christ lived "free" from material attachments. Is my lifestyle visibly poor? What are the areas of my life in which I still need to detach myself?
4. Do I discern and assess my daily progress in following the way of interior liberation in a serene acceptance of suffering and of the cross?
5. Am I available for domestic and community services, placing at the disposal of the community the "things" (my time, talent and abilities) that I possess?
6. Am I quite content to depend on others, to give an honest account, considering these to be practical expressions of poverty as genuine steps towards freedom?

C. RESPONSE (common sharing)

Poverty as Communal following of Christ: At Community Level

1. Can we say that our community is austere in life style, buildings and furnishings? Is our community structure and life style in keeping with the culture of the place or do we come across as executives and elitist? What more can we do as a community.
2. Is money spent judiciously or are there often unnecessary and unjustified expenses?
3. What are the ways by which we can be more transparent in the use of money and accounts?
4. As a community, what ways can we be more prudent, honest and professional in the day-to-day administration of goods and thus avoid hasty decisions and wastes.
5. Can we say that the standard of our community with regard to poverty bring us closer to the poor for whom we work? What are the areas where we can improve?
6. Is the community sensitive to the needs of the neighborhood? Does it serve their needs? Is our campus available to them?
7. What concrete measures can we take to make our apostolate still more for the poor?

8. Do we work hard? Under the guise of delegation do we neglect our commitment towards the fulfillment of our responsibilities? Are we accountable for our particular responsibility or do we leave it in the hands of collaborators and hold them responsible for it?
9. “You shall not defraud your neighbour; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a labourer until morning (Lev. 19, 13). Do we pay just living wages?
10. Is the community’s or social and ecological responsibilities reflected in the style of its administration and administrative structures? In what way?

D. Resolve – Prayerfully asking: *What is the Lord asking me / us to do?*

E. Receive – the grace of poverty by praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy

Prepared by Fr. James Mathew SDB (INC)

(Handout on next page)

SCRUTINIUM PAUPERTATIS

(Handout)

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2. to promote openness and accountability our community use of money and means

A. Readings (from Scripture, Constitutions and GC27)

B. Reflection in Silence

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Silently reflect on '*Poverty as personal following of Christ*'.

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