

“How blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”  
(St. Matt 5:3)

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The greatest virtue in Christian life is love. It is the poverty in spirit that leads us to love. Hence the supreme importance of the poverty in spirit.

### I. What is poverty in spirit?

Two things are implied in this: 1) The awareness that we lack so many spiritual qualities 2) The conviction that all that we possess, are the free gifts of God “Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (St. James 1:17) says St. James. St. Paul says “the God, who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by man nor is he served by human hands, as though he needeth anything, since he himself gives to all men, life and death and everything...In him we live, move and have our being” (Acts 17:24-28). “What have you that you did not receive?” (I Cor 4:7) Even the desire to do good, comes from God. “God is at work in you, both to will and work, for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13)

Apart from God, we are nothing, we have nothing, and we can do nothing.  
With God we are everything, we have everything and we can do everything.

## II. Some examples for poverty in spirit

### 1) King David

David believed that it was God who saved him from wild animals and enemies. He considered himself as nothing and God as everything. That is the reason why he did not kill King Saul who was searching for David to kill him. David had a very good opportunity to kill Saul. But he considered Saul as the anointed one of God and spared his life. Since he considered himself as just an ordinary man before God, he danced before the Ark of the Covenant. On account of the deep piety that came from the poverty in spirit, he desired to build a beautiful temple for the Lord. After offering plenty of gold, silver and precious wood, he prayed as follows expressing his humanity “Thine O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from thee and thou rulest over all. In thy hand are power and might, and in thy hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank thee, O God, and praise thy glorious name” (1 Chron. 29:11-14)

## 2) St. Mary, Mother of God

Elizabeth mother of John the Baptist was in the highest position. She praised St. Mary who was in the lowest position. Elizabeth was the wife of a priest. She was well known for her piety (St. Luke 1:6) and she was pretty old. Thus she had the highest position in society. On the other hand, Mary was the poorest among the poor. When infant Jesus was taken to the Jerusalem temple, she was not able to offer a lamb. She had to offer two doves instead (St. Luke 2:22-24). She was young too. Thus she had no position in the society. Elizabeth praised Mary saying "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb; and why is this granted me, that the mother of the Lord should come to me?" (St. Luke 1:42-43) Anyone would become proud if that person hears these words of praise. But Mary humbled herself and praised God saying "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior; for he has regarded the low estate of his hand-maiden (slave) (St. Luke 1:46-48). The poverty in spirit of Mary helped her to remember herself to God's will saying "Behold I and the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me, according to your word" (St. Luke 1:38).

### 3) St. John the Baptist

When multitudes came to John for baptism, a commission of people came to him and asked him, whether he was the Christ. He clearly said “No”. He was asked whether he was Elijah. “No” he said. They asked “are you the prophet?” He said “No”. He said “I am the voice of the one crying in the wilderness ‘make straight the way of the Lord, as the prophet Isaiah said.” (St. John 1:23) Do we have this humility when God helps us to do great things?

### 4) St. Peter the Apostle

St. Peter healed the man born cripple and people were wonderstruck. Then Peter said in humility “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this or why do you stare at this, as though by our own power or piety, we had made him walk? The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name, by faith in his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know, and the faith which is

through Jesus has given the man, the perfect health in the presence of you all.”

(Acts 3:12-16) Do we have this humility?

5) St. Paul the Apostle

St. Paul says, “But by the grace of God I am what I am and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me.” (1 Cor. 15:10) Do we have this humility?

### III. The Fruits that come from poverty in spirit

We will be able to respect even those of a lower standard when we realize that all capacities and abilities are coming from God.

- 1) We will be able to help the needy when we understand that all the blessing of God are given for the common good of mankind.
- 2) We will not become jealous when we understand that it is God that gives big and small talents at His discretion, so that people can help each other.
- 3) We will not become proud of our achievements when we realize that they are achieved through the grace of God.

- 4) We will be thankful to God and we will love Him, when we understand that all the blessings are given in our unworthiness. Then we will also obey Him and live for His glory.
- 5) We will not ridicule and blame people when we understand that such people are less blessed by God.
- 6) We will work hard depending on God's grace when we realize that apart from God we cannot do anything.

There is no limit to the blessedness of those having poverty in spirit. That is the reason why the new version is "How blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Do we give first and foremost importance to poverty in spirit in our day to day lives?