

Charles de Foucauld

1) Imitation of Jesus Christ

Resolution: imitating Jesus

To live my vocation means for me to imitate the hidden life of Jesus, a life of humility, of poverty, of labour, of obscurity, of withdrawal, of submission, of prayer, of penitence, to be the least of men, a worm and not a man, despised by people and disgraced in the eyes of men: the lower I will descend in the eyes of the world, the closer I will be to Jesus, living in total poverty.

Imitation in the present

So stay entirely in the present moment. Live at Nazareth as if you will never leave this place, nor the life you live here: live in the blessing and gratitude that Jesus, in his ineffable tenderness and in the inexpressable kindness of his Heart condescended to grant you a life that is so marvellously in tune with His; mind that you won't desire anything else, that would be ungrateful and crazy, that would be neither to acknowledge nor to understand what an incomparable present he has given you in allowing you to share so perfectly His life, that would be proving that in having given you that present, he had thrown the pearl before the swine. Watch that you don't want to get out of your present way of life. Rather, live it with jubilation, blessing it, and see to it that you maintain that life so that it resembles His in all exterior aspects. And make it no less similar to His in your interior dispositions, in working ceaselessly at resembling the Divine Model: in all your thoughts, in your words and in your actions.

Don't change anything external about the life that you are now living; you can't change anything without it thereby losing its resemblance to Him. Perfect yourself constantly within...

Three degrees of poverty

One can be poor in two ways: 1° poor in earthly goods, 2° poor in spirit, that is to say empty of all desires, loves, attachments of all that is not God...

1° To be poor regarding earthly goods is a good thing; it is the first degree on the path of perfection, the first condition for becoming perfect. It is bearing a resemblance to Him who chose always, always to be poor: "The Son of Man has not even a stone on which to rest his head."

2° The second kind of poverty, the poverty of the spirit, the detachment of the soul empty of all that is not God, is incomparably more perfect than the first. It is the second degree of perfection which leads directly to the third and last, which is the union of Love with God.... How good you are, my God, to make perfection consist of things so simple, so simple so that absolutely anyone can practise them.

The means

The means which Jesus used lying in the manger, living at Nazareth, on the Cross are: poverty, humiliation, abandonment, renunciation, persecution, suffering. These are our weapons. Let us follow that unique example and we can be sure to accomplish a

lot of good, for it is no longer we who live, but He who lives in us; our actions are no longer our actions - human and miserable, but His, divinely efficacious.

2) The love for God and the adoration of the Eucharist

So near to me

You are, My Lord Jesus, in the Holy Eucharist!
You are there, one metre away from me, in this Tabernacle!
Your body, your soul, your humanity, your divinity,
your entire being is there, in its double nature!
How close you are, my God! My Saviour!
My Jesus, my Brother, my Spouse, my Beloved!

You weren't any closer to the Holy Virgin,
during the nine months when she carried you in her womb
than you are to me
when you come onto my tongue in Holy Communion!

You weren't any closer to the Holy Virgin and Saint Joseph
in the stable at Bethlehem,
in the house at Nazareth, during the flight to Egypt,
during all those moments of the divine family life
than you are to me at this moment
and so, so, often in this tabernacle!

Saint Mary Magdala wasn't any closer to you,
sitting at your feet at Bethanie,
than I am here at the foot of the altar!

You weren't any closer to your apostles
when you were among them
than you are close to me now, My God!
How happy I am!

More than 15 hours with You..

How sweet it is to arrive here at 4.30 in the morning, telling myself: still four hours that I can spend before the altar, with nothing else to do but to gaze upon God; and then at 10.30 am: how lovely it is to say to myself: I have one hour and a quarter that I can spend before the altar, to look at you, Lord. Then at 3 o'clock: half an hour to rest while looking at You. Then at 5 o'clock how deeply moving, the end of the working day having arrived, to spend time at your feet with the thought that until tomorrow morning there is nothing to do but to stay close to you wherever I am..... Oh what sweetness of sweetnesses, my God: more than 15 hours without anything else to do but to look at you and to tell you that I love you! O Happiness! Oh how good it is to be there hidden in the secret of your face...

A kind of little hermitage

... a kind of little hermitage, where a few poor monks could live on some fruit and a bit of barley harvested with their own hands, not going out, not preaching, but giving hospitality to all who come, good or bad, friend or enemy, Muslim or Christian... It's evangelization not by words but by the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament, the offering of the Divine Sacrifice, prayer, penance, practice of the evangelical virtues, charity - a universal charity, shared down to the last mouthful of bread, receiving each human being as a beloved brother or sister.

3) Brotherly love and the power of intercession

Mt 25:35-45 As you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine

“For I was in need of food, and you gave it to me: I was in need of drink, and you gave it to me: I was wandering, and you took me in; I had no clothing, and you gave it to me: when I was ill, or in prison, you came to me. Then will the upright make answer to him, saying, Lord, when did we see you in need of food, and give it to you? or in need of drink, and give it to you? And when did we see you wandering, and take you in? or without clothing, and give it to you? And when did we see you ill, or in prison, and come to you? And the King will make answer and say to them, Truly I say to you, Because you did it to the least of these my brothers, you did it to me. Then will he say to those on the left, Go from me, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire which is ready for the Evil One and his angels: For I was in need of food, and you gave it not to me; I was in need of drink, and you gave it not to me: I was wandering, and you took me not in; without clothing, and you gave me no clothing; ill, and in prison, and you came not to me. Then will they make answer, saying, Lord, when did we see you in need of food or drink, or wandering, or without clothing, or ill, or in prison, and did not take care of you? Then will he make answer to them, saying, Truly I say to you, Because you did it not to the least of these, you did it not to me.”

Bl. Brother Charles said towards the end of his life: “I believe there isn't a statement in the Gospels that has had as profound an impact on me and has transformed my life as the words, “What you did to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me”

How such a faith must change our lives! Into what degree of charity that faith should plunge us!...It is not said, “all the good we are refusing to do, no, rather all good we could do but are neglecting to do..” How all those who are indifferent to the temporal and spiritual needs of their neighbour are condemned by these words, it's frightening to think of it!

Mt 18:14. Similarly, it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little one should be lost.

“The Good Shepherd.... Our Lord has come to look for those who are lost. He will leave the 99 sheep to look for the one that is lost. Let us do as He did: let us run with

our prayers in search of sinners: We should pray for the conversion of sinners because prayer is about the only powerful means we have to do them good, to help our Spouse in His work, to save his children, to pull those whom he loves passionately away from mortal danger. He has commanded us to love them how He Himself loves them....

Mt 18:19. I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven.

If we have something to ask of God, let us look for the maximum number of souls possible to do so. Let us meet together in the largest possible numbers, in one or several groups, and to pray - aloud or in silence - at the same time for the same thing: Jesus will be in the midst of us and God will surely grant our prayers.”

Mt 18:20. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them

Let us follow the example our Lord gave us: Apart from his 40 days in the desert, He was always surrounded either by his holy parents or later his disciples.... Our study, our prayers, our work, let us always do it together. Let us enjoy talking with our brothers, amongst them, of Him who is always amongst us. May we spend our lives in the company of our brothers so that we are always in the company of Him who said that where several were united in His Name, there He would be amongst them. Let us reserve solitude, the secret prayer of the face-to-face with God, for the hours of the night, and only those. For the rest of the day, let us spend the hours in the company of our brothers, at the example of our Lord, and in so doing invite Him so that we may enjoy the infinite happiness of his Presence, invisible but absolutely certain, amongst us.

Brotherly love

Brother Charles said shortly before his death, “Fraternal love of all human beings... to see a child of the Heavenly Father in each person: to be charitable, humble, courageous with all; praying for all, for all human beings, to offer one’s sufferings for all.”

Universal brother

He wrote in a letter to a friend, “I would like to have all the inhabitants: Christian, Muslims, Jews and Idolaters, look upon me as their brother, their universal brother.”

4) The discovery of other cultures and the presence among others

Resolution during a retreat:

To do my utmost for the salvation of the infidels of these countries in a complete forgetting of myself. By what means? By the Presence of the Blessed and Holy Sacrament, the Holy Sacrifice, prayer, penitence, through good example, charity, through personal sanctification - using all those means myself, and doing my utmost so that others do the same in the midst of the infidels, and others too who cannot be here amongst them.

He wrote on the Feast day of the Holy Name: "That Your Name be sanctified. That Your Kingdom come. That Your Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. In me and in all, always, o Jesus. I add to my plans for the end of my retreat (29.11.1905) the following: to visit each year the inhabited villages of the Hoggar (mountainous region in the central Sahara where Brother Charles lived), accept the invitations of trips in the Salara if they could be useful; and if possible, to spend each year some days in the tents of the Touareg people.

In 1913 to Commander Meynier, who was taking command of the Oases:

"I hope to do much good for the populations placed under your authority, to help them progress in every way, to draw them closer to us so that those who are now our subjects might one day become our brothers."

In a letter to another French officer in 1912, he warned:

"if we forget the love of neighbour commanded by God, our common Father, and the 'Fraternity' written all over our walls, and we treat these people not as children but as raw material for exploitation, the unity we have established among them will backfire on us, and they'll throw us into the sea at the first sign of difficulties in Europe."

Military humanism

He was at home with the "military humanism" espoused by certain officers, and he accepted being the religious arm which permitted them to strengthen the French presence; but he could see its limits, noting in 1904 (with the vocabulary of the time): "I'm afraid that this great colonial empire, conquered a few years ago, which could and should give birth to so much good - moral good, true good - is presently nothing but a cause for shame for us. It gives us reason to blush even in front of the savages. It causes the name 'French' to be cursed, and alas the name 'Christian', and it renders these populations, already so miserably poor, poorer still. Will the locals be able to distinguish between soldiers and priests, to see in us servants of God, ministers of peace and charity, universal brothers? I'm not sure..."

Dictionary Touareg - French p1242

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