

What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

Simply put, to be poor in spirit is to be humble. The one who is poor in spirit depends completely on God, saying, “Nothing that I have is my own; everything I have comes from Him. He has gifted me all of my material goods, all of my good traits, all of my virtues.” To be poor in spirit is to accept the reality that, without God, I am completely helpless. Yet it is my helplessness that draws the Heart of the God to me, for “when I am weak, then I am strong.”¹ When I recognize my weakness, I recognize my need for a Savior and call upon the Lord. His glory shines brightest through my cracks. The one who is poor in spirit delights whenever she encounters her weakness or littleness because she sees it as a place to encounter God and as a reminder that she can do nothing apart from Him.

How was Jesus poor in spirit?

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”² Therefore, we can look to any moment of His life and find His poverty of spirit, from the nine months He spent inside Mary’s womb, totally dependent on her, to the Resurrection, when He was raised by the Father through the Holy Spirit. St. Francis of Assisi encouraged all to contemplate the poverty of the Nativity; there we see Christ, the Son of God, born to poor parents in a barn and laid to rest in a feeding trough. During His years of public ministry, He wandered from town to town and had “nowhere to lay his head.”³ He insisted that “the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his Father doing,”⁴ displayed most radically on the night before His death in His prayer, “Not my will, but yours be done.”⁵ In the Eucharist, Jesus lowers Himself into the appearance of bread and risks going unnoticed, unloved, doubted, and desecrated just so He can be close to us. Look to Him to learn how to depend on the Father and count nothing as your own.

How can I be poor in spirit?

The foundation of humility is radical trust in the Father’s loving care. You must trust that the Father will provide for all of your needs. Anytime you find yourself worrying, simply pray, “Jesus I trust in You,” for He has told us not to worry.⁶

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI says the poor in spirit “come with empty hands; not with hands that grasp and clutch, but with hands that open and give and thus are ready to receive from God’s bountiful goodness.”⁷ Where are you grasping and clutching? Where are you being called to let go of your sense of control and allow the Father to work? Where do you depend on yourself instead of on Him?

Ultimately, you must realize that “possession is all about service.”⁸ All you have has been given to you so that you can give it away to others, thus modeling the radical generosity that the Father shows you.

In Christ, Aurelia Vaiana

¹ 2 Corinthians 12:10

² Hebrews 13:8

³ Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58

⁴ John 5:19

⁵ Luke 22:42

⁶ Matthew 6:25-34, Matthew 10:29-31

⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* p. 76

⁸ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* p. 77