



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

11 February 2019, 3:58 PM

Summary reflection 3: understanding poverty, chastity and obedience

The following is a summary reflection of the third talk given by Father Raniero Cantalamessa to the US bishops during their 2019 retreat:

We begin by wanting to be with Jesus, and to be taught and formed by him, and then to imitate his example.

One example to imitate is Jesus' poverty, chastity, and obedience. These are traditionally called evangelical counsels; they are invitations, not commandments.

A lot of people think that only religious live by these counsels, but some lay people make private vows to live by them, and priests make promises at ordination to do so.

But all the baptized are invited by Jesus to imitate his poverty, chastity, and obedience. So, there has to be an understanding of them that applies to all, even to married folk.

In this regard, I offer an opinion that poverty is about living a shared life, like Jesus and the apostles who lived out of a common purse (*Luke 8:1-3*), not about being poor.

And chastity is about the gift of self to another, not necessarily about forsaking marriage and sex, unless you are a dedicated single person, a religious, or a priest. So, even spouses imitate Jesus' chastity when they give themselves to each other.

And obedience is not about doing what someone in authority tells you, but involves rather a shift from me to thee, with a readiness to serve, no matter who, whether the other is deserving, asks nicely, is aware of the cost, or is grateful.

In this particular talk, Father Cantalamessa focused on chastity, and particularly on the commitment to celibate chastity made by those to be ordained priest.

Priests give themselves to God and to the people they are sent to serve, forsaking marriage and the use of sexuality for the sake of the Reign of God (*Matthew 19:12*).

Celibate chastity is a broader love of all, compared to the deeper love of spouses. And it allows for a more varied, expansive service of all people, anywhere, compared to the reserved service of spouses for each other and their children.

Indeed, the broader love, and more varied and expansive service of people living celibate chastity has resulted in a world enriched by their ministry: sharing the Gospel all over the world, studying and teaching to advance understanding, leading others to a deeper union with God, and building schools, hospitals, and charitable institutions.

These people even hasten the coming of the Kingdom (2 *Peter* 3:12) by inspiring others to move beyond concern only for themselves, to be aware of the poor and to serve them, to work for justice, and to find peace in communion with God.

True, some Priests have been unfaithful, but that doesn't argue against celibate chastity, any more than adultery or divorce argue against the permanence and fidelity of Holy Matrimony.

Who has taken hold of your heart? To whom do you give the gift of self out of love?

Michael Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque