

THIS IS NOT THE CASE!...



By Bro MARIANO DIVITO, OFM CAP.

There is still, sadly, too much poverty in the world. The statistics given to us everyday by the newspapers and TV are horrific and merciless: a billion people (above all children) are malnourished or not nourished at all in a world that wastes tons of food everyday.

Many are the organisations, religious and non-religious, that with great commitment and generosity fight the many forms of poverty that afflict the many different poor areas of the world.

The Holy Father during the first year of his election has not missed an opportunity to reaffirm the absolute priority of love and concrete attention that must be given to the poor of this world and to its outermost reaches, so that the Christian message is not diluted into some prideful self-reference to its past that is of no practical relevance in present day history.

But...can we fight against poverty and at the same time hold it up as the way of perfection in the

Church's mission?

"How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor!" is how Pope Francis with a sorrowful voice expressed himself on 16 March 2013, a few days after his election, before six thousand journalists.

This was a prophetic vision that he would make clearer and in more detail in his first Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of 24 November 2013.

"We might think that this 'way' of poverty was Jesus' way, whereas we who come after Him can save the world with the right kind of human resources. This is not the case" (Lenten message of Pope Francis 2014).

This is not the case!

How, then, do we reconcile the impelling need to "act" and succeed in those intricate, corrupt systems that wound and disfigure the face of humanity, with the equally necessary evangelical preference of "being" poor?

To whom must we look and where are we to begin?

It is necessary to begin again from

Christ!

"Christ's poverty is the greatest treasure of all."

St. Paul reminds us: "Remember Our Lord Jesus Christ... He was rich, but He became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of His poverty" (2 Cor 8:9).

The Church, we Christians, and I would say every man and woman of good will, can and must do everything possible and also more, with all the means at our disposition and in every place to overcome the too many inequalities, injustices, discriminations and abuses of power that are the cause of destitution in huge parts of our planet. But...and this is the attribute that belongs to every Christian, without ever forgetting that at the centre of all our actions is the whole of man: material, moral and spiritual.

Yes! Poverty (following the way of Jesus) can fight and overcome destitution, that, as the Pope continues and clarifies is not the same as poverty: "Destitution is not the same as poverty: destitution is poverty without faith, without support, without hope."

As Christians we are called to give not just that daily bread, but also that spiritual adjunct that overflows from our gratitude for what we have received and which inspires us to work and open up new paths of evangelization and human promotion.

Our Lenten preparations for Easter that is approaching, will not be another missed opportunity if we at least ask ourselves, without delay and seriously, how we may enrich others by "being poor".

Is this something impossible?

No! This is not the case!

Fr. Mariano Divito