



“The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.”

***“... He had wrought all His desires in them,
Their infirmities increased; thereupon they hasten”*** (Ps 16:4)

At times, it is hard for us to see the protection that Christ gives to the poor. It is hard to perceive the divine encompassing gaze that encloses the poor man within the grace, like Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham. The more fragile the life of the poor man is, the more he experiences the touch of Christ on his shoulders, on his face, the touch of Christ upon his heart. The mystery of creation that makes the life rich and blesses the poor.

Often, we rather see the poverty that alienates the spirit. The poverty that hurts the dignity of man. The poverty that makes you undesirable. The poverty that increases the infirmities and hastens life unto death. And yet, this is the place where God's desire reshapes the fabric of the human soul:

“Do not deliver me to the teeth of my enemies, O Savior, for in the manner of a lion they move against me Your servant” (Antiphon 2)

It was dark in the chapel on Thursday morning. The lamps were not yet burning. But a man was praying in the corner already. He did that during the entire breakfast program, from 5:00 am to 8:30 am. It is not unusual to find people in the chapel early in the morning. Just a few weeks ago, a homeless woman was sitting on a chair resting. The holiness is hospitable and comforts the people who are without a place. Other times you can see people going in and out, to pray, to rest within the silence, or to look for solitude. For instance, Anna comes every morning around 8am to pray in silence before starting to work for the whole day. Others do the same.

However, M. whom I recognized after the prayer, stayed for more than 4 hours. M. is a young brother, who's been struggling with addictions for years. His body and his life have become thinner and thinner with time. It is a miracle that he is alive. So many people died over the years because of that. We saw M. and talked to him in different moments of his life. He has a great sense of humor, and he always has a smile to share, even though he is so close to danger. One might ask how is that possible, to smile when you are so close? But what else would you do when, because of your infirmities, you are “hastening” and getting closer? The addictions made M. very poor. He lost and he is still losing bits and pieces of his life. How much more can he empty himself? How much more impoverished can he become? In the past, M. shared with us his struggles. How he tried to come out of this poverty. Today he does not speak about it anymore. Is that a sign of defeat? Maybe it is. Or rather it is a sign that he now speaks directly to

Christ. On Thursday morning, the chair he sits upon revealed in the chapel the presence of Abraham, who is already comforting M. because he is also one of his children (Lk 13:16). And a child shall live and not die because of poverty, because God is the God of the living and not of the dead.

Poverty is unconventional. At times things or people are taken away from us, at times we are losing them both altogether. We are emptied but not without a presence. The Presence that makes the poor the “apple of his eye” (Ps 17:8).

At Bridges next Wednesday at 6:30 pm
MAiD - “An evil that is going to grow in Canada” Dr John Berkman

On Thursday M. had lunch at the mission, coming all the way from the west end, from Kensington market. He is in his late 70’s. He is always reading a book. He read all his life. During lunch he can talk about trips he made to Rome, where in the 60’s you could enjoy visiting the Colosseum by yourself. It was not crowded like today. He is very elegant and respectful. He likes history but reads much more. He sees the poster about euthanasia, and he shares his thoughts. He thinks sometimes people choose to die that way because of pain. “The pain can be unbearable, you know.”

Later, he shares a personal story. During the pandemic, it was very hard for him. And to make things worse, he suddenly received the news that his sister-in-law was going to be euthanized. “She had pancreatic cancer and that can be very painful and there is not much you can do. But you know how it felt? Like an execution. They give you the date and the hour. Like when they execute you ... And so, it happened.”

We talked more about the implications of MAiD. I remembered how he visits every week a friend in the hospital. “But you know, if you are against it, you have to visit people in the hospitals when they get sick. People from the community. Otherwise, you become a hypocrite. You know, you cannot only be against it.”

A kind visit

“... but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped his hands.”

(today’s epistle – II Cor. 11:31-33; 12:1-9)

On Wednesday, a person in a wheelchair was passing by with his wife (also in a wheelchair) and their child. He asked if there was a ramp to come up. We went to help come inside. He looked very young, and his face was shining. If not for the wheelchair, his child and his wife, one could have mistaken him for an angel. He goes inside the chapel and keeps looking around. “I am going to come back. This place is very special. I don’t know anything about the church. But I can see God is present here. I am coming back to discover more.” He left with the schedule for meals and prayer. He asked for both.

Mima and John's wedding today

It has been quite a journey for Mima and John. And the journey continues. More than 5 years ago Mima came to the mission for the first time. Since then, her life changed a lot. Chris is a witness to this transformation. And so is the entire community. Today, it is a time for celebration. To be thankful for their gift, the gift of marriage. The community is rejoicing because, just as they were not alone while working, so they shall not be alone at the feast.

On Volunteer appreciation night:

Open Letter from Fr Roberto:

Dear Father Nicolaie and brother Luke,

I want to express my gratitude for what I experienced last night at the volunteer community celebration.

What a privilege!

I saw the beauty of so many people that came and the real work of healing that the mission does.

The joy and gratitude in the faces of people was at times overwhelming, such contrast to the often-common drab and pessimistic faces that seem to fill our streets and alas even our churches. This was an amazing group of people. Rich, rich in humanity and joy!

People spilled into the street wanting to get in, the mission seemed more than ever and Arc, a place of refuge and healing for all people. People today in general society seem to be afraid of refugees and immigrants. Yet what we saw last night, was the richness of humanity they bring.

They bring joy and gratitude and hope to us Canadians. In our society that is now obsessed and addicted with the need to abort and euthanize each other, this is such a welcome and needed change. Last night what was present at the mission, was the need to express joy, dance, gratitude and hope. People from all walks of life, countries, languages, cultural and religious traditions, rich and poor. This did not happen by some evolutionary chance, or accident.

At the mission it is to you both, Father Nicolaie and brother Luke, that we credit how a humble church becomes a place of prayer for all peoples and a place where the glory of God is manifest, in MAN fully alive.

Equally in Scarborough, in the group of people who came, I thank Mary and Elijah for their leadership.

Thank you, father Nicolaie and brother Luke, for being shepherds and fishers of men, and George's humility, Frank, Miroslava and Sister Penka, Kidan and so many, many others who desire to serve...!

I can't imagine how much joy there was in heaven last night, at witnessing what was happening on earth at St. John The Compassionate Mission.

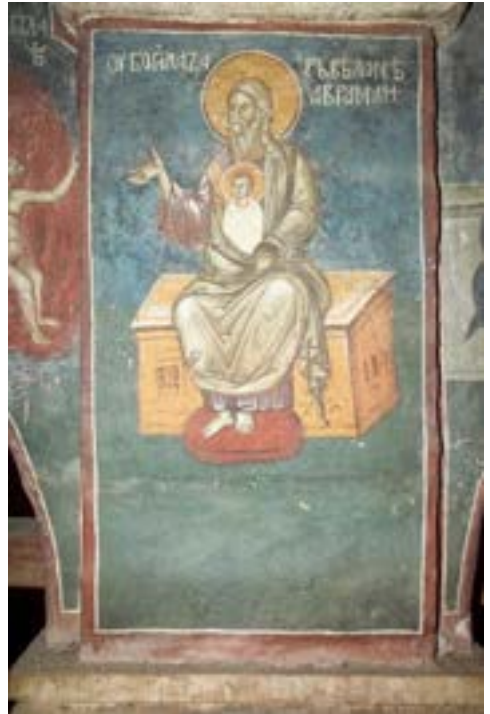
pRoberto

A simple practical exercise:

Please write down your prayerful answer to this question (anonymously).

You can put your answers in the donation box. They will be used for reflections and/or shared with the bishop.

“What change, if any, do you think the Orthodox Churches should consider today?”





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We are an apostolate of the ecumenical patriarchate "Mother Church of Christ's poor" under
the Omophorion of Metropolitan Gregory of Nyssa

St. Silouan Chapel, November 3, 2024

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