

Fr. Joe Chapter 9 ~ Finances In his own words...

Finances were never a big problem, simply because we never had anything. There were just a few people at each church, and they were poor working people who were struggling to exist themselves. At one mission, I sometimes carried \$7.50 in the church checking account. One Sunday a priest took my place and he brought the whole collection to me in a Band-Aid box. I simply told the people that we could only spend what we have, and we have to do things ourselves.

We decided to try and raise some money by changing the way we raised money from the Saturday night ice cream social for the local people to a Sunday chicken dinner and festival to try to get people from Cincinnati. We put up tents, we cooked the dinner, we had a raffle booth, and we kept the beer hidden in the barn. We brought in about \$1,000, but Protestant churches would go out into the street and pray for rain to keep us from desecrating the Lord's Day. And it's strange that every other year it seemed to rain and we would get rained out, but the other year we would have a nice day.

At one church, we decided to raise a little extra money by cleaning out the attic of the church. We shoveled bat manure into sacks. Men came with shovels and we filled 96 sacks with it. I sold it for \$100, but we did not come out ahead. While shoveling, one man's foot slipped off the ceiling joints and went through the ceiling. It took all of the profits to repair the hole in the ceiling.

In one of the missions we had a tobacco base on our farm acreage. When I got there, an old character was growing tobacco on shares. One afternoon I saw them hanging the tobacco in the barn to be cured. I went over to the barn and all of the men froze and they became silent. When one of them asked, "Reverend, do you believe that anyone that has anything to do with tobacco is going to hell?" I lit up a cigarette and said, "If I do, I'm in bad shape." They all came down from the rafters and they greeted me with smiles.

One of them said that one Sunday his preacher came to dinner with his white shirt and tie and said that we are going to hell for this. He said that he told the preacher that if that were the case, he would have to stop giving his donations to the church. The preacher stuttered around and said, "I guess it's all right." They all laughed.

I invited them to come over to the church and have a beer. As we were on our way to the church, one of them offered me a swing of moonshine from the truck of his car. Politely, I said, "no thank you."

The next year I turned the farming over to one of my parishioners. Next season when he was finished picking corn, he drove his truck up to the church and said, "Father, this crop is so bad, I am going to dump it." The birds picked over the ears, moisture got in and rotted the ears. I said, "Don't dump it." I got my Roman collar and climbed into the cab and said, "Let's take it to the Mill in Blanchester."

When we got there, farmers were lined up with their trucks filled with nice ears of corn. They kind of snickered at us when they saw the load of dried up ears of corn. When we got there, I took a few of the better ears of corn and took them in to be tested. Their chins dropped when I was offered 97 cents against their 93 cents. Of course, the difference was due to the fact that they had more moisture in their ears. I ran out to the truck and told the farmer, "Quick, dump the load and let's get out of here as fast as we can!" The next year we grew soybeans.

When a person is without an abundance of material possessions or money, we call them poor. They may be poor by material and worldly standards, but they may be rich in many other ways. They may

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experience the love and the peace, and the happiness and fulfillment others are still seeking in their lives.

With material things they learn to be practical. A car is meant to get us from one place to another. Clothing is just a covering for the body. A house is a place to provide shelter and warmth. They do not compare themselves to others who may be blessed with more possessions and become envious and jealous. They do not complain to God, but rather thank Him for providing them the necessities of life. And often they share what little they have with others who are even less fortunate and in need. They do not try to live like the Jones who have better material things. The Jones sometimes would like to live like them who have better spiritual things.