

The Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience

These three vows are also called the evangelical counsels and describe a radical way to live out the Gospel, radical in that the Gospel becomes so rooted in her that it effects all her choices. In each age, they can provide a strong witness to Gospel values in the face of competing or even contrary values in the prevailing culture.

POVERTY

A religious chooses to share all in common with her fellow religious rather than have personal ownership of material goods. In the face of a materialistic, consumer culture where one's value is often determined by earning power or the acquisition of wealth, poverty testifies to our dependence upon God as the source of all gifts and our solidarity with one another, especially the poor. When so many are ignoring people who are on the fringes of society, religious with a vow of poverty can connect with the poor, work with them and speak about their needs and concerns. She will also be open to the spiritually poor and willing to lead them to the Father as Jesus did.

CHASTITY

A religious chooses a celibate way of loving rather than entering into a conjugal relationship. Sex is used in our society for so many purposes, including the selling of products and recreation, and the prevailing message is that one must be sexually active to be fully human ... even if that means promiscuity. Chastity reminds us of the deeper meaning of sexuality. A genuine witness of chastity expresses a unique way to love, a way to serve others, and invites others to consider that there is more to life than meets the eye, that our relationship with God is indeed primary.

OBEDIENCE

A religious chooses obedience to indicate a preference for the common good over personal desire. The contemporary definition of freedom is to be able to do whatever one wants to do as long as it does not interfere with the rights of others - freedom from responsibility. Obedience demonstrates that the most perfect form of freedom is that which makes a commitment to another person, divine or human, or a cause. Obedience enables one to put her life at the service of the Church.