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sense of the holy, the elemental. As we make an idol of productivity, we have driven the deepest meaning out of life by driving out the sacred, replacing the holy oneness of life with exploitation—violence done to the people and the land.

It's interesting to observe the connection between possessions and violence. St. Francis would say eight centuries ago: We don't possess anything, for were we to possess things we would need laws and weapons to protect them!" Materialism creates a twofold violence:First, we violate our Holy Mother Earth and her children with the toxins of technology, stimulated by the frenzy to have, climb and command wealth, inevitably leading to rivalry, injustice and violence. The second violence is the need to protect wealth with weapons. St. Francis issues a warning of the dangers of things mass produced without meaning and then guns needed to make us secure with them. Are we making the arms race possible by the way we live? Can we dramatically and prophetically convert the arms race by radically turning back to God alone and reducing what we possess? Many of us yearn to reclaim the essentials of life by learning to live a non-acquisitive, non-coercive lifestyle.

LIVING ON LESS AND LESS — FEELING MORE AND MORE GRATEFUL: Learning to live on less is an interesting practice. Two forces are at work as we at Agape have persevered through our own failures. First, is the **practice** of voluntary poverty which resists and wrestles with the snake of material things and second is the joy and freedom of voluntary simplicity. For ten years, we have looked for appropriate and creative ways to resist war taxes. It became increasingly difficult to pay for war preparations if we didn't believe in war. Francis' words connecting materialism with militarism led progressively to the stage of living under taxable income. This **practice** of limiting our income is our **no** to violence. Like any practice, it takes work, experimentation and dealing with failure and pain. Because it disciplines how we live, we have learned (sometimes kicking and screaming) to live on less and to quit the tendency to make luxuries needs. Simplicity, in the words of Thoreau, helped us "to confront the essential facts of life": You reap what you sow. Sow materialism and you will reap the arms race.

If we dare to go deep into the experience of vowed life in simplicity, we will arrive at a place Francis did—living poverty for its freedom or "living on less, gratefull." Material poverty has teeth when it is grounded in spiritual poverty. This is our **yes** to life by living on the ingenuity of love. Our experience taught us the more downwardly mobile our lives became, the more direct control we had over ourselves, our jobs, our family life. Full time jobs and full time salaries, especially in positions we held with no Christian basis became chains. To decide to resist the popular culture and to plumb the depths of simple living meant to throw off the shackles of a workplace without love, a livelihood without truth (the simple life is exhausting too—frantic at times, we confess!). But, generally, in our ministry and in our relationships, we have more time to give of ourselves and less time to squander on office politics and running through life like a steeplechase. The simple life has helped us to integrate our livelihood needs with our need to serve. To bring making a living closer to our understanding of "The Sermon On the Mount," was to have had a taste of freedom's full fruit.

COMMUNITY: Living simply midst the trumpets of prosperity appears futile. Living alongside the onslaught of hucksters and buck-turning, while we simplify, can seem ridiculous. The wretchedness of housing costs, car payments, insurance on **everything** make voluntary poverty out of reach. Unable even to start the process of resisting the fast track, we soon find ourselves buying on credit, using banks with their interest and mortgages (and disdain for the poor). Monthly payments lock us in and auction away our future. (Whatever happened to just paying cash for what we need?). The passion to oppose is drained out of us.

The literal impossibility of learning to live on less as an individual or an isolated family forces us to call into question everything—every possession, every possessiveness, every habit pattern. One reality that has emerged from our trials and errors with wrestling with popular culture is to begin to resist by not going it alone. A deeply cherished illusion of middle and upper middle class thinking is that we are self-contained atoms, morally complete without serious need of others. Poverty with the vow in our society must inevitably lead to community. What is not possible individually becomes so communally.

Simplicity, like any virtue, leads us to God. Being led there, we are invited to change. Living a simple life isn't an isolated discipline that runs without tremendous doubts. We are constantly rethinking, tinkering and starting over. But, if we dare gaze at poverty's truth and desire its freedom, we will begin a conversion process that reaches into every cell. Like the cross, it's a gamble. At the heart of evangelical simplicity is the risk of annihilation. Hegel wrote: "It is solely by risking one's life that freedom is obtained." The cost of voluntary poverty is enormous. Liberaton from dependence on things has always been an expensive thing, but, in the end, a meagre price as St. Paul puts our pilgrimage into a larger perspective: *"From the beginning until now the whole of creation as we know has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all who possess the first fruits of the spirit. We too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free. for in this hope we are saved."* (Rom. 8:22-24).

By Brayton Shanley

Update - Moore Case Death Row Georgia

The Supreme Court has sent Billy's case back to the state of Georgia without a definitive decision. Delays could take 1-3 years.