

## Poverty of Spirit

*Johann Baptist Metz*

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## **Poverty of Spirit** Johann Baptist Metz

An inclusive language version of the modern spiritual classic, an exquisitely beautiful meditation on the incarnation, on what it means to be fully human, and on finding the face of God hidden in our neighbors.

## **Poverty of Spirit Details**

Date : Published May 1st 1998 by Paulist Press (first published 1994)

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Author : Johann Baptist Metz

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## From Reader Review Poverty of Spirit for online ebook

### Grace Guzan says

“We must learn to accept ourselves in the painful experiment of living. We must embrace the spiritual adventure of becoming human, moving through the many stages that lie between birth and death.” Poverty of Spirit, written by Johannes Baptist Metz, is a short novel that through scriptural evidence, explains how we empty ourselves and become impoverished for God. It gives the reader insight on the true meaning of humanity through Christ. The book begins by describing human existence. Metz unpacks how life is filled with pain, suffering, injustice, and death; and it is normal for us to question our faith. However we can use these moments and realize that God suffered just as we did when he took on human flesh and came to Earth. Jesus showed us how to realize our potential and become fully human. His passion is the faith within the mystery of our humanity. It shows us that we must do the very thing that we do not want to do. It takes humility for us to realize that we are nothing and God is everything. "He....did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself" (Phil 2:6). This book shows that we must embrace the spiritual poverty of our own humanity, and proclaim it as Jesus did. This does not mean that we must suffer and die as Jesus did. Even though we sometimes get caught up in the enviability of death we should not look at it in this way. Rather we should use our knowledge and understanding to better ourselves during this life on Earth. To be impoverished for God means that we must learn to accept ourselves as beings who do not belong to ourselves. In doing so, we will be able to live eternal life in heaven with our creator. I would recommend this book to anyone is struggling with their faith or is just looking for inspiration and hope. It was a quick read and can be read in one sitting. You won't regret it!

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### Staci Lee says

Beautiful little book. I will be picking this one up again.

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### Sergio Pages says

This book ties really well with the second week of the spiritual exercises of Ignatious of Loyola. Especially as it pertains to Jesus humanity.

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### Kimberly says

Great short read!! It's only 52 pages but crammed full and pretty dense. It had some great thoughts that I will have to chew on for a while. Definitely give it a go!

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### John Culbertson says

Metz' plea for total abandonment and complete surrender to a poverty of spirit leads me to question whether he is tacitly endorsing the modern world order. Cognitively, I buy his argument. The first Beatitude, coupled with the Christ Hymn in Philippians 2, presents an uncompromising demand for loss of self into an

immanent-yet-transcendent God. This is what I believe Metz (in 1968) most likely gleaned from the budding liberation orientation in Latin American base communities and a Eurocentric Church fresh out of Vatican II.

Nevertheless, he argues "We are all compromised in our acknowledgment of the truth of our being and in our work of becoming human (since that original fault at the dawn of humankind" (45). Metz recognizes our innate inability to fully accept this poverty of spirit. After all, there is only one Christ.

Is Metz simply meditating on a world that is? Is he not tacitly endorsing the current world order by describing our inability to fix it and validating a radical orientation toward and with poverty? This, I suppose, is a great paradox of liberation theology. Siding with the poor and oppressed requires structures of oppression and inequality. What, therefore, does this mean for eschatology? How will God's salvific plan, in the context of liberation theology, resolve this paradoxical tension?

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### **Brian Hohmeier says**

Metz is a prisoner to existentialism's moment, leading his apparent exposition on the incarnation to be anachronistic, unduly spiritualized and, ironically, poor. To his credit, his wandering strings of poeticized, universalizing assertions lend his short work an enthusiasm that could almost be mistaken as mysticism.

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### **booklady says**

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:3

*Poverty of Spirit* by Johannes Baptist Metz seemed like such a simple book the first time I read it. Perhaps I was just so overwhelmed by everything else to do with *Retreat in Daily Life* -- the term given to St. Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* when they are conducted over a six month period verses the usual thirty day intensive seminar format.

However, the simplicity of *Poverty of Spirit* is comparable to that of the initial Beatitude which it expounds, the closer you look the deeper it goes. 'To become human means to become "poor," to have nothing that one might brag about before God.' (p.10) Nothing? Nothing! NOTHING! Let that sink in. Really and truly sink in. Poverty of spirit isn't about becoming poor but accepting that we already **are** poor, only most of the time we just don't know it, or get it. 'We are so poor, even our poverty isn't our own.' (p.51)

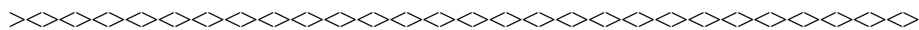
Ah, but this is a review and not a homily. Still, it is hard to write about this book without going into its spiritual teachings and mystery. *Poverty of Spirit* can be read in one sitting; it's only fifty-two pages. And yet probably a third of my copy is highlighted because of all the quotable sayings.

Jesus's poverty of spirit begins with His acceptance of His humanity, something we are so familiar with we usually fail to grasp the immense significance of God-become-man. It continues with His life of prayer, obedience, service, ultimately culminating in His sacrifice on the Cross, called the sacrament of poverty of spirit.

Cardinal Metz shows how we human beings are innately poor and the various shapes poverty takes: commonplace; misery and need; uniqueness and superiority; provisional nature; finiteness and death. Each distinct form is dealt with as both our chalice and our curse. And yet, those of us who would lay claim to the kingdom of God/heaven, know this to be blessed.

A spiritual classic worth reading . . . many times. For me, once every Lent.

One additional note about the author, which I just learned recently in reading, *The End of Time? The Provocation of Talking about God*, Cardinal Metz is a fellow Bavarian and colleague of Pope Benedict XVI.



05/03/09: I'm re-reading this as I've done every Lent since I first did the St. Ignatius Spiritual Exercises here in Oklahoma City with the Sisters of St. Benedict who offer the thirty day retreat over six months for busy working people and call their program, *Retreat in Daily Life*. The Metz book is required reading and it is a spiritual classic. Like many of the great works, it can be read in a short span of time, but only mastered over years.

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**Kent says**

Suffice it to say, no one is well read on the Beatitudes without having deeply considered Metz' "Poverty of Spirit."

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**Jose Sandino B. says**

**Maravilloso!**

Es para deleitarse en la presencia de Dios, en la oración, en el silencio tan necesario en estos tiempos que vivimos.  
Este pequeño libro hay que saborearlo con todo el amor que buscamos en Dios. Llenense de el!

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**Tina says**

A brilliant and inspirational disquisition on the true meaning of "the poor in spirit" and the humility that is its essence. A small book to return to, by one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. (His work was fundamental to the development of Liberation Theology, and influenced the Second Vatican Conference.) Highly recommended.

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**Stefani McDade says**

ALL CHRISTIANS MUST READ THIS BOOK!!!!

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**Ken Peters says**

I've read this little book three times. It was due to what I've felt God has been speaking to me about lately that I decided to read it most recently. After all, given how typically self-reliant I can tend to be, I knew it would do me no harm to be reminded of the importance of poverty of spirit. Though there's much in this

book that I still don't fully grasp, I was particularly stirred by the author's description of our propensity to resist poverty of spirit. But Metz makes a clear case for the value of embracing it!

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### **JD Chambers says**

The author opens in simplicity the beatitude of poor in spirit. How we engage it biblically in nearly every facet of life. I specifically found the authors connection between poverty of spirit and prayer enlightening and encouraging.

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### **Melbert says**

#### **The ground of all theological virtues**

This is a deeply and profoundly philosophical take on what it means to be “poor in spirit,” as Jesus begins the beatitudes. It requires slow, meditative reading to grasp the depth of his wisdom.

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### **Mathew Leonard says**

This work cuts to the depth of what all of humanity experiences and responds to, the innate feeling of poverty within our soul. An extremely helpful read for those hungry and thirsty for a deeper walk with Christ.

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