

Reflections of the life of St. Anthony Mary Claret

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Another characteristic of Claret's that I found interesting was his reason for living, voluntarily in great poverty.

'He was deliberately poor, because he wanted to be faithful to the Gospel rule of mission ("take with you neither gold nor silver") but also because that love of riches, which was the driving force behind the capitalism of his age, was sapping any sense of generosity toward the helpless of this world.'

'His apostolic detachment from money had a high witness value for his times. It also facilitated his ministry...'

Because ordinary people, farmers, pastors, farm labourers, country folk could call on him more easily if they knew they didn't have to pay him for his ministry, and they had very little to give. I found it very 'practical' that he forbade himself, and later his missionaries, to eat chicken or other fowl as it had become customary for the faithful to go to the lodgings of missionary preachers with chickens, then afterwards they'd reckon how many chickens they'd had to give up, maybe having second thoughts!

'On one occasion, Claret remembered hearing a country woman say to her neighbour: - "Hide the chickens, because here come the missionaries."

Maybe that attitude wasn't abounding in 1976, as, on the contrary, I have very vivid memories of chicken being offered with great generosity in celebration of the 'missionary' visiting villagers' homes in Guatemala. Strangely enough in Belize too! The generosity of those who have so little.

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