

The Power of Poverty the Beauty of Mercy Part 1-S8 E5

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:00:00] We have a special treat for you this week: our conversation with our special guest for the Mark Mary was so wonderful and so rich and so beautiful, we put it into two parts. So we hope you enjoy part one of father Mark Mary, talking about poverty, the conversion of heart and the captivating reality of the heart of Jesus Christ.

Hello, and welcome to season eight of the Abiding Together Podcast. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest and encouragement on your journey with Jesus Christ. My name is Sister Miriam James Heidland, and each and every week I am joined by two of my very dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. This podcast is born out of our friendship and sharing all kinds of things together: our walk with Jesus, our insights, the lessons we are *still* learning, our joys, sorrows, tears, and laughter. And you are most welcome on the journey with us. You can find out more information about all of our episodes at abidingtogetherpodcast.com. But for now, grab a cup of coffee, settle in, and welcome home.

Hello and welcome to this week's episode of the Abiding Together Podcast, where we have another amazing guest for you, which you are absolutely going to love him, but we're going to make you wait to find out who that is. So we have to say that Michelle Benzinger you have another hurricane headed your way. Girl, do you have like a dish on the top of your house that is sucking all low pressure over Pensacola? What's happening right now?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:01:30] Oh my goodness. I don't even know what to do. I told one of my kids today do not ask what can happen next because we've talked about it before, unprecedented times I'm done. I need some precedented. I just need a week or two of precedented times. So yeah, we're just praying. I'm praying for all the Gulf Coast. This will air right after the hurricane hits, so who knows what's going to happen? So just, yeah, but I was telling the girls through tears and our guests through tears, that, it's just, it's hard when everything is changing for all of us. And when we don't have emotional reserves, because there's so much change, but just trying to keep on doing the next right thing. So that is the state of the union over here. So Heather, how are you up in Canada where there are not hurricanes?

Heather Khym: [00:02:17] Yes. I got my first plaid shirt on of the season.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:02:19] Girl, you rocking

Heather Khym: [00:02:20] that Fall.

Getting chilly up here, but there's something so comforting about that. I woke up this morning and put the fire on and yeah, just had some quiet time and it was just a beautiful way to start the day. So I am so ready for this conversation, excited to have it. And I'm so glad to be with you all. How are you Sister?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:02:41] I am doing well. And I'm excited for our guests too, because we've had to have them on before, when there was another hurricane. So I think it's actually father who's probably doing this. I didn't want to say this out loud, but you know, I'm just joking. So we're delighted to have you on and I'm going to let Michelle, your dear friend,

father introduce you so our audience can learn all about you and just to receive from you. So Michelle, you, would you like to introduce our guests?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:03:04] I would. Our guest is the hurricane called Fr. Mark Mary, CFR. The one who loves to talk a lot of smack about our podcast and the one that he is a CFR priest, the Franciscan friar of the renewal. You've been a priest for ...

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:03:20] About two and a half years now.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:03:21] Two and a half years. And I met father Mark Mary, right before he was ordained a priest. We ended up working on a creative project together for Brother Isaiah: poco a poco, a design project. And he has actually become a dear member of our family. He's close to my husband, he's close to all of us, my whole entire family. And he likes to say, he's the annoying brother that I never knew I needed or wanted. And he plays that role so well. So welcome Fr. Mark Mary, welcome to the Abiding Together Podcast.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:03:52] Thank you for such a warm and beautiful introduction.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:03:57] You're welcome.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:03:57] Heather, Sr.Miriam: glad we can finally meet

Heather Khym: [00:04:00] At long last.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:04:01] So glad this day has come.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:04:04] Now, I am like, I'm just an annoying little brother. That's just who I am. I can't fight it.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:04:11] And why should you?

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:04:13] Exactly. Thank you. Thank you. So thank you for loving me anyway.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:04:17] We do, we do Father and really the first question we ask is the most important question and it's all downhill after this. The most important question we ask our guest is how do you take your coffee?

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:04:27] Can I throw you a curve ball answer?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:04:29] Story of your life. Go for it.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:04:31] As long as I have my coffee in like a plain boring mug, I'm happy. It could be any, it can be an way as long as it's caffeinated. Cause like in the friary we have a very austere aesthetic. I got that going on in my cell where I drink my coffee and prayer. And if I bring in some like flowery Mickey Mouse mug or something like that. It throws me off.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:04:50] I'm sure there's a lot in your friary. Flowery, Mickey Mouse mugs. I'm sure there are plenty.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:04:54] You'd be surprised. That's why I like it caffeinated and I like it in a boring mug.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:05:00] Okay. I just have to interrupt on this part. When he was visiting our house, I looked at his coffee mug. He had my wifey coffee mug. He thought it was funny to steal my favorite coffee mug just to drink out of it.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:05:14] That is what annoying younger brothers do.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:05:16] They do. So when he is here, he likes to drink the wifey coffee mug. But anyway.

Heather Khym: [00:05:22] Well, Fr. Mark Mary since I'm just meeting you for the first time and so is Sister and many of our guests are too. I would love to just know a little bit about your personal story. Like what led you to the CFRs? Do you have siblings? Just things like that. And really, when did you have your first encounter with the Lord?

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:05:38] Sure. Yeah, so I grew up in Orange County, California. I kinda, I literally grew up on the street Country Club which Michelle

Michelle Benzinger: [00:05:46] Country Club Drive.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:05:47] likes to give me hard time about. And I, it was, I was like a country club kid, so grew up pretty, pretty wealthy, but like with really, really wonderful parents. And then I have an older sister and just really the soil that they laid... when the gospel did come, when Christ did come, like it couldn't have been better. I really look to, to college as where I had this moment of kind of the deeper conversion. I had a really beautiful community at my youth ministry. And so I was there like all the time. But it was in college where I'd been trying for this lie of living dynamic, which was like, you do one thing Friday, you do different things Sunday. Like love Jesus, but don't get crazy. It was in college where the Lord, he basically showed me, what I believe in needs to affect my whole life. And, and very quickly I felt that I kind of received the call to be a missionary very quickly. As I learned about the sacraments, I knew I wanted to be a priest and I was looking where can I love the poor? Like, not just this, like a side hustle, but like with my whole life and where can I be with brothers and where can I bring people to the sacraments? It was at In and Out Burger actually In and Out burger in Anaheim Hills, California, where I heard about this group of hardcore friars in New York who sleep on the ground. And there as a 19 year old kid it was the most intense thing I had heard of and that's what I was looking for. And looked them up that night and it was everything I was looking for. I entered the friars in 2009, so 11 years about. I could not love more being a friar and a priest. The brothers are incredible, but yeah, I just couldn't enjoy, be more grateful for the invitation to serve the Lord as a friar with brothers and as a priest. It's um, I mean, I gave my whole life for it,, so I knew it was gonna be good, but it's been even better than expected.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:07:32] That's amazing. That is amazing. So what was it like when you did your first visit though, to the friars? When you did your first come and see? Like, how was that experience?

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:07:42] That's a great question. I just knew I did not discern well, I didn't have a spiritual director. I had nothing, so I didn't actually meet the friars. I redirected my whole life to becoming a CFR where I went to school, all this stuff. I didn't meet them for like five years after that in and out moment. But the funny thing is that my very, it was. Six o'clock office of readings first visit. And I, I didn't drink coffee yet. And it was so early and I

sat back in the chapel and this like this total desolation. I was like, I can't do this. What am I doing? There's no way I can do this. Just the early morning totally rocked me, I guess it, I guess it got better from there. I don't, it's funny. I just remember the brothers. I remember them being real. I remember them praying. And I remember the guys with gray hair who were praying as well. And like who were serious as well. And that was it. That was what I was looking for is like, okay, this is shows me that this is where with my whole life, I can continue seeking the Lord. I saw the other, other brothers doing that. And so that's one of the things which was my big takeaway from those early visits.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:08:47] Father that's really fascinating. And this is great because I'm learning about your story in real time. And I find the details very interesting. That's captivating. How is it that as you grew up, you really had, it sounds like the American dream, right? You're wealthy, have a wonderful family. How does a man, how is it plausible that a man in today's society who's young and vibrant and masculine, all the beautiful things. How is it that you could leave something like that and leave an idea of like a wife and a family and grow up very comfortable yourself. And how do you leave that and embrace a life that is so radically different and find fulfillment? I think people, whether that's chastity, whether that's poverty, whether that's obedience, people admire that because they know it's something true and beautiful. And can you explain to us just how does that happen? I just find that fascinating.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:09:31] I don't know what to say, except that the love of God is real and experiential and not just a foreign idea. There was, there was encounters with the Eucharist and just like that, that's not a thing, but that's a someone, right. And that the Lord is there, the opportunity or the privilege of bringing people Jesus, it just made sense to me. I mean, it was a real grace. And then really like the desire for me, which burned through all other desires: wife, family, kids, career, all that sort of stuff, really, really, truly was the sacrament of confession. If I gave my whole life and it met another person could receive eternal life because of that, then it's a life it's worth it. As a priest. It's also been one of the most incredible, probably the most incredible, experientially incredible joys of being a priest and a minister of God's mercy and healing in that way. The word privilege doesn't nearly do it justice.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:10:27] That's beautiful. It is. And I remember you telling me a story after you had gone to I think SEEK, Focus and you were just telling me. I asked you what your favorite part was and you said the confessional. You said hours upon hours of hearing confession and that was the answer I was expecting. And you were just saying the beauty of that, just the beauty of walking with these young adults and college students and being just a spiritual father to them and experiencing that sacrament of healing,

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:10:54] The grace of it is so real, right? Like I'm, I'm, I'm a poor punk Padre. Like I'm just, I just show up and you just receive them. But if you hear confession somewhere like an hour, you can see a number of people have years and years and decades of like burden lifted, just like that. You get court side seats to the work of God and mercy and healing. And it's just like, unbelievable.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:11:18] I love your vocation. I love it. Cause you know, really that's exactly what you're doing when Jesus tells the disciples to heal the sick, raise the dead and to cast out demons. Welcome to confession on a Saturday afternoon at a parish near

you, you know, it's just so stunningly beautiful. Your vocation is just so, especially in today's society, it's just so stunningly beautiful. I mean, I just, I love it. I love it. .

Heather Khym: [00:11:40] Yeah and I think the thing that I love about that is that you are able to see people in their deepest poverty and bring the love of God there in a very tangible way. You know, that should be at least the experience of confession is that at our lowest, at our little, most little places that we normally want to hide, that when we expose them to the light of God, that we are loved there and forgiven and set free there. And yeah, I would just love to hear more about the spiritual poverty aspect of your vocation Father. I would love for you just to speak to that because it isn't something that we often hear about in the world and I think it's actually desperately needed. So I'd love to hear your heart on that.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:12:19] Yeah, thank you. And it's, it's really matured and developed a lot over the last 11 years. So the friars, right? We take as many religious, most religious, these, the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. And really the church looks to Franciscans in a special way to live poverty: the spirituality of poverty, to love the poor, all of that in an exemplary way. But as a young man, it was very much a way. It was like being hardcore, right? Like I love the idea of like having a mat on the ground. I love the idea of being barefoot, but, but the more, the more you go, like the deeper. You experienced real poverty. I'll say two things. I'm going to say the tradition of it, particularly with St. Francis and Franciscanism and then kind of an experience that I personally had where it kinda came home. For Franciscans, for St. Francis, right, it's whatever, it's Matthew 19:29. Like you're not going to give up anything that the father is not going to repay a hundred fold. You're not going to be out done in generosity and our evangelical poverty, like why we fought for it so strongly over the centuries is this is the privileged space in the real stuff of our life that we give God an opportunity to be father to us. provide for us. And it's it's as concrete as whatever the bananas that get donated or the socks or whatever it is. Like, we give God permission to love us and father us and he's faithful. And he does it leaving behind some nice things for the treasure of intimacy with the Father, for the treasure of this experience of his goodness. I'd do it any day of the week, every day of the week. It's just, it's a no brainer in a lot of ways for me.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:14:03] Hmm. And so tell us about a personal story where you really encountered that.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:14:08] Okay. It was in postulancy which is right where the guys were just coming in and I had a class of nine of us and there's probably five or six other friars in the house. Maybe a little bit more. But these are all guys, like, I'm like a dude, you know, and I want the dudes to like me and I, I want to be tough and I want to put on a good show and like, I'd done my whole life. Like, that's just kind of what I, what I, I played, I was good at sports. I played sports, you know. The hardest part of becoming a friar was singing in public for the first time. And I remember it so clearly it was like, it was my turn to lead some, some canticle or something like that. And I'd never, never, never, never sung in public before. And so, so it's like, I ask the priest like, Hey, can I just like, say it and, he's like, no, you got to do it. And I remember like restricted windpipe, sweating, my heart beating, the whole, the whole nervous shock anxiety thing happening just cause I had to sing in public. I pushed out a little extra air. You know, I don't know if you could really call it singing. I gave it my best try and it wasn't like a, you know, it was, it was a total crash and burn, but what was fascinating is this, the brothers didn't treat me any less, right? Like it was this incredible opportunity for me to

be poor and weak before my brothers and to still be loved by them. This was new. cause my whole life I'd excelled either academically or athletically. And I could, I had the freedom and chose to do what I was good at. And so I got met at that level. And then for the first time in a religious life, particularly communal life, I had to be seen where I wasn't strong and where I wasn't good. But I was still loved and still received there. And it's such a deeper experience of love. And it's, it's really, it's really freeing.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:15:55] I think you're talking about something very important there, father, you're talking about the evangelical gift of poverty, where we live like Christ. Like you and I are professing religious vows, you know, take on a special connotation to Jesus, who's poor, chaste and obedient. Where we live, like you're saying very beautifully, in the providence of the Father. And I love that. And then you're also, you're talking about the theoretical poverty of you don't own anything like neither do I. Like we don't own anything, and so that frees us to give ourselves more deeply to the kingdom and to not be concerned about the day's affairs. But I think what you're also talking about, which everybody, and as a Christian is called to in their own respective vocations, but I love what you're talking about here, because you're talking about also the personal poverty that many times we guard against at all costs and try to make ourselves wealthy so we're never seen in want, so we're never rejected. Because we're afraid that if you saw me in my poverty, you would reject me like, like you're saying, and that. That. Can you just talk a little bit more about that? Because that is an area we all relate to oh, so deeply every single human heart knows that fear of I am poor here. And if I'm seen here, I don't know what's going to happen.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:16:56] Yeah. This is, this is just, it's really, it's my heart. It's the same thing. Kind of that I expressed in the sacrament of confession. I kind of jokingly say that like discipleship, it's going to look a lot more like, it's gonna look a lot more like a delivery room than Magnolia magazine.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:17:10] Hold it. I'm so impressed that you even know Magnolia magazine

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:17:16] You must hang out with Michelle benzinger

Michelle Benzinger: [00:17:16] I have done my job. I feel good about that. Okay, go ahead. Sorry.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:17:23] You're like a Catholic Joanna Gaines , but, but right. Like it's, it's, it's messy and it's ugly and it's not. It's not all nice and tight and color coordinated. Like our discipleship, our walk with the Lord. We're fallen people in a fallen world. The story of Christianity, it's never, it's never man like climbing up some mountain to God and like reaching him. It's always the story of God coming down in his mercy to us and lifting us up. And that's how it is. And that's okay too. I don't, I don't want to be sort of flippant with this, but it's not about us. It's about him and his goodness and his love for us, just us turning our eyes away from our poverty, actually to his goodness and to his love and to his gaze. And then like receiving from him, like the truth of who we are: messy, broken, but beloved and his children. And we just spend so much energy not receiving that. That's unfortunate.

Heather Khym: [00:18:23] If we talk about that concept in several ways, and you're just describing it so beautifully because it's incredibly true. I think for so many of us is that our poverty, we often see it as the stumbling block, whereas actually it's the avenue by which

God wants to come and meet us and where we get to see him in his magnitude, you know what I mean? Like, not that we could possibly ever perceive his entire magnitude, but it's like the poorer we are, the more places he has to fill.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:18:52] Hm. And I agree, and I think is something powerful with vows that you say, you know, Heather and I both have confessed our wedding vows: to love and honor, and to cherish in sickness and in health. But for you both, you've taken this beautiful vow of poverty and chastity and obedience. So what blessings have you seen that have come out of the vow of poverty for both of you?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:19:14] Well, I think for myself, I grew up very middle class, but I've always, I have a tendency like nice things. I've always liked nice things. And if you would have told me in high school or college that I would be a missionary and own nothing, I'd be like, you're crazy. I have zero interest in that. I don't want to do that. I want to shop at Saks 5th Avenue and be a very wealthy business woman. I don't want to do that. So for me, it was a profound conversion to what really matters and giving away all my stuff when I left. When I entered religious life right after I graduated from college. And so giving away everything and coming to a community that we don't live poverty in the same way that the CFRs and the missionaries of charity do. But we, we live very simply and we, and it was, it was a reorientation of my heart to what really matters and what makes me important or what is really valuable. And I can tell you now that after being in my community 22 years, now, that is, it is so tremendously freeing. I don't, I don't own my own car. I don't own my own bank account. Any donation that anybody makes to me goes to my community, every single cent of it. I live in a tiny little room in the corner of this house, in the middle of cotton fields in Texas. And my life is very simple. It is very simple and it has cleared up my mind and my heart and set my heart on what is most important in so many different ways. And it's also a, like father's life is, it's a radical witness of the primacy of Christ in all things. And you know, there's a funny saying that nobody has a U-Haul at their funeral. It's, it's gone. Like you can't take it with you. It's over and, and beautiful things. It's not because material things were bad. That's not it at all. It's not a disdain in a sense of, of something like that. But. It's a renunciation of what is temporal for a reception of what is eternal and that's the powerful life of Christ. And that's you see that light? You see the life of Christ as father. So beautifully says is a life totally dependent upon the father. And he says, why are you worried about what you're gonna eat or drink? Like, don't the, you know, don't the pagans worry about that. Look at the lilies. And so it's just been, for me, a needed thing. I don't, I, cause I wouldn't ever have chosen this myself, but the Lord's like, I love you so much. And here's what you really want so I'm going to give this to you, and it's going to make your life really well. And then your friends give you cosmetic bags because they don't like your Ziploc bags that you put all of your three ounce storage in. So they say to you, we can't stand this anymore, here's a cosmetic bag to put your shampoo in. It's embarrassing.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:21:20] Oh my gosh, it really is sister. When she came to visit. She had a ziploc bag with all her toiletries in it and I'm like I can't handle it. You need a pretty bag. Like I just can't handle it. Aesthetics. You know, the kingdom of God is at hand and needs the cosmetic bag.

Heather Khym: [00:21:35] This is how we compliment each other.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:21:41] Yes. So father Mary, what about you?

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:21:45] I'm first. Just, it was nice to have a chance to sort of sit back and watch y'all do your thing a little bit. I get why you crush us. I get why I get why people say like you guys are pretty good, but Abiding Together they're on another level. It's true.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:22:01] If you only knew Father.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:22:04] Can I, I'm going to talk about maybe from the perspective of my first vows and my final vows and what happened there, it's fascinating. Like my first vows, when I made them, we just make them for a year. You know, some communities do three years or other variations. We just do it for a year. And I was probably, I guess, was 25 at the time. And it was so emotional and it was such a big deal and it was so kind of like terrifying this idea of, of making a one year commitment. I just remember, cause it was just like everybody's crying. It's just like, it's a huge thing. And part of it, I understand it. Part of it is just like it's scary. And I fast forward the tape to my final vows. Which were about, I guess, about three or four years later. And when I made final vows, it was like, it was steady. It was calm. It was peaceful. And my reflection on it is it's like, like you're getting out of the boat. Like when you make your vows, like, okay, like, am I actually gonna be able to walk on water? Like, is the Lord really going to give me this grace? Is he going to be faithful? And over those years of living it, I'm like, yeah, he is. He is. And he's been faithful these these few years. So I have no doubt he's going to be faithful for the rest of my life. Right? So it's with poverty, chastity and obedience. It's not a, it's not a one way conversation or a one way profession. I think it's like I say, like when we say like, I will be poor, but the father speaks back, I will provide, and I will say, I will be chaste and I will be dependent on your love. And the father says, I will love you with the love with satisfies. And I say, I will be obedient. I'll listen, I'll go. And the father says, and I will lead you like through good pastures, right? Like, and, and that's what I think is the greatest gift of poverty, but also the sort of instance, the poverties of obedience or the poverties of chastity is like, it just gives the Father, it gives the Lord the opportunity to be who He says He is in the stuff of life. And it gives me the freedom and it puts me in the place to. To receive it. He has been faithful to his word and he has not been out done in generosity on all of these areas.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:24:07] Wow. That is so powerful. And I think even just reframing that, both because we see, even when you hear, Oh my gosh, they take a vow of poverty. Or even like Heather, we have talked about spiritual poverty a lot on this podcast. That's a reoccurring theme that has come up over and over again, but just even turning that upside down on its head, that it isn't it's poverty just means our hands are open to receive generosity and provision where we see lack he's saying, no, I say abundance. Like you were saying, father, and what a beautiful gift that is and what a beautiful gift that is to what there's power in these vows. There's power in the vows that Heather and I have said in marriage, but there's power in these vows that you all have said in religious life. And with that kingdom power brings it's upside down and it's the upside down kingdom, but it's the abundant kingdom, you know, that is inviting each and every one of us to, in some way, shape or form. Yeah, that's beautiful father. Thank you.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:25:02] Maybe if I can jump in one more time. Cause I don't want to overly sanitize or romanticize it either. Like, you know, like the, the, like the poverty's we experienced in all the different ways. Like they're real, you know, and when you're in it, it's like, it's not, it doesn't feel good, you know? And it's, and it's poverty with stuff that you actually care about. No. Cause I think a lot of your listeners are going to be in touch with that

as well. Like I have this situation where I'm poor that I can't control if it's a son or daughter who's maybe left the faith and there's a poverty. Like the poverty is real, you know, and the concern is real, but so is the Father's provision and the Father's goodness and, and he's alive and alive and at work and in all of our lives. And we just have to kind of give him permission to do, do his thing and his time.

Heather Khym: [00:25:50] It reminds me of that quote from Saint Augustan where he says, God has always trying to give us good things, but our hands are too full to receive them. And it's that emptying of our hands. And choosing to trust. It really is a decision, you know, at some point to choose to trust God that he actually will fill them with good things. Like, like you said, father, like, it's not just, he's going to fill it with whatever random things. It's good things. He has good things for us. And I think what I was also just struck by as you were sharing father, is that it was a process for you. And I love the title of your podcast: poco a poco means little by little, and I would just love to hear about. That like how that name struck you, what that means to you guys, like in the real, tangible ways that you live to embrace our littleness, um, on the journey.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:26:39] Can, can I share where that comes from? Yeah. I'm going to root it in the tradition because I think that's important. And then the very practical it's like when we became what's called a Pontifical Rite, which is kind of like you're a grownup community. The friars did in 2016. I think one of the things that Rome says like that. Basically the vocation of the friars is to give a witness, prophetic witness that life is a pilgrimage to father made of faith hope and love like, so this pilgrimage idea, it's part of our thing. It's part of our charism, but it was when I was living in Honduras, in Honduras, the friars, we have a medical center called San Bendito, st. Benedict, Joseph Medical Center. Which offers totally free care to the poorest of the poor. And we're talking very, very poor people. Part of the nature of just how these things work is, uh, patients would come and sometimes they come from four hours, like from the mountains from, or even further. Um, we had one woman who showed up at the door at nine in the morning, who's pregnant to receive some help from like our sort of prenatal, the St. Gerard program there. And she left her house at three in the morning, like by nine she'd already been on the road for six hours because this was. The closest place that she could get help. But so these people are, were really poor and beat up and really suffering would wait outside of the clinic for, uh, some, for sometimes all day or most of the day. And one of our friars, um, he would go and he'd visit them. And he couldn't speak Spanish. Well, he's like, he's like the real, he's the real deal. He's the real deal. He couldn't speak Spanish. It brings us laminated image of our lady of Guadalupe and a song sheet because he couldn't like have conversation with them. So he'd sing praise songs with them in Spanish. Um, but one of the things he would say to them as an encouragement is somos pellegrinos, like we're, we're pilgrims. Poco a poco, vamos a llegar, little by little, we're going to make it. And just this encouragement for all of us, we're on the pilgrimage. All of us who are struggling, like we have the grace to make that next best step poco a poco, little by little, the spiritual journey. It's a real journey. Be Okay with that, that, that we know where we want to get. Maybe we're not there yet. Well, let's just keep making the next best step, little by little.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:28:50] Isn't that really all any of us can do to that's. So it's so beautiful. And that is the graduality of even our conversion, that every one of us, it is little by little and I think many times we want to. Arrive, quote, unquote, we talk about that a lot and the Lord says, I'm pleased to have you on this journey with me and you will continue on it.

And in here we are being transformed. Thank you so much, father, it's been a delight to have you on the show and as I'm sure you know, that every at the end of every episode, we have a one thing or two one things or three one things that are really speaking to your heart. So we're going to let you sit on yours for just a second and, and either figure out what it is or distill it down to a couple. But Heather, would you like to offer our friends, our listeners, your one thing for the week?

Heather Khym: [00:29:31] I have two this week. There's a lot of good things happening out there. And anyway, the first one is. This young man who is on his way to be coming a Saint. Uh, Carlo Acutis. I don't even know if that's how you say his name is that is that right? But I saw these photos like coming up of this young man and started to read his story and he passed away in 2006 from leukemia. He was 15 years old, but his whole life was just about loving Jesus and this he's so accessible. He's got his little Nike sneakers on and I thought, wow, uh, best ever a promo for Nike that his shoes are on a soon to be Saint. Anyway, I would just encourage our listeners to look him up and read his story. And in particular, you know, that he could potentially be an intercessor for our children. And, um, I've already started to ask him to pray for our son. So, yeah, I just love his story. I love that he's real, that he's relevant that he's now and some people are calling him, you know, the patron of the internet. So, uh, that was wonderful. And then, also there was this sweet little video that I came across called the dumpster fire in the garden by Brad Montague. And it was so. Charming and cute and kind of funny. It was so impactful. Like it really was like a really powerful little video. And I looked up Brad, I was like, who is this genius who created this video? And he's the guy behind the kid president. And I was like, Oh man, this guy is gifted. So anyway, look that up. It's going to make your day, just watch that little video and we'll have it in the show notes and on the website. So Michelle. What is your one thing?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:31:12] My one thing is actually a project that Father Mark Mary and I worked on together. We developed with OSV, these Saint Story cards and they are four different saints, mother Teresa, John Paul the second, saint Francis and Saint Therese. And they're cards for children that have artwork on the front of them. And that you ask questions that are interactive and pray. And when you go through the cards, you can put them all down in a certain order, and it shows this beautiful painting mosaic, when they're altogether of the saint's lives. And it was a blast of a project to work together. It was amazing to work with the artists that we were able to. It was so fun to work with Fr. Mark Mary, even though, you know, he was going to diss St. Clare at one point. But other than that, it was an amazing, just I love it. I love it. And it was really good for me to see - we gave it to some younger children and they went crazy over it. They absolutely loved it. So, yes. So all this to say the Saint Story Cards are my one thing.

Heather Khym: [00:32:10] I can't wait for the borders to open so I can get my hands on some of these beautiful things, honestly.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:32:16] Seriously, this has got to end now, sister, what about you?

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:32:21] One thing is a song that came up in my Spotify playlist that, you know, they suggest random artists. And there was a, just a couple of songs that I was, I said, that's so beautiful. And I started listening to this artist and she has a song called today. So I got to talk about spiritual poverty, little child, like this, the song is called *Today if you hear him* and the song is by Taylor Leonhardt. And she's saying in the, just if

today, if you hear him, if you hear him calling across the valleys, don't be too grown. You go run to him. Let's become like little children today. And that pierced me. I absolutely loved it. And it's such a call to all of us, to the little places within us that are so lovely and so delightful. And would we never be too grown right. To go to rest in the heart of our fathers. So that's my one thing today. If you hear him by Taylor Leonhardt.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:33:04] Father Mark Mary, what is your one thing besides me? What is your one thing?

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:33:07] Oh, you Michelle, thank you. My one thing is, can I, can I. Can I keep being a punk and have a little bit outside the box one thing I'm going to steal it.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:33:20] You can have whatever you want Father.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:33:21] My one thing I'm going to take from James and Peter and John and Paul, because Galatians 2:10. It's my one thing is go visit this verse. Right? So, so Paul, he comes and he meets the pillars of the church. Okay. And they have the conversation and he says that they gave us me and Barnabas. They give us their blessing to go to the Gentiles. They only asked one thing of us. That we would be mindful of the poor, the one thing we'd already been doing and, you know, as they got together, the one thing was be mindful of the poor. And so I just encourage our listeners to, to, with our great saints, to, um, be mindful of the poor this week.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:33:59] Amen. Thank you so much for coming on the abiding together podcast father. We are delighted to have you.

Fr. Mark Mary, CFR: [00:34:04] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for having me

Sr. Miriam James Heidland: [00:34:08] Dear listeners this week, perhaps we could look into our lives and see where's the Father providing for us, whereas he delighting to provide for us and who are the poor amongst us. And can we be mindful of them and just asking the Holy spirit to open our eyes to the poor so that we can them and receive Christ and little by little, we will reach our eternal home. So until next week we will be abiding together. God bless you have a wonderful week.

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