

## Re : Workshop # 15: Peace and Joy!

Excerpts from the CIOFS manual, section GOD REVEALS HIMSELF, p. 7

### Peace through forgiveness

*The omnipotence of love is pardon<sup>1</sup> (forgiveness)*

When Christ shares in the omnipotence of God - which means when he dies - he shares in the **power of forgiveness which is the deep heart of God.**

**This requires a word of explanation.**

**Forgiveness** is not simply indulgence and remission of sins. It is a **re-creation**. It is to recreate the freedom for those who have renounced their proper freedom because of sin.

It needs greater power on God's part to forgive than to create. In fact, **to recreate** is more than to create.

*The creative act in God is an act of humility and renunciation: **God, who is All, renounces being All.***

In order to understand this we have to enter into *the logic of God*, as it has been revealed in Jesus. Here it is:

**When someone is Love, it is intolerable to be «alone», to be All.**

**It is impossible to be Love and to be All.**

This opens spaces for freedom and, as the German poet Holderlin says: «*God makes man as the sea makes continents: by withdrawing*».

If, for God, the act of creation is an act of withdrawal, will not the act of re-creation, of forgiving, of reconstituting freedom, be a doubly greater act of withdrawing? Is not forgiving to withdraw twice? Is this not the supreme Omni-potence?

It is therefore in dying that Christ manifests the supreme, re-creating, forgiving Power of God.

All too often, we approach the theme of forgiveness in a completely wrong way.

This is largely the fruit of our mistaken understanding of God, of the kind of living contact we have with God, of our non-understanding of his Being as He himself has revealed it to us. We do not succeed in grasping the vast dimensions of grace and love in forgiving.

Often our argument goes like this: *I have done something I ought not, it weighs on my conscience. Well then, I will confess it and God, who is omnipotent and good, will forgive me.* And everything ends there.

For heaven's sake, it is quite correct, but ..., where is the relationship of love in this way of thinking, where is the experience of the lover with the beloved, where is the preferential relationship with God?

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<sup>1</sup> "Pardon" comes from Old French *pardun* (noun), pardonner (verb), from medieval Latin *perdonare* 'concede, remit,' from *per* 'for' + *donare* 'give.' = for-give.

Deep inside, we must admit that the forgiveness we expect is ultimately “granted” in a paternalistic way. However, **a God made man who forgives by dying**, whose death corresponds to an act of forgiveness, and a universal forgiveness, is no paternalistic God. He is a disconcerting God who abases himself right down to our level and who has loved us to the extent of dying, specifically in order to reconstitute us forever in the liberty of the children of God, so that we can be able to love with his own love.

Every sacramental confession and its preparation should be for us a profound experience of exchange of love and of radical gratitude. It should be a stirring experience of true regeneration reaching the deepest roots of our whole being - as it was for Francis!

So, it is true and correct to say that by the shedding of Christ’s blood, we are saved.

**Perfect Joy**



**according to saint Francis of Assisi**

### **HOW ST FRANCIS, WALKING ONE DAY WITH BROTHER LEO, EXPLAINED TO HIM WHAT THINGS ARE PERFECT JOY**

One day in winter, as St Francis was going with Brother Leo from Perugia to St Mary of the Angels, and was suffering greatly from the cold, he called to Brother Leo, who was walking on before him, and said to him: “Brother Leo, if it were to please God that the Friars Minor should give, in all lands, a great example of holiness and edification, write down, and note carefully, that this would not be perfect joy.”

A little further on, St Francis called to him a second time: “O Brother Leo, if the Friars Minor were to make the lame to walk, if they should make straight the crooked, chase away demons, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and, what is even a far greater work, if they should raise the dead after four days, write that this would not be perfect joy.”

Shortly after, he cried out again: “O Brother Leo, if the Friars Minor knew all languages; if they were versed in all science; if they could explain all Scripture; if they had the gift of prophecy, and could reveal, not only all future things, but likewise the secrets of all consciences and all souls, write that this would not be perfect joy.”

After proceeding a few steps farther, he cried out again with a loud voice: “O Brother Leo, thou little lamb of God! if the Friars Minor could speak with the tongues of angels; if they could explain the course of the stars; if they knew the virtues of all plants; if all the treasures of the earth were revealed to them; if they were acquainted with the various qualities of all birds, of all fish, of all animals, of men, of trees, of stones, of roots, and of waters - write that this would not be perfect joy.”

Shortly after, he cried out again: “O Brother Leo, if the Friars Minor had the gift of preaching so as to convert all infidels to the faith of Christ, write that this would not be perfect joy.”

Now when this manner of discourse had lasted for the space of two miles, Brother Leo wondered much within himself; and, questioning the saint, he said: “Father, I pray thee teach me wherein is perfect joy.”

St Francis answered: “If, when we shall arrive at St Mary of the Angels, all drenched with rain and trembling with cold, all covered with mud and exhausted from hunger; if, when we knock at the convent-gate, the porter should come angrily and ask us who we are; if, after we have told him, ‘We are two of the brethren’, he should answer angrily, ‘What ye say is not the truth; ye are but two impostors going about to deceive the world, and take away the alms of the poor; begone I say’; if then he refuse to open to us, and leave us outside, exposed to the snow and rain, suffering from cold and hunger till nightfall - then, if we accept such injustice, such cruelty and such contempt with patience, without being ruffled and without murmuring, believing with humility and charity that the porter really knows us, and that it is God who made him to speak thus against us, write down, O Brother Leo, that this is perfect joy.

And if we knock again, and the porter come out in anger to drive us away with oaths and blows, as if we were vile impostors, saying, ‘Begone, miserable robbers! to the hospital, for here you shall neither eat nor sleep!’ - and if we accept all this with patience, with joy, and with charity, O Brother Leo, write that this indeed is perfect joy.

And if, urged by cold and hunger, we knock again, calling to the porter and entreating him with many tears to open to us and give us shelter, for the love of God, and if he come out more angry than before, exclaiming, ‘These are but importunate rascals, I will deal with them as they deserve’; and taking a knotted stick, he seize us by the hood, throwing us on the ground, rolling us in the snow, and shall beat and wound us with the knots in the stick - if we bear all these injuries with patience and joy, thinking of the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, which we would share out of love for him, write, O Brother Leo, that here, finally, is perfect joy.

#### **And now, brother, listen to the conclusion.**

Above all the graces and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ grants to his friends, is the grace of overcoming oneself, and accepting willingly, out of love for Christ, all suffering, injury, discomfort and contempt; for in all other gifts of God we cannot glory, seeing they proceed not from ourselves but from God, according to the words of the Apostle, ‘What hast thou that thou hast not received from God? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?’ But in the cross of tribulation and affliction we may glory, because, as the Apostle says again, ‘I will not glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Amen.”