

Conf 6 - Laughter and Littleness - tools for freedom

THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

The joy of The gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew. In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy, while pointing out new paths for the Church's journey in years to come. (Evangelii Gaudium #1)

Consequently, an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral! Let us recover and deepen our enthusiasm, that “delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing, even when it is in tears that we must sow... And may the world of our time, which is searching, sometimes with anguish, sometimes with hope, be enabled to receive the good news not from evangelizers who are dejected, discouraged, impatient or anxious, but from ministers of the Gospel whose lives glow with fervour, who have first received the joy of Christ”. (EG #6)

PIOUS LAUGHTER

A laughter at ourselves, how ridiculous we are

God finds your feeling of importance and funny and absurd, “He who sits in the heavens laughs” (Ps. 2:4). If you look at yourself in the light of faith then you will see that all your presence of absolute seriousness and esteem are truly funny. (Dajczer, Gift of Faith, 95)

The ‘virtue’ of humor, which is seeing the absurd in the world, is a religious remedy which may have the value of an exorcism. ... (Gift of Faith)

- duck-billed platypus
- Field shrew

a ridiculed Satan is most forcefully struck, for he is deadly serious, and very afraid of ridicule, and is therefore compelled to leave you. (Gift of Faith)

- sweaty hands
- Off-key singing

Christian humor is a remedy by which the idol of self is dethroned. ... you can tell yourself, "Look how absurd I am, I worry about trifles, I have so many troubles, I am ruining my health." But, in reality everything is like ashes, like rubbish and finally may prove to be worthless. Try to look at your life in light of faith; try to joke about yourself. This may be difficult because the virtue of humor sometimes requires heroism. (Gift of Faith)

FROM ST GREGORY OF PALAMAS - LETTER TO XENIA

And whenever the intellect withdraws itself from all material things, emerges from the turbulence they generate, and becomes aware of our inner self, then first of all it sees the ugly mask it has wrought for itself as a result of its divagations among worldly things, and it strives to wash it away through grief. When it has got rid of that uncouth guise, and the soul is no longer coarsely distracted by various cares and worries, then the intellect withdraws untroubled into its true treasure-house and prays to the Father 'in secret' (Matt. 6:6). And the Father first bestows upon it peace of thoughts, the gift which contains within it all other gifts. Then He makes it perfect in humility, which is begetter and sustainer of every virtue - not the humility that consists of words and postures easily taken by anyone who wishes, but that to which the Holy Spirit bears witness and which the Spirit Himself creates when enshrined in the depths of the soul. (#54)

In such peace and humility, as in the secure enclosure of the noetic paradise, every tree of true virtue flourishes. At its heart stands the sacred palace of love, and in the forecourt of this palace blossoms the harbinger of the age to be, ineffable and inalienable joy. (#55)

The shedding of possessions gives birth to freedom from anxiety, this freedom to attentiveness and prayer, while attentiveness and prayer induce grief and tears. Grief and tears expunge passion-imbued predispositions. When these are expunged the path of virtue is made smooth, since the obstacles are removed, and the conscience is no

longer full of reproach. **As a consequence joy and the soul's blessed laughter break through.**

Then tears of tribulation are transformed into tears of delight, and the words of God become sweet to the palate and more sweet than honey to the mouth (cf. Ps. 119:103). Prayer changes from entreaty to thanksgiving, and meditation on the divine truths of faith fills the heart with a sense of jubilation and unimpeachable hope. This hope is a foretaste of future blessings, of which the soul even now receives direct experience, and so it comes to know in part the surpassing richness of God's bounty, in accordance with the Psalmist's words, 'Taste and know that the Lord is bountiful' (Ps. 34:8). For He is the jubilation of the righteous, the joy of the upright, the gladness of the humble, and the solace of those who grieve because of Him. (#56)

"Poets do not go mad; but chess-players do. Mathematicians go mad, and cashiers; but creative artists very seldom. I am not, as will be seen, in any sense attacking logic: I only say that this danger does lie in logic, not in imagination. The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits." — G.K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy

Angels do not fly because of their gravity but because of their levity

LITTLENESS

ST THERESE

“It is to **recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God as a little child expects everything from her father**; it is to be disquieted about nothing, and not to be set on making our [own] living. Even among the poor, they give the child what is necessary, but as soon as she grows up, her father no longer wants to feed her and says: ‘Work now, you can take care of yourself.’ It was so as not to hear this that I never wanted to grow up, feeling that I was incapable of making my [own] living, the eternal life of heaven.

“To be little is not attributing to oneself the virtues that one practices, believing oneself capable of anything, but recognizing that **God places this treasure in the hands of His little child to be used when necessary; but it remains always God’s treasure.**

Finally, it is **not to become discouraged over one’s faults**, for children fall often, but they are too little to hurt themselves very much.“ St Therese

ABBA MATTA EL MESKEEN

If for us the experience of (your) infancy is so difficult, it is not so for you, O Son of God. If we stumble along the way that leads to communion with you because of your smallness, you are capable of removing all the obstacles that prevent us from doing this. We know that you will not be at peace until you find us in your likeness and with this (same) smallness. Allow us today, O Son of God, to draw near to your heart. Grant that we may not consider ourselves great in our experiences. Grant us instead to become small like you, so that we can draw near to you and receive from you abundant humility and meekness. Do not deprive us of your revelation, the epiphany of your infancy in our hearts, so that with it we can heal all our pride and all our arrogance. We greatly need... for you to reveal in us your simplicity, by drawing us, and indeed the Church and the whole world, to yourself.

Our world is weary and exhausted, because everyone is vying to see who is the greatest. There is a ruthless competition between governments, churches, peoples, within families, from one parish to another: Who of us is the greatest? The world is festering with painful wounds because of this great illness: Who is the greatest? But today we have found in you, O Son of God, our one medicine. We, and the whole world, will not find salvation or peace unless we go back to encounter you anew in the manger of Bethlehem. Amen.

