

Pierre Goursat

Community weekend

21st June 1981

## We're in a dry patch because we're perhaps not being compassionate

During a community weekend, Pierre Goursat, feeling the need at this point for the Community to advance, and firstly presenting the "apostolic journal" as a concrete way to live out our commitment to mission, speaks now of the "sanctification journal", insisting on the help it can bring us in objectivising the path to conversion.

You can continue praying for me. Glory to you Lord!

So, my dear friends, I was struck twice, when certain speakers spoke of the desert, [about which] certain people replied straight away: "Ah yes! That's exactly it! I'm living these dark nights." So, I instantly see in them great mystics: you are in the dark night of the senses, the dark night of the Spirit. Anyway, these are big nights!

The truth is often that we're in a dry patch because we're perhaps not being compassionate. But all the time we're saying: adoration, compassion, evangelisation. It's become a slogan. It gets annoying, in the end, it's not worth repeating it. But it's clear that normally, from adoration, our heart should be opened, and truly, we should then show compassion. We say to ourselves: "We don't really see why in adoring the Blessed Sacrament we'll show compassion." But it's because we have ideas that are perhaps not entirely correct. By the way, it's so complicated that we can understand that we don't understand very well!

By adoring. We adore the Lord Jesus. And this, we must truly believe in the True Presence: (...) a presence which is truly real and very concrete, because the Lord was incarnate, and he wants to stay with us. So, he is in Heaven naturally, that isn't a problem, because he is everywhere. But at the same time, he wants to be with us. And it's a great joy for us to know that he's with us.

But, then if he's with us, he is also in us and we are all with him. And all the suffering in the world, and all the beings who are greatly suffering, well, the Lord is with them. And so much so, that when we adore the Lord, we participate in it, we are compassionate with all this suffering, his suffering and all the suffering of others. And above all [with] that which is not offered up. [There are] quantities of people who suffer like dogs, they don't know why they're suffering and often they revolt against it. And in the compassion of adoration, we must say to the Lord: "Here we are, we pray for them, who don't pray to you and who don't know they can pray to you."

So, you see, in that moment, well the dry patch disappears pretty rapidly! Because we understand truly how much we are involved in a cosmic drama and that really, we are trying to help; there's an intense spiritual combat. So, I believe that certain people who have difficulty praying, well, perhaps haven't understood entirely the intensity of this battle. This battle which is a battle of love. So, naturally, I'm not telling you to change your way of acting: because you pray, you each pray in your own way. But if you are in a dry period and you're bored or you don't know what to do, you're annoyed or whatever, well, dive into this compassion, into the love of the Lord; and ask Mary, who is the mother of compassion, really to teach you this compassion. Because not only will it reflect on the state of souls or the feeling for all those who are suffering, but it'll also give you a practical way of then saying: "Well, I've got to do something concrete to help my brothers." You see? So, you're not running away. You're committing.

So that, that's one thing. The second thing: I'll talk about active compassion. It's obvious only at that point, you say: "That's all very nice, but I can't manage everything I would like to do." Well, we reply: it's true, because you only have 24 hours and then, you have limited time. And then, you have limited strength. But it's precisely for this that we're in community! So, if we are in community, one does this, the other does that, but all together, we do everything together. And that's what you really should tell yourself. Because [in] the services, one does the cooking; he says: "Listen, I would like to evangelise, but I'm always here with my carrots and my turnips." And, it's not very nice evangelising carrots and turnips! (...) And so, but truly you feel that this love [of the Lord] pervades the turnips (*laughter*). And then, the turnips, it passes to all the others who are a bit 'turnippy'<sup>2</sup> too (*laughter*). But that's how it is.

So, when we talk of service, you know there are people who speak a lot about obedience and submission. For me, these are words which raise the hairs on my neck. But it's not obeying and submitting, it's serving. To serve our brothers and sisters. We are here to serve. Because Jesus came [to be a] servant and us, we serve our brothers and sisters. And the pope is called the servant of servants. So, if we have a notion of service which is similar to compassion, then it's clear that we're really entering into a great love, all together, because the Holy Spirit unites us. And this gives us an extraordinary dynamism.

So, there was the little Therese of the Child Jesus who was in her Carmel. She was washing dirty handkerchiefs. She got splashed with a bit of dirty water. She said: "Thank you Jesus. Too many benedictions<sup>3</sup>!" It was charming! We say: "What does that really do for the missions?" And yet, she was named patron of the missions. Because it's the manner, it's the love with which we do things which counts. It's not the things we do, it's the manner in which we do them, with the intensity of love.

So, us, in our community, that's it. "Emmanuel", God is with us and we are with him. And that's why we have services and that, whatever we do, we say: "Lord Jesus, I offer you that for those who are greatly ill, for the tortured, for all the people in despair." And so truly, there is an immense love being poured out in the world. And it was the Christians in the first centuries who said [to the Romans]: "You have no idea what service we're providing you: if we weren't here, how much your empire would crumble. It's not crumbling because we are there, praying without ceasing, for you." Yet, we have to believe in the extraordinary power of prayer. And really do it in faith, all together. Because it's through faith the world is transformed. And when a community prays like you pray, there, earlier, an atmosphere of prayer and love is created. We are here, we say: "Lord, we lose half an hour to be with you, all together, because we believe you are the God of glory, the God of love. And we want to give you this homage, as the world does not pray to you, the world is completely in darkness. So, we pray." Well, it's an immense strength.

Right. So, next, we move on to the practical elements. Because we are contemplative, but [also] apostolic. So then, in order to be apostolic, we have to organise things. So, it's not getting organised too badly. There are rather a lot of attacks [against] the Emmanuel Community; but most of these attacks say: "Oh yes, but that, you are really organised." I laugh when I think of my self-organisation, but anyway, that's how it is (*murmuring laughter*). So, it's the Lord who wills it no doubt and who is helping us.

So, you know [all of the Community's activities]. I won't list them for you. You know well there is *SOS-Priere*, there's *l'Arche de la Colombe*, there are hospitals like Sevran, Saint-Cloud and then Nanterre, the hospice at Nanterre<sup>4</sup>. [In] all these organisms, it's really terrible, this misery, this suffering. So, we have brothers and sisters who go there, but not everyone can go because they work, but everyone can participate in this, do you understand? It's really very important.

---

1 The love of the Lord.

2 A play on words: the French word for turnip "navet" can also be used colloquially, to describe something as mediocre.

3 Allusion to an episode in the life of St. Therese of the Child Jesus: during community laundry, her neighbour splashed her in the face with dirty water when lifting up the handkerchiefs; and Therese ended up seeing it as a source of benediction.

4 Teams from the Community visited the sick in these different hospitals in the region of Paris, bringing them Holy Communion, working with the Catholic chaplaincy.

So, we have these [prayer]<sup>5</sup> assemblies, you know. There are more and more of them. We look after parishes<sup>6</sup> and we look after more and more now, because there are more and more of us, so it's easier and easier. Only, in order to do this, [we] have to be asked first<sup>7</sup>, [see] how we feel about things and how we are to discern things together. For example, it's clear that the vocation of catechists and of that of the liturgy, well, we feel really that they're more especially for the Emmanuel Community, to help parishes with. So, you know also we have special groups for students<sup>8</sup>. So, in addition, there's the "Quart-monde" where there really are people who are living in great poverty<sup>9</sup>. There is the travelling community<sup>10</sup>. They<sup>11</sup> evangelise in the 20th, in parts of society that are excessively poor also. There are Arab-Christians<sup>12</sup>. There are Africans<sup>13</sup>.

So that gives us already a lot of work. And with all of that, you have certainly thousands of opportunities to pray and ask the Lord for the conversion of these people! So, that gives you already a certain outreach. So, to go on, you know that it doesn't stop there, there are general weekends, there are specific weekends<sup>14</sup>. But also, there is the radio being launched soon. And that, you have to help out with because it's a battle to get a channel. It's the battle of the channels! So, we have to fight, with weapons of light, so truly we can advance. So, if you pray, well, it'll save us some time.

So, I won't tell you about everything. You know it better than I do. And there really is enough for us to believe and for us to help the interior<sup>15</sup> services, because some people say to me: "Oh yes but, you understand, we're looking after the interior services and it, it's not evangelisation." So, I say: "That's not clever, because it's obvious that we have to for there to be a valid organisation for the exterior services of evangelisation, there has to be a minimum interior organisation! Otherwise, it's anarchy!" So, if you're praying in the interior services, well, you're praying outside for evangelisation. This is very clear. And if you tell [yourself] that, it works by itself.

So, now, we'll move on to the action. So, you're going to go and buy a little journal. Two little journals actually. It'll cost the Earth. It'll cost you 2 or 3 Francs, or 3 or 4 Francs. So, there you have it. There's the journal of apostolic actions. Ah, that, that's new! A little something new! So, this, it's the Legion of Mary who did it and it really helped. (*Pierre Goursat explains the idea behind it*) We have a meeting. The most important thing is the secretary. So, the people meet together and we say [to one of them]: "What [apostolic action] will you do?" – "Hmm. I dunno." So very well. [We tell the secretary] "So, write down: "I dunno" (*laughter*) And then, [the person says]: "Ah, well, I have an idea, you see. I have an idea. I'll do this." – "We can write this down." Very good. And then, the others have lots of ideas. Everyone gets excited, they have lots of ideas. So, we write down these ideas. And we say: "Now, in eight days' time, we'll have a meeting and you can tell us what you've been doing." Ah! That's less funny! So, eight days later, [one of them] says: "Well for my part, I don't know, I'm tired at the moment. And my wife is tired. And my child has a cough. I'm a bit worried." Anyway, there's hardly anyone left. There are two or three people, but they say: "Ah! I forgot my journal!" – "Yes, well it's not worth going on about it." So, we have a meeting, moved to fifteen days later. So, fifteen days later, the others come – because they've forgotten about the system of using the journal – and they get there: "Yes, I haven't done much." (...) So, in the end, there are two or three who, as a distraction, have actually done something (*laughter*). So, the others are annoyed, they say: "Oh dear! He's doing it and I'm not doing it." (...) So, the following time, we start getting into it. You see, it takes three weeks, four weeks, depending on the speed and the practical spirit of people. And then, in the end, good year bad year, we're obliged to walk on and then we say to ourselves: "Oh dear! Now, you have to believe it because every week, you'll get asked again what you've been doing. And then, it's Thursday already. We're meeting on Sunday. Oh dear! I have to do something on Friday because, honestly, I mean!" And it goes like this.

---

5 Pierre continues to list the apostolic activities of the Community.

6 At this time, lay members of the Community (they didn't have priests yet) served in the parishes of Aix-en-Provence and Marseille; the choir regularly animated Liturgies at Saint-Germain-des-Prés in Paris; the catechetical centre Samuel was also in service of these parishes.

7 If a parish asks a member of the Community if they can serve, those in charge must discern if it's good.

8 The Community included lots of students who formed prayer groups in the universities and schools.

9 A couple from the Community, the Peeters, were very committed to ATD Quart-monde. Other members served it also.

10 From around 1977, a team from the Community went to pray regularly with them in the trailers parked in the banlieue of Argenteuil. Many travellers came to the prayer assembly at Saint-Sulpice. One of them was baptised in 1978 and a certain number of them are engaged in Emmanuel.

11 Is this referring to travellers or another group within the Community?

12 A small prayer group existed, with a Jordanian, a Lebanese, a Tunisian etc..., members or close to the Community. They evangelised their compatriots.

13 The sessions were organised at Paray-le-Monial for the « African francophone » (notably from 12th to 16th July 1979).

14 For example, on Catechesis, Liturgy, the medical world etc...

15 The internal services of the Community: accountancy, administration, secretary etc...

But on the other hand, we're not asking you to succeed, we're saying: "You should go and see your "good lady" from the 15th – as we say<sup>16</sup> – who is "polished with Cambronne oxide"<sup>17</sup>, but it's not at all serious." (*laughter*). So, you go and see her. She's getting a little better – poor woman! – and so, you go and see her. [Then you recount:] "And [my neighbour], she threw a flower pot at me." So, he turns up<sup>18</sup> with a black-eye. We tell [him]: "It's beautiful, you're a martyr (*laughter*). You're a martyr, it's beautiful." So then, he's glad because they say he's a martyr now. He's really happy! So, there it is, like that, it advances.

And little by little, another says: "I saw a charming woman who was really nice to me." So, we tell [him]: "You see, don't take yourself so seriously! Don't have this vain attitude. It's thanks to the other guy who had a flowerpot thrown at his eye, and then [thanks to] all the others who've suffered, that grace passed through you. But don't you believe that you did something more than the others." So, she thinks to herself: "Oh dear!" (*laughter*) So that's how it is.

So, on the other hand, things advance. So now, [the example I gave] concerns a little group. But you see how numerous we are! There are at least fifteen, twenty little groups! And in 20 little groups, well, there are a lot of people who've received smiles! They haven't all received flowerpots! Right, so then, things advance, you see? But it advances because we write it down and we go over it each time. So, it seems strange to you perhaps! But I promise you that the Legion of Mary said above all that they've done [this] with people who are very, very simple and often very, very poor, [sometimes even entirely] illiterate (it's not very easy to note things when we're illiterate, but anyway it doesn't matter).

And it's clear it's a force for action. Because, every week we say: "I have to do something. I promised to do it. I'll be held accountable. And I have to progress." And so, at this point, we're taken up by this action. And afterwards, we get a taste [for it] and we believe. After a certain time, when we see that all the brothers and sisters are doing it, well we say to ourselves: "Well, well, it's because it's true then!" And so, we progress further and further. And then, we see the extraordinary work which is produced! It's multiplying, initiating on all sides.

You see? So, you tell me: "But all of this, it's will-power, it's organisation, these are big things I mean." We reply: "My friend, and your sister, how is she<sup>19</sup>?" Because practically, the truth is what Jesus said: "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled <sup>20</sup>!" Yet, we're in a hurry, time is short, we have to act. And we must act. And as Therese of the Child Jesus said, when she saw a Carmelite dawdling: "Let's go, let's go! Is that how we walk when we have a big family to feed?" That's it: a mother with thirty-six kids, I promise you she doesn't have the time to say: "My God! My navel!<sup>21</sup> I've lost my navel (*laughter*). Whatever has happened to my navel?" So here is the question.

So, you've got it! And it'll work. So, buy this little journal. You know, me, now, I understand. We talk, we talk, he talks, he talks, "you chatter, you chatter"<sup>22</sup>. Well, now, I'm chattering, I'm chattering, and then, by coincidence, we're going to note it down. So, there's a good surprise for you: afterwards, we'll have a meeting with the heads of household, the heads of sector<sup>23</sup>, all the heads of heads, co-heads etc. And then in the end, they'll tell you [in household meetings]: "And so, what are you going to do during the next week?<sup>24</sup>" Well, I'll warn you so you won't look like a complete idiot. But honestly, think a bit so you can say something worthwhile. But above all think about what you're going to say eight days later, you're going to have to have done it! That's less fun! (*laughter*) Anyway, I'm not mean: I'll pre-warn you. I'm not taking you as a traitor! Right, so, you've got all that. It's not worth insisting a long time because you are quick-thinkers.

So, now, I'll talk to you about something which is even less fun. So, the second journal is called the "sanctification journal" (*laughter*). (...) So, in this journal, firstly you're going to put your name, because you know, if you lose it... hmmm! (*Laughter*) So you can put a pseudonym. You can put Jonah, Ezekiel... (well, don't all put Ezekiel, otherwise you'll never find it again. But find something original. Because if you lose it, at least we'd say: "Ezekiel?" – "Ah yes (you'll say) it's me." (*Laughter*))

---

16 Allusion to the popular saying « *la voisine du cinquième étage* » « The neighbour from the 5<sup>th</sup> [floor]"

17 To lighten the atmosphere, Pierre makes a reference to a joke meaning "She was intoxicated by carbon oxide"

18 In his example, Pierre passes from "you" to "him".

19 Popular expression used to cut short a speaker.

20 Lk. 12:49.

21 From 'Navel-gazing'

22 Another popular expression.

23 In the years from 1976-1980, this term signified a grouping of households.

24 This "apostolic journal" had been systematically written in during household for a period of at least a year.

So, in this sanctification journal, you're going to put your daily prayer time<sup>25</sup>. You commit to a time of prayer, perfect. It reminds you a bit that you're committed to a time of prayer. And then, you put: "Well, Lord, I didn't do very much! And then, I curtailed things a bit. And then thirdly, well, I was caught up in a very important charitable thing, I wasn't able to pray." You see. So, conclusion, at the end of the week, you'll say: "Well, I was meant to pray every day, I only prayed twice. Two or three times." And it's fantastic, when we see that, we say: "Well, well, that's curious! I thought I'd prayed every day. But after everything, no. I was distracted. I didn't pray every time."

So, you make sure to write that down. Like that, it's really clear. Next, as we're [speaking about] prayer, we say: "You know, I'm falling asleep a bit. I'm falling asleep." So, I've found a very agreeable formula. The log. "I'm humble, so I'm a log, near the Lord. A snoring log." (*laughter*) You know, a log, it crackles sometimes, like that, it's nice. "I'm asleep. So, as I wake up, sometimes I go over the time for my prayer time because I'm sleeping so well!" (*laughter*) Right, there we go. Anyway, you note that down.

So, next, you write down how much you sleep as well. Including during prayer times! (*Laughter*) Especially what time you go to bed. That's very important. (...) We write it down. Right, so, all that's very good.

So now, you also say: "From an apostolic point of view, I promised to do this or that thing." Don't talk about your apostolic journal but note down anyway a little something. So that, is also important for those who are scrupulous, or active, or super-active who crash all the time, who don't know they're tired, who always overshoot their strength: the rhythm of life. So, you have to think they have family responsibilities, professional ones, apostolic ones. All that is important [but] there's a balance to life. So, as you don't know how to achieve it very well, well, it's exactly what you can talk to your companion about. We see our companion, we tell them: "Here we go. Ah, I don't know how to do it anymore." That, is concrete, it's practical! And the companion will truly help you. And it's much [more concrete] than the state of souls: "It was raining today, so I felt sad. And then, discouraged. And then yesterday I was much better. And then I start it again." So, it goes up, it goes down like that non-stop, so much it makes the companion feel sea-sick, (*laughter*) but it's really lost time.

So, on that topic, I'm going to talk to you about another thing. I wouldn't say "the girls", I would say "the boys": there are boys who are very sensitive and who, at the smallest of things, a ray of sunlight, a light breeze – like myself<sup>26</sup> – well, they get a cold or they aren't very well. So, the others say: "No! Me, I'm solid! You see, I do this and I do that." So, he seems to be a sorry individual and to say: "Really, Lord, what can I do? I'm always high, I'm always low. I'm always low, I'm always high." It's not much fun. Well, offer that to the Lord. Tell him: "Lord, you see, you made me like this. You love me as I am. I remember that. Well, I offer you my inconstance, my difficulties and this tiredness. But I promise you, I would very much prefer to be as balanced as my brother, this person [from] the point of view of nervousity, then like that, I would have a regular life and I could do a thousand things." It's good to say this. But practically speaking, the Lord will tell you: "Listen, my little one, I made you as you are. And you need to praise me for the marvel that you are. And so, I think you can do much more than you are doing. And in the end, I also think that you think you are much uglier than you are! And so much so that if you could do this service for me, well, I would be very glad that you do" – "Ah! You believe so?" And then he'll start doing loads of little things. And then in the end, he'll stop navel-gazing and he'll feel freer because he'll be less closed in on himself and then, he'll start looking after others. So, when we're closed in on ourselves, we're cowering; and when we open up to others, we're fulfilled. So, he'll be fulfilled. So, in this way, for certain brothers and sisters, life is fulfilling.

So, when we're with our companion we mustn't make them a list of everything that's going badly either, and then all the difficulties, all this, all that. And he<sup>27</sup> says: "My companion, he doesn't understand anything. He's not listening to me. He's asking me: 'But what have you done [for your apostolic action]?' What have I done? I haven't been able to do anything with [all the difficulties] I have!" So, he says: "He doesn't understand me. My companion doesn't understand me. I'm going to change my companion." So, we see how things are a little. We say: "But how then! Change companions then." So, we're found another who is much harder! "Ah – he says – oh dear! I got the wrong one!" So [he] takes a third. And then he says: "In the end, I'll come back to the first one because after it all, he was less annoying than the others."

---

25 The « sanctification journal » included a column « prayer time » in which one should indicate the time consecrated to prayer every day.

26 Pierre felt the cold. But here he's talking metaphorically about sensitivity as an ability to be moved.

27 The person Pierre uses for his example.

So, it's clear when it comes to companionship, we mustn't lose time either. It's important we talk about it once, twice, three times, in order to walk over the horizon. But it's clear we're there to act. And that the Lord is saying to you: "But what do you do during the week? Not only are you doing nothing, but you find your companion, and you waste his time telling him that you're doing nothing. And most of all, that you can't do anything. And that you mustn't be asked for anything because you can't do anything."

So, obviously there's a minimum. Firstly, you have to pray hard and say to the Lord: "Can [I really not] do this or that thing?" And on the other hand, be humble and modest enough to listen to my companion and not always be saying: "But no, you don't understand this! But you don't understand that I can't do that!" And try and listen to them and say: "Listen, I would like to try that." Have some good will. Some good will. So, it'll facilitate things too, if your companion can talk to you. There are some companions [who] say: "I can't talk to him because I feel like he doesn't understand, he's not there yet. So, you tell me to pray, so we pray, but unfortunately, you can feel that he's too personal, too egotistical, too proud, too susceptible because of his pride. He doesn't listen to anything. So, what can you do? We pray, but..." But if the person thinks that perhaps, they can change, and that perhaps they're not perfect or they're not walking the straight line, they'll listen at least to their companion. They won't say: "But, they don't understand me. They're much too hard on me, they don't want to understand at all."

So, this is important. You see, all these questions, they're subjective. So, we could say: "It's the companion who doesn't understand! Me, I do this, I do that." [But] if we have things noted in our journal, it becomes objective! They say: "Listen, have you done this or haven't you done this? If you've done this, I don't judge, but anyway, here's how it is<sup>28</sup>!" So, that's why it's important. We stop looking at ourselves, our own ideas, our dreams, our anxieties. We write down precious things. And it wakes us up! So, we can say that we have anxieties obviously! But we can also say what we've done and what we haven't done. And if we're waiting to be good before acting, well, we could be waiting a long time.

So, you see, it's very important to have this little journal. So, this little journal, I won't talk to you in detail about it, you'll see that with your companions, with the heads of sector and the heads of..., anyway all the heads of train stations<sup>29</sup> that you know. And they'll talk to you about all this. Like this, we'll advance. So, we'll do this in a workshop this afternoon.

So, naturally, there'll be souls that will say to me: "Oh! But that's of the internal forum<sup>30</sup>." – "Oh – I say – well, that's a very knowledgeable expression!" So, the internal forum. You think we've really got things other than that to be looking after<sup>31</sup>. The external forum, the internal forum, there are limits between the two, it's not very easy to see the line [of separation]. But it's clear that if we say things simply, it won't bother anyone! To know that you pray, that's the internal forum or whatever you like, but if you don't pray, you have to note it down all the same! So, there are things from the common sense. So, don't complicate life too much and above all, advance!

Because the companion accompanies the person. I see, for example, when you have a spiritual father. Unfortunately, there aren't many who do have one. If I see all these people, if I were to go and see in Paris, if I were to say: "Go on, come everyone and get a spiritual father", well, they<sup>32</sup> would all be absolutely distraught because, how can you expect them to, they don't have the time. As soon as there's a spiritual father who is worth something, he's always overwhelmed! And always, in principle, by 36 000<sup>33</sup> girls. The boys are less "spiritual father", we can see that. But there's always a group of twenty girls waiting to see "father". So then, it's not so easy. We have the job of [deputies]. It's clear that at the moment, as it is organised now, the priests have so many things to do they don't have the time to look after everything. If you have a spiritual father, well, keep your spiritual father and then it's good, there's no problem. But if you don't have one and if you don't find one, well the companion will help you.

So, the companion is less of a theologian. It's not these sorts of problems that you should be talking about. Only, they are concrete and practical. Because often – we'll always put young women, because they're always surprising – [young woman] say: "Well, my spiritual father is like this. He replies like this, and that. So, I'll present things to him like this and like that, so he'll reply like that." (*Laughter*) It's completely true! And what they do. So, the spiritual father isn't any more stupid than the next person. But he replies: "Obviously! She's presenting me [things] in such a way that I'm obliged to

28 Meaning: «You've done it, that's the objective, because it's written in the journal. »

29 Pierre employs a humour trait: the word « head » *chef* in French, makes you think of « *chef de gare* » (head of the train station) when actually he's going to say « head of household ».

30 Subtext: we should only speak about it with our spiritual director.

31 Pierre wants to emphasise the importance of progressing in the spiritual life without questioning the distinction between the "interior forum" or the "exterior forum". Undoubtedly, he means to say: "There are sometimes more important things than asking whether it's the internal forum or not."

32 Priests who exercise the ministry of spiritual counsellors.

33 The expression « 36 000... » is in contemporary usage meaning a great number which cannot be given specifically.

respond to her like that and that's what she wants!" But because the spiritual father isn't there every eight days at her house to say to her: "And your breakfast is burning"<sup>34</sup> and then this and that, in a practical [manner]. Because the companion is there! Ah ha! So, they're annoying because they're a witness who's always watching and who is always [there] at a time he shouldn't be. So, there we have it. So, it's very practical to have this companion. Right, so, all this, so, you'll discuss it.

So, you see, the importance of the story: we're going to have the holidays. We're going on holiday. We say: "Finally, I'll have some holiday! I'll finally be able to rest. And I'll be able to be a bit pagan. I am Christian, eleven months out of twelve. Well, I can allow myself to be pagan for at least one month! (*Laughter*) Really, it's not really that! It's not a lot!" So, in the end, we plummet into a freefall! So, you have to organise your holidays. Because the Devil is thinking: "Oh! I can't do anything. They're always in Community and we can't enter in. And I always get [kicked]." It's not very agreeable for the Devil, put yourself in his shoes! But then he says: "During the holidays, ah, my friend, I'll catch up! I'll catch up. It's then they're separated. I'll catch up!" So then, be warned, be on your guard.

So, naturally, the Community is always very good. It thinks we can have holidays as a community! Ah ha! (*Laughter*) So, there exists the possibility to have community holidays. (...)

So, during the summer holidays, if you are in Community, you can relax, you have fun and all that, but you can truly have a deep community experience and come back deeply changed in yourselves. That's why I propose [these community holidays], we'll give you the addresses, all that. If you want to swim in the sea to roast or go brown, or red (which is [the case for certain people] to go brown) ... Anyway, you'll see that. Right, so I'm talking to you about that because we also will talk about it with our companions and you'll find what you can do on a practical level. Because the holidays are nearly here.

So, I believe that altogether, you've just about understood what I've told you. And I think that it could work much better. And so, it'll enable us to restart next year on the right foot and to advance. Because, you know, it was Ignatius of Loyola who said (and he didn't doubt anything at all): "Right, I'll make a list of all my sins." My God! Lord Jesus! Anyway "of all my imperfections", because you know, the Jesuits were really pretty good people! So, consequently, he said: "Well, it's not difficult! I've got, let's put, 26, 28, 32, 45. Bam! I strike one off every day." Let's say for us: one every week! And then, at the end of 45 weeks, you see, when next year's holidays start, well, I'll be perfect!" Ha ha ha! (*Laughter*) I'll be perfect! It's just as easy as that.

So, on the other hand, you suffer from pride. It's very good; we all suffer from pride. Well, "put your pride then, in the Lord"<sup>35</sup>, You see! There you have it. Take pride in the Lord. St Therese of Lisieux said: "Well, me, I have always thought I'd be a great saint." So, say that if you want. Or a little saint, or a quarter of a saint, anyway, whatever you want. But advance, and then you'll be on your way. Saying: "Lord, I must be perfect as you are perfect. This is what you said and if you said it, I believe it, firm as iron. So, as I'm incapable of that [I count on you]." As [Therese] says: "I am a little grain of sand next to a high mountain lost in in the clouds." You see the beautiful XIX century comparison. It really sounds like the literature from the XIX century. But in fact, it's the reality. "I am a little grain of sand. What can I do next to Mont-Blanc?" So, when you're sitting at Combloux<sup>36</sup> in the snow, getting a cold bottom and looking at Mont-Blanc, you can say:

"Obviously! What am I, next to this?" But<sup>37</sup> you can say: "The Lord is here and the Lord can help us. The Lord can transform us."

So, that's it! That's what we're going to do. With trust, we say: "Lord, truly, you have to help me." And then, our brothers and sisters are there to help [us]. And our household brothers and sisters [who'll say to us]:

"We'll pray for you. And then, you'll pray for them." Like that, we'll pray for each other, we'll call on the Lord and consequently, this will transform us. Truly, we'll all go up together. There you have it. It was Élisabeth Leseur<sup>38</sup> - who was from the bourgeoisie from the end of [XIX] century - [who] said: "Each soul which elevates itself, elevates the world." And unfortunately, we can also say each soul which abases itself, abases the world. Each soul which corrupts itself, corrupts the world. So, truly, Lord Jesus, help us in this way. And make us joyful and successful. Because it's you. Because it's your Holy Spirit. Amen. Alleluia!

---

34 Image used to highlight that, in the Community, the companion has a certain proximity to the people they follow and they take interest in their concrete life. If we see a person often, we notice practical points that aren't going well.

35 Cf. 1 Co. 1:31 and 2 Co. 10:17.

36 Village in the Haute-Savoie where the Community used a chalet for the youth, with a magnificent view of Mont-Blanc.

37 Pierre emphasises the word.

38 Lay French mystic (1866-1914), famous after the publication of her journal (*Journal et pensées de chaque jour*, Éd. du Cerf, 2005)

Pierre gourmat  
and his brothers and sisters

[www.pierregoursat.com](http://www.pierregoursat.com)