

Pierre Goursat

Fraternity of Jesus meeting

25th June 1977

## Compassion

This teaching was given by Pierre Goursat, probably following the project presentation of a “therapy centre” for young people in difficulty, a group towards whom he had always been particularly attentive. This was an initiative he held close to his heart and which had already been put into place aboard ‘La Peniche’, a place where people living on the margins of society could be received between 1973 and 1975. Pierre gives details of his new project, which became concrete in October 1979 with “L’Arche de la Colombe”. A disused farm in Oise, already hosting people, when the Emmanuel Community was asked to take it on. Pierre confided responsibility of it to Francis Kohn who came and lived onsite, assisted by Philippe Barbet who would join him in the evenings, after work. Sometimes, young people in difficulty were also sent by Pierre Goursat into families, he was careful to choose the families well, so as not to be too much of a burden for them, and a time limit was put on their stay.

Even though the Emmanuel Community was born in Paris, the Fraternity of Jesus during this period was developing outside of Paris, through a few people isolated in their respective regions, but who wanted to live the same grace. Pierre explains the importance of these Fraternity of Jesus meetings and also of companionship which, over-coming the distances, ensured they were not alone.

We’ll begin at the beginning. And then, continue with this logic. So, Jacques<sup>1</sup> told you: « The Fraternity, we don’t talk about it. We don’t define it, we live it. It’s like family.” He quoted the example of the children.

*Jacques Ficheteux specifies that: The Fraternity is like a family, we live it and one day we realise: “My family is here.”*

*Pierre Goursat: Gathered together, this morning. It makes a good little family! (...) We can breathe, we don’t need to worry, we can breathe. (...)*

So obviously, everyone from outside of Paris says: “That’s all very nice, but we’re all by ourselves” (...) Obviously, there’s a step to be made, because us<sup>2</sup>, we’re made very busy by being in Paris, so we’re looking after our neighbour and then, we let the others down. We say to ourselves: “They must be taken care of, but...” So (...) there is a simple solution, that of the companion. (...) Let’s take the example of Franz and Marie-Hélène<sup>3</sup>.

*Testimony from Frantz et Marie-Hélène Wernert who were anxious arriving in a place where the Fraternity of Jesus was not present. But, “the Lord came to us through our companion”. (...)*

1 Jacques Ficheteux, member of the Emmanuel Community since 1973.

2 Those with responsibility in the Community.

3 Frantz and Marie-Hélène Wernert met the Community in Paris, for professional reasons they then took up residence in Alsace.

So, the important thing is in the grace of prayer, we truly felt it was in adoration. And so it happens that our friends the Fichefeux<sup>4</sup> were able to have the Blessed Sacrament in their home<sup>5</sup> (*exclamations*). The Proux<sup>6</sup> have it at their house, the Bartet<sup>7</sup> also, the Bescond<sup>8</sup> have just welcomed it (*All: Amen!*). So, you see, that'll really create adorers, all of them. And we thought that in this grace of Adoration, we could truly live poverty. Because this grace of poverty is given to us during Adoration. And our hearts will be set on fire. Set on fire with love for the Lord and for our brothers and sisters. We'll be like living torches, we can set fire to the whole world, starting with France.

It's really still in this spirit, when we go and pray after we've finished talking, either we'll have prayer, or a night of Adoration, in order to be able to pray for our brothers and sisters outside of Paris who are quite alone and who need to be equipped with strength and power to announce Jesus to others.

*Silence.*

So, there isn't really a commitment<sup>9</sup>, it's a personal consecration, it's a mindset. We live it simply in the prayer of Adoration, but maybe, following this, the Lord will arrange things so as to give us activities like therapy centres. It's clear that ideally, we should be able to find therapy centre in every region in France, there is a need for them everywhere, to avoid uprooting people.

And in making a comparison with the prayer groups – which can have numerous services: welcome, organisation and all that – and the Fraternity, which doesn't at all have an administrative or heavy structure (...) but can have certain services, a specific service for, as an example, welcome, a therapy centre... But then that, the whole of the Community must discern. We can feel that it's that which is our priority because what the Devil wants to do is to make us all take a different activity, so much so that we're dispersed and we don't manage to (...) [be effective]. And as soon as we want to build something which outpaces the strength of the people in the Community, well, if we stand together, we can do it. But if everyone has a thousand jobs (...): "I've got this, I'm doing that", [it'll disperse us and the Devil can attack us more easily].

*Question: So, you Pierre, think that perhaps a therapy centre would unify our strengths? That the Lord desires that?*

*Pierre Goursat: Yes! There you have it, exactly. So, we go and have look at the place where the Lord wants it... the area... it's not so clear!*

Because, otherwise, we are uniquely a spiritual group. So, we are truly dressed with the strength of the Lord in prayer and in Adoration, but this also has to work in service of our brothers and sisters. And so, to come right to the question of discernment and obedience: practically, it's above all there that obedience is found. We mustn't [throw ourselves into] any old action, without knowing, [without having consulted our brothers and sisters], saying: "There we go, I'll take this, I'll take that." And this is particularly relevant when it concerns welcoming or receiving people. So people say: "(...)[We are trying to welcome the poor, but it's a lot, we're at] breaking-point, we don't have time to pray anymore, we're exhausted (...) [the people we're receiving are] excitable..." Yet there, in America, they told us (...): "Don't set yourselves up as the centre of the world, don't think that you have to carry the whole world." And the Lord is asking you to pray and to feel if it's you who must do it or if, in all humility, (...) you don't feel strong enough to do it. So (...) you should say: "Well, here we are, we're poor." And then, you pray for the people [that you can't keep], who'll go away more or less despairing and on the way they'll meet someone who actually (...) [can help them] much more (...).

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4 Jacques and Marie-Hélène Fichefeux who live in Orléans.

5 They received authorisation from their bishop to have the Blessed Sacrament in their home.

6 Claude and Danièle Proux, who met the Community in Paris, then took up residence in Drôme next to the Abbey of Aiguebelle.

7 They lived in the south of France and so were part of the Fraternity of Jesus.

8 At the request of Pierre Goursat, Robert and Évelyne Bescond took up residence in October 1976 in a building in the Carmel of Paray-le-Monial, which the sisters had given to the Fraternity of Jesus to use. Many retreats were held here, until 1981.

9 Pierre specifies here the difference between the « commitment » in the Community and the « consecration » in the Fraternity of Jesus.

(...) That's why we must gather together, have meetings to organise [charitable activities]. And charity must be thought about and organised. Because if we don't do it like that, we don't realise how much, for example, drug addicts and people who are exhausted [are also] exhausting<sup>10</sup>. Imagine if we took them in without having [enough] strength (...). So we take them in for one year, one year and a half, two years, (...) three years. [And then] we can't go on, it's a real Calvary and so we let them down. And at that point, they'll be three times worse after that than before. Because they think to themselves: "There you have it, I believed I was moving on, but well, I didn't make it." And so, we weren't successful, because they were doing it by themselves and they weren't strong enough. Whereas, if we'd been gathered together a bit, well, we could have managed it...

*Participation from Évelyne Bescond: already experiencing this welcome between us, in the heart of the Fraternity...*

*Pierre Goursat: There we have it, exactly, exactly (...). So we mustn't live in the Ghettos, because there's also the temptation of the Ghetto, but (...) help each other (...).*

I would like to talk to you about the grace of Adoration, which gives the grace of unity, and which gives us the grace of poverty. We understand true poverty. Before, we had hosts with thrones<sup>11</sup> (...), now we have simple hosts. It's nothing at all, with a little piece of bread and there you go (...). So [Adoration] gives you the grace of poverty and gives us truly this fire in our hearts. A fire which gives us our strength back.

*Words from participants (among others; Josette Lavanant, Francis Kohn, Charles-Éric Hauguel, Michel Boissinot (?), Yves de Brunhoff ...) on Adoration, the project of the therapy centre, intercession for each other...*

*Pierre Goursat: Concretely... what bothers us always more and more, is the rhythm of life. Prayer time: we're overwhelmed (...), we cut corners in our prayer. (...) I would like to talk about spiritual directors or spiritual advisors. You see, it's a bit like going to the doctors. So, there's the doctor, and then there's the nurse, who gives us the injections and all that. Our companions, it's that<sup>12</sup>. (...) So on another hand, I think that if we don't see our companion all the time, we can very well write a little in our journal about the difficulties of each day. If we put them in a journal<sup>13</sup>, we'll think: "Gracious! This week was, oh! I only adored this many [times]? I believed [I had adored every day]!" So, it really helps us to become aware, and we'll have to see that together, as a household, we must take time for that.*

*A participant expresses his disagreement: it's not just because brothers and sisters look after the therapy centre that the Fraternity of Jesus is responsible for it. (...) They're afraid that if we polarise ourselves too much and too quickly concerning jobs, we'll risk getting distracted from the founding grace of the Fraternity. Then Jean Dumard speaks.*

*Pierre Goursat: Yes, but myself, what I believe, is not at all that we should have properties and premises, heavy stuff, and things like this. I think we have simply to serve! The good sisters understood in the end that they didn't need to be the owners of the hospitals (...) and all that, but they could serve in these hospitals. That's the real question. (...). Conclusion: we still live in the world and it's clear that both are needed: we have to be, at the same time, without possessions<sup>14</sup> and yet truly acting in the name of charity, looking after less fortunate (...). And the Renewal, as the Renewal, mustn't be concerned with [possessing goods]. For example, *La Peniche* (...) was a houseboat given as a place of reception<sup>15</sup>.*

*General noise (someone arriving)*

An example: if we create villages of families, a place where there are several families, well, these families will live together (...), close to a town, this will make sure [the husband or wife] doesn't have to leave their job (...) and to come back in the evening, reconnect with their husband or wife, their children. Well, if these different people lived together, people would say: "It's a ghetto, these people are happy (...), who live amongst each other." But we can very well receive a brother or sister who is an ex-drug addict, someone who has been treated in a therapy centre and that we can help. But one or two maximum in each family for it not to be too hard to carry, and so they can be integrated into the family. If there's a hard case – a lunatic, (...) he takes it, once a month, bam, there it is, he breaks everything – so, there promptly appears in the village, a little emergency therapy centre where he can be taken in. We can treat him rapidly without giving

10 For Pierre Goursat this was a precious theme. He didn't want to take responsibility for people if it wasn't possible to help them in the long-term.

11 Meaning uncertain. It would appear Pierre is speaking of sophisticated old-fashioned monstrosities.

12 Pierre Goursat often employs this comparison: the spiritual director is to doctor, what the companion is to nurse

13 This is what Pierre specifies later with the « sanctification journal »

14 Cf. 1 Cor. 7:30.

15 Undoubtedly what Pierre means to say is that the Renewal is not to have goods that belong to it, but it could happen that for example a house is given to a group in the Renewal, for receiving people.

him the impression of being transported around like a wretched soul, lost once again. Furthermore, it won't traumatise the family, because [they won't need to say]<sup>16</sup>: "The children will get scared again, he's going to smash everything." And then, he'll be treated straight away, and two days later, he'll have calmed down, he'll come back (...). But this needs to be organised. It should be entirely possible for a fraternity to do this. And it's not a special organisation. And at the same time, if really all the fraternities were organised enough [for] welcoming, well we could then receive, with love and charity, people in convalescence, neurotics, drug-addicts, all that. And really no one can have results, because nothing is organised for this (...).

So, then, all this, is one possibility, you see. What's important is to really put the emphasis on contemplation.

Now, I'm going to [develop] another point. As an example, I'll take our friends the Fichefeux, James, not to name him. Well, James (...) [when they were living] in Normandy, in Caen, he really made the Renewal shine everywhere. He arrived in Orleans and then, he landed in a group who were having some difficulties, ideas which "weren't very charismatic". And it's very difficult because, as they're<sup>17</sup> the ones imposing themselves, they're the ones who were already there, everyone thought they were right. So [the Fichefeux] said: "Listen, it's not worth putting ourselves in this group because whatever happens we'll never understand each other. So, it'll seem like we're behaving badly. All the same, we'll stay out of it." But they find themselves all alone! And the solitude continues. So, there are of course our dear brothers and sisters who have come with them (...), but well, it's never just the two of them! Or the four of them. So, it's a testing time. But it's a time of desert and of purification. (...).

It's Claire [Pécout] who was saying to me yesterday evening that the Proux have a prophetic view and action about the Fraternity of Jesus. It was really spiritual. And when we were talking about Emmanuel, we said: "If you want to know what Emmanuel is, go and ask the Proux." (...) But they did spend two years alone<sup>18</sup>, always asking: "Lord, send us another family to second us." (...). And up until now we still haven't been able to find [one]. And, in the end, as they went south to Aix<sup>19</sup>, after two years [they were given brothers and sisters]. But what happened to them during these two years? They didn't lament about it saying: "Ah! The Lord has truly abandoned us! Ah! In Paris they're not doing anything to help us! (...)" They prayed really hard in front of the Blessed Sacrament, they adored, they prayed and then, they spoke about it. In the region [of Aiguebelle] there's no one; it's an absolutely cold desert in the South, it's horrendous; with the Mistral, it's terrifying. And in the end, well, they sent convocations [for charismatic meetings] to the whole region, to two or three 'departments', I think. And then, they had 300 or 400 people coming. It was quite extraordinary. After they even had 600 people. (...)

But you see, they prayed a lot, but they also acted. And this stopped them from folding in on themselves, from starting to say: "We aren't going anywhere! We can't find any more families! And we're all alone." So [if they had folded in on themselves], they (...) [would have had less and less] momentum and they would have sunk. They swam vigorously, praying to the Lord, and finally, there were apostolic results. And by the way that's how the Lord found Aix for them.

*Pierre Goursat next tells of how the Proux decided to go to Aix, on the suggestion of Fr. Garrigues who had just arrived. Next, he speaks of a welcoming centre for the disabled which didn't work "because there wasn't any love".*

*Participation from Évelyne Bescond on another example of a house for the disabled: "They technically had everything in place, but there wasn't the love."*

*Pierre Goursat: And so, this obliges us to recognise the effectiveness of love. Because without love, they are doomed.*

*Évelyne Bescond continues, saying there has to be lots of us involved.*

*Pierre Goursat: So then, you the Fraternity, you're a bit everywhere in France, you are [often] alone, a bit like the pioneers, you clear the way (...). And then, little by little, things will arrive. So, you see, it's not contradictory! If we adore, we truly feel poorer and poorer but we place ourselves entirely in the arms of Jesus. And really, we ask him to open our hearts (...). And his Heart warms us up, burns us. We burn with love, and afterwards, we shine. And as we are burning with love, well, whether we're in prayer or we're with the sick or [anywhere else], we are continually on fire with love and we see*

16 Pierre Goursat: (implying: if the family keeps the delinquent).

17 The members of the prayer group in question.

18 In Aiguebelle.

19 Aix-en-Provence.

Jesus everywhere. So, currently, all the young people feel they need to pray more. They aren't praying enough. And yet, they need to evangelise too. They need to be looking after those who suffer, to be compassionate.

*Pierre Goursat continues with the story of the Proux and them setting up in Aix, how they found a house, how it would appear that Claude found work that left time for prayer, for accompanying people and for evangelisation. The initial project seems to have been to open a centre with the help of Fr. Garrigues. Then Pierre Goursat starts praying. Passage audibly unclear.*

We shall pray for (...) [that they find] educators but who don't necessarily have a diploma. Because they have enough staff with diplomas: that's the necessary number for a centre. And, in addition, they could include two or three people who are there uniquely to love; to see how that works (...) and little by little recreate a climate (...). So, Fr Garrigues, he (...) he says: "It's the Fraternity of Jesus, and then all the members belong to the Fraternity of Jesus, it's extraordinary!" So, I'm telling you this, to encourage you, because you're in the desert (...). But prepare yourselves well because after this you'll have work to do! (*Laughter and "Amen!"*)

Right, so on a practical level... (*Pierre Goursat continues with talking about how we go about finding a companion: sending lists, travel costs etc...*)

So, on another note, of course we'll come to see you. But as we do have work to do, we won't come just for one or two people, simply speaking a village; but [we'll come] for the structure, (...) to help discern the organisation, for the spreading of it. (*Pierre Goursat continues with the ways in which we can feel less alone: not remaining passive.*)

The Fraternity, it's a family. It's like all families! Families grow. There are children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, great-grandfathers (*laughter*). (*The next question is about regional gatherings, so when we have family meetings we avoid making the great-grandfather travel to see each person*). [for example in the South-East]; there is a grouping of the family, if you like, for the South-East. (*Another example concerning Brittany*) And then there's the big one, the Paris region (...) You know, Orleans is part of the Paris region! We must have a prophetic vision of things! (...) I'm not talking about Melun, Melun is the little suburb (*laughter; then Pierre Goursat talks about Normandy*). You really must find courage! (*All: "Amen! Alleluia!"*) Above all we'll pray, we'll pray that the Lord gives you strength, power.

You see, it's an energising action! (...) And if you have particular problems (...), don't hesitate to speak about them.

Ah yes, I realise what I've forgotten to tell you: it's that the Proux, what did they do? Well, they were always in Paris. They were over there [in Aiguebelle] and they were in Paris: they were always coming for the [weekends for the] couples (...) – they [do them] in Aix now – and that completely astounded the Parisians. They thought to themselves:

"This couple, is extraordinary!" But it's true! So, if they came for the couples, they came to all our meetings: for the children, for the educators... so, you see... (*Pierre Goursat talks next of the importance of Catechesis*).

**Pierre Goursat**  
and his brothers and sisters

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