

Pierre Goursat

Community weekend
Saturday 12th May 1979

Evangelize

The weekend was held at Neuilly. In this talk, Pierre Goursat speaks about our relationship with the Church.

So, I'm not going to speak for too long, this already makes progress.

The second point of progress, is that Mgr Etchegaray¹ has just ordained his third deacon. So, in ordaining his third, the movement has started and he'll be ordaining mountains of them, like that. He tells us about it, saying simply:

"I have just ordained the third permanent deacon of the diocese – it's Marseille, and it's not an exaggeration² – others are in preparation. We are still not very familiar with this reality, which, even though as old as the Church, we've lost all trace of. A path which ceases to be used, soon becomes undetectable.

Just as walking is proven by taking steps and not by a drawing on a board, so the permanent diaconate is proven simply by making good deacons at home, well rooted in the world and in today's Church."

This has importance for all of our services because people say to us: "Ah, but listen, we have to be recognised, and our service has to be recognised because if they're not recognised, well that bothers us, and then it worries us, it traumatises us." Some people even say that they feel really hurt. Right.

I always say to bishops when I meet them: "But listen, you wait and see; just as we prove the movement by walking the path of it, when you've seen that it works pretty well, well, you ordain, you won't ordain before then, there's no point."

So, it falls exactly in line with what we feel and we are very happy to see that the President of the Episcopate agrees with us. Well. Now I will continue with what he says. He says this (...): *"The diaconate, should be a characteristic of all Christ's disciples, who must make themselves servants to one another. This must be the dominant trait particularly in bishops and priests. Neither power, nor dignity, but humility and availability, are what constitute church ministers."*

So, you see, it's not bad huh? Not changing anything, I totally agree. But it's clear that if it was implemented more, it would perhaps work a bit better. So, us, we have to get to it and make it work better too.

So, he continues by saying: *"It is in this way the whole Church is diaconal: serving God's plan in the world – you see, here I stress – and the mutual service of Christians is in the heart of communities" – He didn't invent that, huh? He said it – "Serving the Good News to all men without discrimination or rather, with a preference for those who are little and poor, and if the Church had wanted, right from the start of her long walk amongst men, to institute and ordain deacons, it is for them to be permanent signs, among us, constant reminders of the attitude of Christ the Servant, everything for everyone – you see, I think, this is really the spirit within which we live. What a spiritual revolution society would have if all of Christ's disciples freed themselves from the mirages of power we search for, the prestige we hold on to, the richness we accumulate. What spiritual renewal would happen in the Church if the bishops and priests exercised their ministry in the heart of Christian communities as simple servants, for the growth and common good of the faithful. Why permanent deacons? So that the whole Church centres itself on Christ the servant, as a priority, and washes feet, the great sacrament of his activity."*

You see, that's exactly it... his thing is well said, huh? And I think that really, this is our spirit, it's the spirit of the Church. So, in order to serve effectively, there has to be a minimum of obedience, but a dynamic obedience. And it's clear that when we want to act, for example when we want to evangelise, don't you think that his majesty the Devil won't be very satisfied to see what's being done on the streets. It's obvious that he'll go into counter-attack. If we, like the knights of the Hundred Years War, dive in like that³, the phlegmatic English will surround us and we'll be cut to pieces, minced meals and we'll say: "Ah, we did that well⁴!" And there you have it! So, we'll say: "We've been such idiots" and then that's it.

1 Archbishop of Marseille and president of the French Bishops' Conference.

2 Allusion to the reputation of people from Marseille for exaggerating when they tell a story.

3 Without any preparation.

4 Pierre says this with a simplistic tone.

So, we really can't be slapdash. That's really something for me to say⁵! So, practically, we have to have a strategy, tactics. So, you know that the Lord told you: "Be prudent as serpents and innocent as doves⁶." I always say: 'prudent' because it rings better, 'prudent', but in fact it's 'cunning'⁷. So, we think: "Cunning, isn't very nice, it's not very evangelical", but these are the ruses of war. And you only have to read the Bible, you'll see the ruses of war! And often that's what we have to do, because, as old Satan is rather cunning, we have to be more cunning than he. But at the same time, innocent as doves. And that is not very easy, but underneath it all, all we have to do is try and you'll see, it's like when we speak in tongues⁸. You see, that's how it works. So, it's important to think that it truly is a combat, we have a spiritual combat to engage in. So, we mustn't be naïve, we must be innocent, it's not the same as naivety. And at the same time, we must be cunning, because we could think: "Oh no! The Devil is here, he's going to tangle us up again." So, we make him think we are all tangled up, and in fact it's us who entangle him. That's the ruse of war.

I'll give you another example: *SOS-Prière*. We really felt that we should launch *SOS-Prière*⁹, but we wouldn't have been able to do anything if a certain number of brothers and sisters, and increasingly more, hadn't already, for a year, two years, been praying regularly one hour of adoration a day, they had this spirit of prayer. This morning we participated in a meeting of those who look after *SOS-Prière* and really, I was touched by the spirit of adoration, of prayer and of being listening to. Yet, we don't get to that point in two days. We don't say: "Hi, I'm listening" and then [it's over], that's not it at all. We must have this spirit. And you know that over the telephone we can hear the soul of the person very clearly. The voice weighs very deep, psychologically. There was a stage director, Robert Bresson, who would always say to me: "I always listen to someone on the telephone to get to know them, and the voice betrays itself, it really betrays what's deep down." So then, if all these brothers and sisters were able to pray, were able to listen, well, it's really because they spent at least one year preparing themselves. And on another point, there have to be lots of us for a service like this one, which is demanding and stretches you. If there were three or four of us, well, after one month, it'd already be over. So, when we went to see Cardinal Martu and when we saw Mgr. Marcus¹⁰ who more specifically looks after us, they didn't agree to let us have the Eucharist, the True Presence in our house¹¹ in the end. So, we thought: "Right, if you won't let us have it, you won't let us have it." And, by the way, he was very surprised, he said: "Really? You really are obedient." He said to me: "If you had done it without asking us, we'd have accepted it. But because you asked us, the answer is no." (*Laughter*) Look at the reaction. It's ecclesial logic! (*Laughter*) And it's really deep, because really, it's what makes obedience, you understand. And because we ask to be able to the Lord, and the bishop who truly represents the Church says "no" to us, well, we say "Right, well that's that". We say "Right, well", because in the end what are we asking for? We're simply asking to be connected to the Lord, to love him and because the Church herself says "no" to us, we say "Right, well that's that" and that's enough, because it's a call before the Lord. The Lord isn't bad or too stingy to say: "Right, the True Presence isn't there, so I'm going to take away all my presence", all that¹². He'll be twice as present because there'll be a presence of mysterious love there, you see. Because we obey and more than that, we've discovered the treasure of the Church. When we obey the Church, we have all the treasures of the Church for all souls, you understand, who are praying and who are suffering and who come and address themselves to us. In our obedience, throughout the whole Community, it's all the prayers of the Church, of all the Carmelites, of all the beings who pray and who suffer day and night, who pray for these souls. So, it's really very effective.

So, you see, it's very important we're a bit grouped together because some people will say: "Well, it's very simple, I have a little group here, then another a little group there, we get on very well, what's the point of being together anymore?" Well, it means we can do work which is more important, more universal. And it was St Ignace of Loyola who said: "the more universal the good is, the more it is divine". It's clear that we have more and more to fight with on a personal level. It's truly a combat with the Dragon. It's the woman against the dragon¹³, it's Mary who fights the dragon and who is fighting him throughout the whole world. We have to support our pope. You know that he wrote a letter about priests¹⁴ and it wasn't to everyone's taste – which is asking a lot – and really there are more and more battles preparing, which will be much stronger against John-Paul II than against Paul IV. Precisely because he is fighting courageously, he doesn't dilute things, he really goes straight to it, because, after 20 years in Poland, he knows what it is to fight, and we really need to support him. So, it's precisely by our obedience, through our spirit of service, in this love we have one for another, that we can truly bring victory: Christ can bring victory through us. So, it's truly up to you, because you are in the Community, you have made this commitment, well, you've made this commitment in love. Paul VI told us: "There are charisms, it's very good, but what's terrible is that there are charisms often without the Holy Spirit and without love." So, we have these

5 Pierre was a bit slapdash!

6 Mt. 10:16

7 Making reference to Mt. 10:16, Pierre often said: « You have to be cunning (like serpents) and innocent (like doves), but don't get the order wrong: you have to be cunning first, otherwise the dove gets devoured by the serpent ».

8 The comparison draws on the fact that in order to speak in tongues, you must also have faith audacious enough to experience it.

9 The *SOS-Prière* service (prayer by telephone 24hours per day) started 13th March 1979

10 Auxiliary bishop of Paris.

11 The premises of *SOS-Prière*.

12 The Lord's presence is not linked uniquely to the Eucharistic presence.

13 Cf. Apo. 12.

14 The letter to priests on Holy Thursday 1979: amongst other things, John-Paul II made a point about priestly celibacy.

gifts, we sing in tongues, we “cocoon”¹⁵, 36 things, we even prophesy sometimes – even if it’s often not right and off-track – but in the end, we do not have love deep within us. And it’s terrible to see for example, someone who has quite an important charism of preaching, or action, and who converts and who, himself, is dry. And in the end, these are works that are dead because he acts and nothing remains for him. We have to pray a lot for everyone and most especially for those in responsibility because at the moment, they take themselves too seriously and it’s devastating. Right. That’s why he takes on imbeciles like me, like that there’s less chance of taking ourselves too seriously. But the Lord is being delicate here, as much as with me and with you!

So, you see, it’s this truly deep action. And it’s always the question, concerning obedience, to say:

“Ah well yes, I don’t understand.” Obviously, if you understood, that wouldn’t merit anything. Obeying, when we understand, is given to everyone, but obeying when we don’t understand, that, is truly virtuous. And again, it’s actually sometimes very important because when we are a sentinel – you know, there’s that prophecy about “I have made you a sentinel”¹⁶ – if we say to them: “that’s idiotic, so come over here” – “Oh really? I’ll come over there then” and he’ll smoke a cigarette with the other person, during which time, [the enemy] enters and the whole camp is lost... they’ll say to him: “(...) we told you to stay here.” He’ll say: “Ah yes well, but I thought...” – “Ah yes well, if you stay here, you stay here and that’s it.”

So, that’s what it is. So, now, our communist friends have understood this well, for a long time. They make moralising films, which even have passive virtues¹⁷. These are passive virtues from the Gospel. Because they understood that for them it’s excessively important. It’s important on a human level and it’s even more important on a spiritual level.

So, we can act without thinking, obey without thinking, or we can obey in a dynamic way, we can act and obey, in confidence. When we’re in our families, when we’re a family or we get on well, we’re happy to obey because it’s not obedience, it’s love. We’re happy to serve our brother or sister, to help our father or mother, because there’s a lot of work to be done, we do it so naturally. So, it’s the same thing with us, we’re a very close family, and if someone doesn’t understand, they obey because they should obey and after they’ve finished their service they’ll say: “Now you’re going to explain to me why I did this because really I don’t understand anything at all.” They have the right to an explanation, but not at the moment when they should be obeying because if we explain it at this point, we mix up the two things. Do you get it, yes? Very well. There you have it.

And so, what is outstanding, precisely, is always what we don’t see. I remember that last year, we had a session with the Africans¹⁸. So, we were very clever, we explained them lots of things. After which we asked them: “So, have you understood?” They replied: “Oh yes, yes, yes, we understood very well” – “And what have you taken note of the most?” – “Ah, well, simply seeing how you love each other.” We thought to ourselves: “Oh no, if that’s all they’ll remember!” Well, it was very important. The testimony of our friendship with each other touched them enormously. And they really saw that the Community existed and that the Lord’s love was among us. They believed it, you see (...).

So, you see, I’ll give you another practical example¹⁹. Lots of people say: “You know, it’s shameful, we’re killing a third of children in France with abortion.” So, you can see, there’s *Le Figaro littéraire*²⁰ which lets a certain professor express himself, and then a certain doctor, one is Catholic, the other, Grand Master of the French Lodge (Freemason), and we show that we’re liberal because we let each other [speak], and we then say to everyone: “You see, you decide.” Right, it’s not worth knowing what we decide if it’s done in a subjective manner, we must know what’s right, what is a crime and what isn’t a crime.

So, there’s this charity “Let them live”. They’ve done a lot of paperwork, they push [the] deputies hard [so] we have a sufficient number to modify the law. But the one thing we forget is that whilst we’re letting them be free, well, children are born and have to be looked after. Ah, well, we didn’t think of that. So, when in times before, a [illegitimate] child arrived we said: “Listen, truly, no, you should keep your child, I feel that you should keep it.” But then the family didn’t keep [the mother]; [at] work, [the boss told her]: “No, you’re expecting a baby, I’m not going to keep you on. I hear you, but I can’t keep someone who’s pregnant and who isn’t married.” Anyway, the whole of society was like this. So, in the end, what did she find? She simply found one of the old charities we used to call for the ‘girl-mothers’. Now, it’s much smarter, we call them single mothers, but it’s still the same thing. Right. But, practically speaking, it was pretty annoying because these are highly esteemed people but who are really very disturbed. For people who are more or less normal, it’s traumatising to just say to them: “Here’s the only organisation where you can go because we haven’t really prepared anything else.”

Well, it’s clear that, because no one else is looking after it, we should be able to ask and create a welcome house for during the final months of pregnancy, then for the birth – naturally the State always gives out subsidies, but love and welcome, that, that can’t be bought – and then to help them start out in life again, to really look after them. So, you’ll see the thousands of people, millions of them who’ll tell you: “Let them live their lives, but of course!” – “And what are you doing

15 In the prayer groups we take shelter amongst ourselves, nice and cosy, we protect ourselves like in a cocoon, but we aren’t experiencing charity (outside of it).

16 Cf. Ez. 3:17.

17 According to the tradition of the Church, the passive virtues are humility, obedience, renunciation...

18 A session at Paray-le-Monial for African francophones in July 1978.

19 Paragraph a bit confused, but the sense is clear: it’s good to fight against abortion, but we must also look after the women who decide to keep their children.

20 Weekly supplement to daily French newspaper, *Le Figaro*.

to help them?" – "Ah, we didn't think about that." You see. There really has to be something that comes knocking on our heart, that opens it, because we have to have this compassion, to be able to say: "It's devastating, what can we do for them?" If this abortion law comes, how much distress it will cause! How many bedroom cleaning maids had problems like this and were let down – and often by the son of the family – and then sent away just like that! It's truly a dramatic situation, you know. And others who give birth one night and go to work the following morning so as not to say anything. It's really frightening. So, because of the suffering and crimes connected to this, well, we end up with this law. At the end of the day, this law is hypocritical because it's not made for women [like this], it's made for rich women who don't want to have children. And it costs less than going to Switzerland. So, really everything is backward. But egoism is still at the origin of it, because we haven't given enough love to each other. So, I'm telling you this, because we're going to be thinking about it, and I would like to reflect with you on the ideas you're going to have to get this going. So, it's important for us to work together and move forward.

Right, so that's all I wanted to tell you for now. Tomorrow we'll have workshops. We'll have workshops on prayer: we'll carry on with prayer, getting deeper into it; workshops on announcing: that worked really well last time, we've got some quite important testimonies; you've already had some testimonies which were given and you'll see in other testimonies just how much we can get stronger and stronger in evangelising in our places of work. And everyone, always gets scared, or gets the jitters, but we get past this fear which comes from the Devil, but we can get over it, so we're even stronger and we're truly transformed by it and we're joyful. And then, in the end, we announce the Lord and we see that people only had one thought, that we'd speak to them of the Lord.

So currently, our great idea is to say: adoration, compassion, evangelisation, and well we feel more and more that this is the path the Lord is showing to us and it's this way. Like he says: "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life"²¹, he's both the destination and the way. And, precisely, I would always say: "I don't understand very well: he's both the way and the destination. So, I don't really understand: is he the destination, or the way? If we've arrived at the destination, we don't need the way and if we're on the way, we're not at the destination." Right. So that's still my logic, but in the end the Lord [has another logic]. Fr. Bro told us the other day²² that the Lord is not at the end of the road, he's not at the mouth, he's at the source. So obviously, we can say: "mouth", "source", those are all words, what does it mean? But it's so important! He's in front of us: "Before we are, he is"²³. He says: "I am"²⁴. He is, "He is" the ultimate. We live through him. So, if we wish, all we have to do is mould ourselves, fall in line behind him. So, abandoning ourselves becomes easy, because we are in him. We really have to be twisted not to see that. Because we're in him, well, we're in him. What could possibly happen to us?

If there's a net, and we fall into the net, well we're in the net, we don't hurt ourselves. So, I really understood this the other day. You say that perhaps you don't always feel it, but when you reflect and pray, you feel it profoundly. If he is the source, if he's the life, if all life is in him, we participate in his life. It's not pantheism, it's truly much more than that, it's the Creator, it's everything. He is our everything. So why do you think that when we have everything, we can lose? It's ridiculous! So, it's really one of our own foolish ideas to be afraid, to be anxious, because he is everything. If we have faith, if he's our everything, well, nothing can happen to us. Only what he wants to happen can happen to us, and as he is good, well there you have it. We think: "God is everything, he can do everything and he loves me." Well, what more do you want? And really, if we start saying this amongst ourselves, it'll become a reflex in us and we'll think to ourselves: "Why are we so scared? That's just stupid".

It's exactly like with children who've been tortured or a dog who's been beaten. You want to stroke it? It's scared, it cowers away. Right. If really, we are loved, well then what do we have to fear? And it's magnificent because Theresa of the Child Jesus truly understood this. She called [God] "Papa, the Good God". Right, well it's exactly that. There was a nurse, who was charming, who had a strange way of picking her up again! She said to her: "It's terrible what you're suffering!" [Theresa] said: "No, because nothing our Good God sends is terrible." So, then she²⁵ said to her: "But don't you think that tomorrow you will suffer even more?" How charming. [Theresa] said: "Not at all! Me, you see, tomorrow will be tomorrow. And I never was able to do anything by myself. So, today I suffer and the Lord gives me what I need, tomorrow he'll give me something else." There you have it. But it seems heroic but underneath it all, it's so simple, this is what we've got to understand and tell ourselves: "Well I'm wrong, I'm wrong [when I'm afraid]."

St Paul says: "it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me"²⁶. Oh! I think: "He must be so holy, this brave St Paul, to manage to say that Jesus lives in him." But I said to myself: "But that's so stupid! Of course [Jesus] lives in him because if he didn't live in him, he'd be dead, him! He would have disappeared, he wouldn't exist." So, simply speaking, we've got to morally, spiritually and lovingly let God have his way in us, but we won't stop God from existing, we won't stop the fact that we exist through him and if we put our will – our desire – towards going to him, well, we are in him. And then, he'll look after us, that's how it works.

21 Jn. 14:6.

22 17th-18th March 1979 was held a «general week-end» on the Eucharist with Fr. Bernard Bro, o.p.

23 Cf. Jn. 8:58.

24 Cf. Ex. 3:14.

25 The nurse.

26 Gal. 2:20.

And so, to finish, I'll tell you what Mgr Huyghe²⁷ said. He was speaking about the Holy Spirit. He said that the Holy Spirit is a witness. So, we thought: "That's great, he's a witness, he'll defend us. If you don't know what you should say, don't worry about that, at the last minute in front of the judges and those interrogating you, the Holy Spirit will tell you what you should say²⁸." We think: That's good, he'll support us, that's good. But no, it's not us he's supporting, it's Jesus he's supporting. Obviously, he's very interested in us: we are witnesses, so do you understand. He'll do anything – even blow up the house – but practically speaking, if we have faith in him, well, it'll work by itself.

It's like the story of Blandine²⁹. Blandine was a 14-year-old girl, she was thrown onto the horns of a bull, charming, not very comfortable, but practically speaking the Lord was there. (...) So, then we shouldn't be afraid of martyrdom, it's ridiculous, you understand? We have preconceived ideas. *(laughter)* But it's true, it's stupid! *(laughter)*. It's really terrible.

We have to get that into our heads. Get that right into your head. Truly our Lord is victorious. We shout out all the time that he is risen, that he's victorious, that we're saved, and well get on prove it a bit more.

Let's sing, at least to give us heart!

Pierre Goursat
and his brothers and sisters

www.pierregoursat.com

27 Bishop of Arras and friend of Pierre Goursat. He gave a teaching on the subject during the sessions in Paray-le-Monial in 1978.

28 Cf. Mk. 13:11.

29 St. Blandine, 12th Century martyr from Lyon.