

## **Till Giving Brings Pain**

(Mother Teresa of Calcutta)

By Bishop George Khodr

That the new-born baby takes all what it is given of food, that it swallows all what its mouth can swallow, that it gobbles in everything, is the norm in our daily life. The “I” is what our existence centered on. What I eat becomes “my” body, and what I learn becomes “my” mind.

I do not mean to say that the human being is totally egoistic and that he is the center of himself as if his heart is not stirred towards others and does not see himself present in the others and through them. The human being is also altruistic and giving and that means that he has the capacity to be moved with compassion. And my aim here is not to define what in Man makes him giving; we say that this comes from the Lord who dwells in him or that it is a free gift from above and that Man takes no credit for the virtues he has; that does not mean that he does not have to fight to acquire them, but that, essentially, the virtues come down on him from above as Saint Paul says: “By Grace you have been saved”. The source of “the good” is primarily God because He is the one who takes initiative and He is the one who loves first. And we are not able to love except after we know that He loves us and understand that we are able to bring love to others because we have known and felt that we are loved.

We do not make the good in us. It is bestowed on us. Yes, we struggle against our egoism to receive it (the good). As such we respond to the Divine inspiration in us. Man is entrusted the love of the other. And there are those who responded powerfully and had their soul edified by that response. Some of us respond with a soul that God can quickly lead to Himself, and some struggle tediously in order to surrender themselves to the Lord. This is an encounter between us and the beloved Lord who knows the mystery of Himself so you find yourself flowing towards Him or you see yourself pulled towards Him with a push from Him as if it is not you who yearns for Him.

There are those who are in love with sin to the core as if they inhabit it; they get so intimately knit together as if it (sin) has been created with them. And it tends towards them like they tend towards it. Likewise there are those who do not want such an intimacy with sin and do not seek it and they do not find rest until they conquer it because their hearts have become the dwelling of God; or in other words His throne.

Some people feel that they have been molded with virtue as if they do not have to make an effort to acquire it; and there are others whom you feel have been molded with vices in an incredible way to the point that only the Lord is able to sow seeds of His presence in them with which they can become a little familiar

with Him; or they may not. But they might remember His words that ring at times in their hearts to wake them up so that those hearts can tear themselves away from temptation since God's grace in them has become more powerful than their sinfulness.

And when God's grace approaches you or dwells in you as such seducing you, and you become "in love" with it, then nothing else would attract you and the Lord will pull you to His pleasures so that you become intimate with the Divine in you since He (the Divine) has become of you; or in other words, you have become of Him; then you have become one that has come down from above. "By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth.....The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go..." (Song of Songs 3)

What there is of faith in mind leads to love; that is to obeying the Lord. But you receive the faith through grace that comes down on you, as such it pushes you to love God. I do not deny that your love for Him expresses itself in you keeping His commandments, but your knowledge that you are His beloved is the major motivation for obeying Him.

To know yourself as the "beloved" is to know that you have received the fullness of God's power that makes Him spend Himself. "So much God loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..." (John 3: 16). God is the one given as much as He is the giver.

God is on your arms or He has sneaked into your heart. That is what Jesus means when He says "If one loves me, he keeps my commandments. And my Father will love him and we come to him and make our dwelling in him" (John 14: 25). If we believe Jesus' words we understand that God is not above us or at us, but He is in us. In this dwells the Power of the Christians in transcending their humanity to the Divinity and to remain constantly ascending as such. This is rare and difficult; yet we have been promised that and we hang on to this call till we become of Him.

By the grace of that truth we become able to exist in the others in love or that we would become "them" (i.e. we become what they are). If you do not move towards the "other" to be "him" you would not have denied yourself. "He who wants to follow me has to deny himself and carry the cross and follow me." (Matt. 16: 24). As such you have to tear yourself away from your self-involvement so that the "self" of Christ can get in to you. In the least of faith, you become with Him in the sense that you would not be too aware of what is yours and what is His. Or you would have to believe that you are nothing but you are of Him and you see no chasm between you and Him because you believe that whatever glory and goodness you have comes from His mercy. If you believe that you have received

from Him all grace, you would be able to give; that is to become a crossing for His grace. There is nothing in your mere humanity that can be given to others. You give what you take and the other takes what has been poured on you from above. Your humanity in itself is inane. It is your faith that deifies you pouring in you the power of God. And you spread this power and know that what the Lord asks of you is to forget your created humanity or to transcend it so that you can give away what has come down on you from the Creator who wants you to give it to those around you since it is from Him; and you know that people can receive it when you turn towards them and share with them that treasure which you have been entrusted with.

God's demand to give yourself on-goingly might bring you pain. The Devil might whisper to you that you are not responsible for people to that extent mentioned in our Holy Books. And the desire for self-centeredness can knock at the door of your heart sometimes. That is form pride. But keep in mind that all beauty in you comes to you from God and that you do not possess that (beauty) except as one who has been entrusted with it.

You are in the permanence of the outpouring (of God's mercy) so that you find yourself as God sees you. And if you see people shining with grace, you feel that only the Lord has granted that and He alone chooses to give (His grace) so that others become the people of God in this world, that is those who carry His semblance and presence.

That is Heaven on earth; until God raises us from the tombs.