

## AMU Conference Dec 2012 Talk 2

### The Gift of the Church

#### Lustiger

- “I explained [to my father] that baptism would not make me abandon my Jewish condition – quite the contrary, it would lead me to find it, to receive the fullness of its meaning. I did not have the feeling that I was betraying my heritage, or abandoning anything whatsoever. Just the opposite: I felt that I was going to find the import, the meaning of what I had received at birth.

**Ratisbonne** (1814-84): *Honey from the Rock* p.30, p.23

I walked, mechanically, looking around, without stopping at any particular thought. ...Then the ... whole church disappeared, I no longer saw anything...or, rather, O my God! I saw only one thing!!! How could I ever even speak of it? Oh! no, human words are totally incapable of expressing that which is inexpressible; any description, however sublime, would only be a profanation of the ineffable truth.... the rest of the building had disappeared. One single chapel seemed to have gathered all the light and concentrated it in itself. In the midst of this radiance I saw someone standing on the altar, a lofty shining figure, all majesty and sweetness, the Virgin Mary just as she looks on this medal. Some irresistible force drew me towards her. She motioned to me to kneel down and when I did so, she seemed to approve. Though she never said a word, I understood her perfectly.”

I climbed out of a tomb, an abyss of shadows, and I was alive, perfectly alive...But I wept! I saw at the bottom of the abyss the extreme misery from which I had been pulled by an infinite mercy; I shuddered at the sight of all my iniquities, and I was stupefied, moved to compassion, knocked out with admiration and gratitude...Alas! So many men went calmly down into that pit, blinded by pride or indifference! They descended there to be swallowed alive in the horrible shadows! ... Will you not raise your eyes to the Savior of the world, whose blood erased the stain of original sin? Oh, how hideous is the imprint of that stain! It renders completely unrecognizable the creature made in the image of God.

I didn't know where I was, I didn't know whether I was Alphonse, or someone else; I felt so entirely changed that I thought I was another self. I tried to find myself, and couldn't. The most intense joy burst in the depths of my soul; I was unable to speak; I wanted to reveal nothing; I felt something so solemn and sacred that I had to speak to a priest

I have been asked how I learned these truths, since I swear that I never opened a religious book, never read a single page of the Bible, and that the dogma of original sin, totally forgotten and denied by the Jews of today, never for an instant occupied my thoughts; I don't think I even knew the name. How then did I arrive at this knowledge? I cannot explain it. All that I know is, that I entered the church knowing nothing, and I left it seeing clearly. I cannot explain the change except by comparing it to a man who awakens suddenly from a deep sleep, or to a man born blind who all of a sudden sees the light of day; he sees, but he is unable to explain the light that illumines the objects he is seeing.

**Cohen** (1821-71) : *Honey from the Rock* p.41, 44+5

At the moment of elevation, all of a sudden I felt burst forth, behind my eyelids, a flood of tears that did not cease to flow with a voluptuous abundance down my inflamed cheeks. .... I remember crying a few times as a child, but never anything like those tears. While they were drowning me, I felt surge up from the depths of my chest, split open by my conscience, the most tearing remorse over my entire past life. All of a sudden, and spontaneously, as though by intuition, I offered God a general confession, interior and rapid, of all of my enormous sins since childhood. I saw them there, piled up before me by the thousands, hideous, repulsive, revolting, deserving all of the anger of a sovereign judge... And yet, I also felt an unknown calm that soon spread over my entire soul like a soothing balm, that the God of mercy would forgive me these, that He would turn his gaze away from my crimes, that he would take pity on my sincere contrition, on my bitter sorrow... Yes, I felt that He would give me grace, and that He would accept in expiation my firm resolution to love Him above all else and to turn to Him from then on. When I left the church, I was already a Christian, as much a Christian as it is possible to be before baptism...

#### BAPTISM

The earth disappeared... [When the holy water touched my forehead] all of a sudden my body shook, and I felt a violent, powerful movement, that I can only compare it to an electric shock. The eyes of my body were closed, but at the very moment the eyes of my soul opened to a supernatural and divine light. This light expanded in my whole being; God the Holy Spirit, descended from the heights of heaven to me, showing to me in ecstasy that which a finite being could never comprehend... I saw... an immense brilliance, without end, plung[ing] ever further, ever further!... Everywhere myriads of angels sang with an indescribable beauty, ever more beautiful, ever more ravishing, such that no human ear ever heard, and the heavenly scents! And a soft warmth penetrated me...and my sight, despite the dazzling light that shone everywhere, never stopped plunging into the rays... and, in the center, reigned a light even more brilliant in its whiteness... There, sitting on a glorious throne, with on His right His glorious, well-beloved mother, was Our Lord Jesus Christ, beautiful with an eternal youth, and at his feet, all around Him, the army of Saints, clothed in the most brilliant colors of the rainbow.

These Saints were prostrate at the foot of the throne...Adoring Him and yet, at the same time, they turned and looked at me with sweet smiles of welcome...All of heaven and its inhabitants

seemed to be rejoicing at my baptism, as though the poor small soul of a redeemed sinner could have a real weight in the scales of Eternity...

Yes, I say the paradise of the Church triumphant. ...

I was plunged into an ecstasy of love, my heart connected to the indescribable joys of paradise and drinking at the torrent of delights with which the Lord drowns his elect, in the land of the living.

I was so moved that still today I can only imperfectly recall the ceremonies that followed. I do remember, though, that I was clothed with the white robe of innocence and a lit candle was placed in my hands, as a symbol of the truth which had just appeared so brilliantly before my eyes, and I swore in my heart to live and die to protect and defend that truth.

**Charlie Rich** (1899-1998) *Honey from the Rock* p.86, 87, 88, 93, 94 READ FROM BOOK

[If only I could believe ...that the words in the Gospels are really true,... All of a sudden something flashed though my mind and I heard these words spoken in it. 'Of course it is true, Christ is God, is God come down to make Himself visible in the flesh. The words in the Gospels are true, literally true.'

The next thing I remember was that I found myself on my knees in fervent prayer and thanksgiving. ...God Himself came to my rescue that day, and He Himself spoke to me with His own voice saying to me that Christ is God. Those few minutes brought such a profound change in me spiritually and intellectually that I have since that time been unable to recognize the self I had been prior to that experience, an experience the full nature of which will only be able to be known after this life is over.

I felt a deep gratitude in my heart for something which made me feel very happy,...from that day on... there was an ineffable fragrance about the words 'Jesus Christ,' a sweetness with which nothing can be compared. The sound of these words to this day fills me with a strange inexpressible joy, a joy which ....does not come from this world...

I have, since my Baptism and First Communion, acquired a happiness which I would not exchange for anything in all the world. It has given to me a peace of mind and a serenity of outlook which I did not think was possible on this earth...

It would in my case have been in vain to have been born had God not been good enough to extend me the grace to become a member of the Mystical Body of Christ the Church of Rome is. Without the Life Christ is, there is no life at all,...It is for heaven we have been made and for no other earthly good thing. It is to heaven every good and beautiful experience points and has in view.

I became a Catholic so that I may in that way be happy, not just for a few years, but forever and ever. I became a Catholic that I may in that way get the grace to one day participate in the joys of the angels and saints in the life to come. It is to that life the

grace of conversion is meant to lead. It is meant to lead to a happiness we cannot now imagine or conceive.

...one can ...never come to an end of enumerating the blessings conferred upon him by the grace of becoming a Catholic. "The mercies of the Lord I will sing forever." ( Psalm 89:2). .... Can the mercy of God be made more manifest [than] in the grace extended to us to become a member of the only true Church? It is be[ing] a Catholic that matters and not in any other thing the world has to offer however good and beautiful it may be. The Church of Rome gives us God Himself. It does so in all His fullness – a greater gift than God is, a human being cannot hope to receive. We receive the gift God Himself is, when we receive Holy Communion. ...To become more intimately united with God than the Church enables us to be by means of the Holy Sacraments, we must take leave of this life.

I feel sorry for my fellow Jews who fail to love the Love Itself Jesus is ....without faith in Christ nothing has any meaning...

... Once he has received the grace to become a Catholic, the life of a convert becomes a song he will sing for the rest of his earthly days, and this is especially true of converts from Judaism, seeing all such go from darkness to the light to be had in Christ alone.]

## SEVENTH DAY OF THE WEEK FOR CHURCH UNITY

Intention of the Day: Conversion of the Jews :Prayer for the Conversion of the Jews

Let us pray. O God, Who dost manifest Thy mercy and compassion towards all peoples, have mercy upon the Jewish race, once Thy Chosen People. Thou didst select them alone out of all the nations of the world to be the custodians of Thy sacred teachings. From them Thou didst raise up Prophets and Patriarchs to announce the coming of the Redeemer. Thou didst will that Thine only Son, Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, should be a Jew according to the flesh, born of a Jewish maiden in the Land of Promise. Listen to the prayers we offer Thee today for the conversion of the Jewish people. Grant that they may come safely to a knowledge and love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah foretold by their Prophets and that they may walk with us in the way of salvation.

Amen.

The undersigned Fathers of the Council humbly yet urgently beseechingly pray that the Holy Ecumenical Council of the Vatican come to the aid of the unfortunate nation of Israel with an entirely paternal invitation; that finally exhausted by a wait no less futile than long, the Israelites hasten to recognize the Messiah, our Savior Jesus Christ, truly promised to Abraham and announced by Moses; thus completing and crowning, not changing, the Mosaic religion.

The undersigned Fathers have the very firm confidence that the holy Council will have compassion on the Israelites, because they are always very dear to God on account of their fathers, and because it is from them that the Christ was born according to the flesh.

Would that they then speedily acclaim the Christ, saying "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed be He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

*Would that they hurl themselves into the arms of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, even now their sister according to the flesh, who wishes likewise to be their mother according to grace as she is ours!*