

## PERFECT JOY

(FROM THE FIORETTI)

ONE DAY, as St. Francis was going with Brother Leone from Perugia to Santa Maria degli Angioli, in the winter, and suffering a great deal from the cold, he called to Brother Leone, who was walking on before him, and said to him: "Brother Leone, if it were to please God the Brothers Minor should give, in all lands, a great example of holiness and edification, write down, and carefully observe, that this would not be a cause for perfect joy." A little farther on, St. Francis called to him a second time: "O Brother Leone, if the Brothers Minor were to make the lame to walk, if they could make straight the crooked, chase away demons, restore sight to the blind, give hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and, what is even a far greater work, raise the dead after four days, write that this would not be a cause for perfect joy." Shortly after, he cried out again: "O Brother Leone, if the Brothers Minor knew all languages; if they were versed in all science; if they could explain all Scriptures; if they had the gift of prophecy, and could reveal, not only all future things, but likewise the secrets of all consciences and all souls, write that this would not be a cause for perfect joy." After proceeding a few steps farther, he cried out again with a loud voice: "O Brother Leone, little lamb of God! if the Brothers Minor could speak with the tongues of angels; if they could explain the course of the stars; if they knew all the virtues of all plants; if all the treasures of the earth were revealed to them; if they were acquainted with the various qualities of all birds, of all fish, of all animals, of men, of trees, of stones, of roots, and of waters,—write that this would not be a cause for perfect joy." Shortly after, he cried out again: "O Brother Leone, if the Brothers Minor had the gift of preaching so as to convert all infidels to the faith of Christ, write that this would not be a cause for perfect joy."

Now this discourse having lasted for the space of two miles, Brother Leone wondered much within himself; and, questioning the saint, he said: "Father, I pray thee teach me where to find cause for perfect joy." St. Francis answered: "If, when we shall arrive at Santa Maria degli Angioli, all drenched with rain and trembling with cold, all covered with mud and exhausted from hunger; if, when we knock at the convent-gate, the porter should come angrily and ask us who we are; if, after we have told him that

we are two of his brothers, he should answer angrily, 'What you say is not the truth; you are but two impostors going about to deceive the world, and take away the alms of the poor; begone, I say'; if he refuses to open to us, and leaves us outside, exposed to the snow and rain, suffering from cold and hunger till night arrives,—then, if we accept such injustice, such cruelty, and such contempt with patience, without being ruffled, and without murmuring, believing with humility and charity that the porter really knows us, and that it is God who makes him speak thus against us, O Brother Leone, write down that this is a cause for perfect joy. And if we knock again, and the porter comes out in anger to send us away, as if we were vile impostors, with oaths and blows, and saying, 'Begone, miserable robbers! go to the hospital, for you shall neither eat nor sleep here!'—and if we accept all this with patience, with joy, and with charity, O Brother Leone, write that this is indeed a cause for perfect joy. And if, urged by cold and hunger, we knock again, calling and entreating with many tears, for the Love of God, to the porter to open to us and give us shelter, and if he comes out more angry than before, exclaiming, 'These are but impertinent villains, I will deal with him as they deserve'; if he takes hold of a knotted stick, and, seizing us by the cowl, throws us on the ground, and, rolling us in the snow, beats and wounds us with the knots in the stick;—if we bear all these injuries with patience and joy, thinking of the sufferings of our blessed Lord, which we would share out of love to Him, O Brother Leone, write that here, finally, is cause for perfect joy.

"And now, brother, listen to the conclusion. Above all the graces and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ grants to His friends, is the grace of overcoming oneself, and accepting willingly, out of love to Christ, sufferings, injuries, discomforts and contents; for in all the other gifts of God we cannot glory, because they do not proceed from ourselves, but from God, according to the words of the Apostle, 'What hast thou that thou hast not received from God? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' But in the cross of tribulation and affliction we may glory, because, as the Apostle says again, 'I will not glory save in the cross of our Saviour Jesus Christ.'"

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