

G

1. On **Germany**, in 1970¹

Fr. G.: Gerondissa, will you please tell us how you made the acquaintance of the then Bishop of Germany, today's Metropolitan of Kissamos and Selino?

G.G.: in 1970, the Most Rev. Metropolitan Irineus was in Crete. I went to see him with a friend of mine, the late L.T. This lady was closely connected with the Bishop's works, his boarding schools and other benevolent institutions. One day she asked whether I would like to meet him. :Yes;, I answered. When we became acquainted – he is an outstanding personality indeed – he questioned me on various matters and asked if I could stay a few days and talk to the girls of the boarding school. After that I left for the U.S.A. and wherever I went , I inquired if they had a Cretan Association. Every Parish had one. I informed them of the work of Bishop Irineus and they wrote to him sending cheques and saying that a nun passed from here etc. after my return to Greece, he invited me again to Crete. One day, Bishop Irineus told me that he was leaving for Germany. He did not wish to go, you know, not at all. But these were the days of the Colonel's Junta.

Fr. G.: The Government wanted to send him away, because of the influence he had locally, particularly at Chania – an influence that interfered with their own policy. So they sent him to Germany.

G.G.: Yes. He had done much for the Cretan people. He even helped them in founding a local Shipping Company.

Fr. G. ... the ANEK Lines, after those terrible shipwrecks... the Bishop was therefore "dangerous". He had to go...

G.G.: So, he said, "Would you come with me"? "I will". "The point is I am leaving next week!" "Gladly." A week later we were on the plane, landing in Bonn among press reporters etc. Then the ceremony at the Metropolis (Lennestr. 15) and meeting fellow Greeks with the various problems who came to see the Bishop. Then, he would send me to hospitals, to visit the sick and so on.

¹ St. Andreas, Patission, Athens, 15-2-88

2. on “**God and I on Earth**”²

K.: Mother, What do you mean when you say, “God and I on Earth”?

G.G.: This is meant to prevent us from being misled by human knowledge and guidance. It is most essential. Because the Power of Darkness will always send near you persons who will appear as sheep while underneath they are wolves, as the Lord says,,, And many a time the Evil Spirit will enter persons that are dear to you. When he sees that you are following a Practice with the sole purpose to reach the Way of God, he sends them to deceive you. Persons that are most dear to you can come and do things that are totally unrelated to the Truth of God. This is why you should always ask yourselves, *If the Invisible Christ were here, Visible, as it happened once before, how would I behave? What would I do?* And then, you start trembling so much that you are unable to utter a single word. ... Truly.

3. on the relation between **Grace and Love**³

G.G.: The Grace of God often departs from us because of our acts and our way of life. It may return sometime, after much effort, with Prayer, Submission (to the Will of God) and Humility. Still, the key to all that is the extent of our Love. Once, I asked the Angels: “Where does God want me to be? What does He want me to do”? The categorical answer was: “Where you go, what you do, how you live, whether you help others, is of less significance. Only one thing is important: the quality and quantity of the Love you give to all – to all, without discrimination.”

K.: What do you mean by quality and quantity?

G.G.: Quality is determined by the giving of Love without expecting reward. As to quantity, Love must be endless, to the point of personal sacrifice. For Love without sacrifice is not Love according to God. But, what kind of sacrifice? That which is not felt as being sacrifice! To such an extent! Not the calculating kind which says, “I have sacrificed this and that, and what have I got in return”. That is Pharisaism.

² K. Panoutsopoulou, Athens, 1985

³³ K. Panoutsopoulou, Athens, 1985

4. On Gratitude⁴

G.G.: I want to tell you to be very careful on the subject of gratitude. Never expect gratitude from others. It is you who must be grateful, immensely grateful. When you become conscious of that, you will have God's Blessing. Do you know why? Because when God wants to help someone – you, for example – He will send somebody to do it. This somebody could be anyone. That is to say, if God had not sent this particular person, He would have sent another one. You would have been helped anyhow. “*My help is from the Lord*”. Who am I therefore – this “anyone” – to take pride in helping? Sometimes we hear someone say: “If it weren't for me, this could not have been done!” and other such nonsense. Whereas, everything would have been done. Do you understand why? Because, as we are told, God can make children for Abraham even out of the stones and send them to help.

5. on the Group⁵

K.: As Social Workers, we make use of the group, whenever we wish to help a person understand himself. We believe that the ideal size for a group is twelve people. Could this be the reason for which Christ Himself started with the Twelve Disciples?

G.G.: Well, but don't forget that He never said to all the Twelve together what He said to those He took apart from the group as they walked – to James and John ... to Peter, James and John... It was to them, *privately*, that He made all the important revelations. Yet, His Teaching was for the whole group. *I believe that a person cannot evolve within a group*. Because the group cannot possibly be uniform. The group may share an ideal. Let us suppose that the ideal of a certain group is to gather all the beggars off the streets and lodge them in small houses with a common kitchen. Let us suppose then that, personally, I am opposed to this. I say, “Let him be free to beg, buy the food he wants, enjoy his family as you do. Don't confine him as if he were a prisoner because he is poor”. Now, here is the problem. A visitor arrives and watching the group will presume that all the persons in it share the same opinion always. He cannot distinguish between them. I had such an experience once. I happened to be in a certain country, invited by a group of people. The speaker delivered his address in an impersonal manner, without

⁴ K. Panoutsopoulou, Athens, 1985

⁵ K. Panoutsopoulou, Athens, 1985

any reference to ideals, without any mention of God. At the end, a man of God approached me and asked, "What are doing here? Don't you see that this man is like the Antichrist himself"? I answered, "I certainly see that. This is the reason I am here". "What are doing, then"? I said, "Exactly that. I have been waiting for someone who disagrees, like you do, to come and have the courage to ask me what goes on here, so that I may tell him: you are quite right, my friend. These things are neither for you nor for me".

K.: As you mentioned once, quite aptly, he who directs a group finds himself in a most difficult situation, because he cannot possibly divide himself in so many parts; become as many different individuals as the person who compose the group he is in charge of...

G.G.: It is exactly for this reason – because man cannot be split up in many parts – that I believe that a good job can be done with only two persons, face to face. In this way, one person expresses himself freely, sees his own image in the other person who listens to him, and opens up his heart. Then the listener stops being himself. I can tell you that with God's Help I can become in one day, five or ten completely different persons – as many as those who come to talk to me. So much so, that I sometimes think: Is it possible for Love to transform a person into someone else? And can this be repeated with every newcomer? Yes, Indeed. Because after all, love is the only thing I give them, nothing else.

K.: Could you please explain this? When you say that you become the other person, what do you mean by that?

G.G.: Well, let's say that a young boy comes and talks to me about his problem, about what he faces at home: how unhappy he is with his mother, who shows no understanding at all, and who – from the time he returns from school until the next morning when he leaves for school again – has but one obsession and keeps telling him: "Be at the top of your class. Don't let anyone else be the first. Take care that you beat them all. Make sure that you become a strong man. See to this... See to that." This mother never says, "Try to love your classmate. Don't treat him badly. Remember that all children have parents who love them. You should love one another as if you were one family". She never says anything like that. And so, the young boy is desperate. He comes to me, "I cannot stand it any more. I cannot bear it, because I want to behave in a different way from the one my mother wants me to. What am I to do"? I assure you,

sister, that at this moment I cease to exist as you know me. At once, I become this person. I suffer with him, put myself in his place and say, "What is to be done"? After that, and only then, I feel the Guidance of God and can give him advice on the attitude he should adopt in the face of his problem. When the youth has acted accordingly, he comes back and, once more, we talk it over. And so on. In five or six months a state of understanding is reached – something that would have been impossible if I had been thinking the way I am. For I was brought up as a "spoiled" child, born and growing up in an environment of love, without difficulties. Therefore, how could I possibly approach this youngster? How could I do anything, unless I was completely transformed into this person? Do you understand? You cannot just tell him, "Do this. Don't do that, because it is wrong" and so on. You cannot do anything if you stop "being him". You must feel with him, suffer with him, until God guides you one how you can both solve the problem, on how you can find the way out of this difficult situation.

k.: In a way, that is, you get right into that person.

G.G.: Yes, Absolutely! I live his problem. Fortunately, however, I live it only as long as this person is in my presence. Is he gone? I spend some time alone with the Angels, present this person at the Feet of Christ in mental prayer, and this case is over. After a while another person comes, and then another. In each case, I become that other person. Sometimes this goes on for days.

K.: How many persons can you see in one day?

G.G.: Normally, and so far, about fourteen or fifteen.

k>: How tired do you feel the moment the fifteenth leaves?

G.G.: I don't feel tired at all! I feel nothing – to such a degree that I could start my day all over again, that very moment.

D.: How are you renewing yourself?

G.G.: Woe to me if I could not be renewed! This happens because I have no memory at all for earthly matters, none at all. How can I describe it? My experience with human contacts taught me this gradually. I had something like a childish memory and was wondering what a fine thing this is.

D.: Did you have this since you were a child?

G.G>: No. For me it began from the time the Lord took me to England, in 1938, with only one pound sterling in my pocket, and it has been going on ever since.

D.: That is, you leave everything in the Hand of the Lord. You keep nothing in you?

G.G.: Nothing, absolutely nothing. I do not exist. I didn't know that. You just listen, then you shut "the door of your room" and nothing exists. You have left it all at the Feet of Christ

K.: How did you achieve this?

G.G.: I didn't. It is something like a gift from God. This is how I understand it. Do you know why? Because I never linger on any problem, not even my own. When the person leaves, I have no thought. I rejoice with a flower; I look and the sky; or something like that. And it is again, God and I on Earth. Do you understand? When God created us He said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (that is, with all the strength of your being) "and thy neighbor as thyself". When my neighbor comes, and I become his neighbor, and we have talked for a while, I say to my Lord: "There, now he goes away happy, and so am I". What I had to do is finished. I don't waste time thinking it over and saying, "Ah. The poor lad, who knows what he is going through now, how his mother is treating him, etc." I never imagine such things.

K.: The next time he comes to see you, let's say after as long as six months, how do you proceed? From the beginning or from the point where you ha stopped?

G.G.: From the point he will start – nothing else. I live that very moment. Because I believe that the Past does not exist and that it is quite foolish to think of the Future, since we do not know what will happen. Only the Eternal Present of God exists. It is at this very moment that we live it. For me, now, there exists no one on Earth except God and you. Do you agree? (laughing) Those who know me, sometimes tell me jokingly, "The moment we leave, you will forget all about us". Well, now I shall be leaving you, I'll go home, and shall see somebody else. The same thing will happen again and again. This person and I on Earth – only!

6. on **Judith Grundy**, the Dutch Missionary in India⁶

G.G.: The parents of Judith Grundy were Dutch. The more the number of their children increased, the more difficult it became to provide for them – with God’s Help they had eleven children. So, they decided to emigrate to the U.S.A., where they were able to raise their children with less difficulty. Judith was the eldest. One day, when she was 12, she heard the pastor speak on missionary work in India and Africa. A little later, she quit school and attended courses in domestic sciences. After that she took preparatory lessons for missionary work. Her parents wanted her to find a job and help the family, but they could not dissuade her from pursuing her strong wish to become a missionary. Though her family was Lutheran, she enrolled in a Methodist school for missionaries. She studied the Bible thoroughly and everything seemed to come to life in her heart. She used to tell me that she felt the prophets as friends.

After her studies, Judith waited for the Call – to find out to which country God wanted her to go. One day, she prayed most profoundly and devoutly asking God to show her the way. Then, in church, after the sermon she heard the pastor say that in India there were many opportunities for Christianity and that “the crop is heavy, but the laborers are scarce... Who among you feel love for Christ and for the Truth of the Gospel? Let them raise their hand”! The first to do so was Judith. I remember her telling me that she was not aware of what she had done, she knew though that a Divine Power had raised her hand.

Preparations started in a few days, and so did various comments. “It is not right for her to go with that group since she belonged to another Church...” and many such remarks. They almost drove her to distraction. Her parents refused to let her go. She was quite desperate, and a moment came when she felt like giving up. She sunk into prayer and had an experience related to “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28). So, with all her faith, with all her devotion, she deposited her load at the Lord’s Feet. Obviously, it was a sign from Christ, as a few days later, friends of the family came with the news that they and other acquaintances would help her go to India. They promised to pay her passage and assured her a small monthly allowance on which she could live. And so, at the age of 25, she left for that unknown land.

⁶ Helen Virvou, 1972

Her steps took her to a village at the foot of the Himalayas, where there were a few Dutch families. Two weeks later, she was called to deliver an Indian woman. The mother, a widow, died five days after giving birth to a girl and the infant was left with no one in the world. Judith took the baby and adopted her, giving the little girl her own name.

This was the beginning of a large family of adopted children that Providence gave her and provided for, through her faith. Her life was a simple one, and she raised the children as if she were their true mother. Neither she herself nor any of the children ever wore anything new – they were always dressed in whatever they received from friends in the U.S.A.

Judith gave her children a good education, sending them to mission schools and raising them as good Christians. They became teachers, painters, nurses, excellent catechists etc. They were brought up with much love and each followed his or her own vocation. Thirty five years passed. Her sons and daughters married and she became a grandmother. All continued their mother's work, raising good Christian families. All these years she stayed in this small village, which is surrounded by tea plantations. In summer, she moves to a larger village, up on the Himalaya Mountains, together with all her family. She never refused a favor, never imposed her will. The children literally adore her.

One evening, we were sitting in her courtyard, watching the sunset. Judith held one of her grandchildren on her lap, fondling it. We started talking of life, and death, of life after death. With a nostalgic look on her face she turned and told me: "When I was young, I was so eager. I believed I could do many great things for God. But I didn't do anything important".

I sat, looking at this woman filled with the Grace of God – like a Saint – who had never thought to please herself but only to submit to God and reach His Light of Love. This is why she was not aware of her saintliness, just as no Saint is aware of it...