

Experiencing God



by Christ the Priest Region



In order to convey the concept of experience to another, a person must be drawn to or be exposed to someone or something, in such a way that that someone or something will impact the person with a life changing experience. The word experience is defined as “an event that is lived and from which something is learned.”

To be able to talk about experiencing God in our lives, a personal encounter with God must occur. In other words, we must expose ourselves to God. We must let God—who is reaching out to us, who is trying to captivate us, and who does not rest until we allow Him to touch our lives in a unique way—find us. After we experience an encounter with the Lord God, our lives will never again be the same.

Those who have experienced God in their lives are fervently compelled with a desire to attain holiness—the effective practical holiness of “deeds” and “love in action” described by Conchita. They feel urged or impelled to share and communicate the happening that changed their lives. An experience with God leads us naturally to experience love of neighbor. God has captivated me, and I want my neighbor to experience God with me and through me.

These two elements of experiencing God are described in the Apostleship of the Cross as “fidelity to the Father or loving exchange” and “salvific solidarity with our brothers and sisters.”¹ This also entails working for the building up of a priestly people, founded—not on human effort—but in God who has revealed himself in our lives. The building of a priestly people—with its foundation built upon our experience of God, inspiring us to desire complete union

with Him and to do good to others—has been present throughout the history of salvation since the patriarchs and continues in our times in Conchita and Félix de Jesús.

How appropriate and effective for the theme of this writing are the words of Pope Benedict XVI in his Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, “The Door of Faith,” which announced The Year of Faith: “Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy.” When we open the door of faith, we all experience a desire that leads us to God. God reveals Himself and through faith we surrender freely and wholly to that which God wants to reveal.² How essential to our faith is the encounter with God!

Those who encounter God through Christ feel a strong calling to love Him in their daily lives, experiencing change and conversion. Love begets love. When love is expressed and shared, it grows and is strengthened. Those who encounter God and who love God are compelled to communicate this experience.

¹ cf. *Rules and Bylaws, Apostleship of the Cross, (ERAC) 29, 44*

²cf. *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum, 5*



It is of great significance to mention two important figures from the twentieth century who had experienced a constant encounter with God. This encounter is with God on the Cross, i.e., with Jesus who goes to the extreme—to death on the Cross for love of us. Jesus invites these two to live and surrender their lives in this same measure for love of others. They are Conchita and Félix de Jesús. We probably diminish the lives of these exceptional spiritual directors if we try to point to a specific event through which they encountered God and after which their lives changed suddenly and drastically. Instead, we can say that throughout their entire lives Conchita and Félix were in constant encounter with God; the experience of God was continuous in their lives. Their experience of God on the Cross was so great and powerful that they felt an overflowing love for the Crucified. Through this experience they were able to perform great works of mercy. In other words, they wished for others to also experience the unconditional love that is surrendered on the Cross.

Conchita expresses this experience of the love God has for her and the love that she has for others in her famous cry: “Jesus, Savior of all people, Save them, Save them!”

Conchita wishes to love God, but she knows that to love God you must first be captivated by Him.³ She is aware that as her love for God grows so does her love of neighbor. A result from what Conchita describes as “deeds” or “love in action” is the desire—a consuming zeal—for God’s glory and the salvation of souls. Let us listen to her words: “This love—for works of love—that

through God’s grace has possessed my soul, drives me to constantly suffer, surrender myself, give what I possess, even if it is not mine. Wondering about this new feeling, I asked the Lord and, in an instant He made me understand how this feeling is the work of Divine love communicated by Him.”⁴

Conchita, who through her experience of God has come to know the love of Christ, wishes to complement what is lacking in love for Him in the world with her own life: “I want to keep you in my thoughts for those who forget you...sacrifice myself for those who offend you...love you for so many who hate you without knowing you...”⁵

Félix de Jesús lived his life preparing for an encounter with Jesus on the Cross. He is completely transformed after the encounter. Moreover, Félix de Jesús refuses to keep this personal experience to himself. On the contrary, whenever he can, he shares his experience with others. For this reason he founded many religious congregations and associations.

«Our calling to be Apostles of the Cross emanates from a personal experience—a sudden and transforming encounter with Jesus Crucified»



³ cf. Jr. 20,7

⁴ Conchita, *Account of Conscience (CC)* 12,282-283

⁵ Conchita, *CC* 1,10-11



Father Félix would say: “If we do not reach an intimate union with Christ, we will not do God’s will. Until our final breath, my dear sons and daughters, our lives must be completely dedicated to continuing Jesus’ mission, Jesus’ work guided by His loving force.”⁶

Those who have experienced a personal and saving God in their lives—as did Conchita and Father Félix—feel the urgency for salvation to reach all souls. This burning desire, which transforms men and women today, is the result of a life lived in union with God.

The Apostleship of the Cross looks to encourage these two elements—experience with God and the building up of a priestly people—as the two guiding lights in the spiritual journey. Each one of us—each in a unique way—has experienced an encounter with the Crucified, which is the reason for the change in our lives and is the force that motivates us to take a different path. An encounter with God should not be viewed by us as an isolated experience of the past or as some stagnant experience. This experience should remain vibrant and dynamic within us making our daily encounter with Jesus Crucified the force

that motivates and gives life to all that we are and all that we do. Why? Because it is Jesus Crucified who finds us, who loves us, and who places in His heart all our miseries and because it is this same Jesus Crucified who is our friend on this journey.

Consequently, for us—the Apostles of the Cross—an encounter with Christ on the Cross is not an isolated event but a happening that transforms our daily lives; it is our natural “habitat.” This experience compels us to build up priestly people creating a culture in which men and women of our times take a bold and creative stance in situations where they are called to witness the living presence of Jesus. In other words, priestly people are called to help Jesus with the salvation of souls and to build the Kingdom of God amidst difficulties.⁷ They are prepared to respond with the different realities of our society, albeit complex, and to be living witnesses of Jesus’ merciful and compassionate love.

Our clamor, “Jesus, Savior of all people, Save Them,” is born out of an encounter between the heart of God and a human heart.

«Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy»



⁶ Félix de Jesús. *Lecture to Students*, 7 enero 1929

⁷ cf. *Col. 1,24*



Our calling to be Apostles of the Cross emanates from a personal experience—a sudden and transforming encounter with Jesus Crucified.

In light of all this insight, it would be interesting for you and I to ask of each other:

**What has my experience with God been like? Do I constantly renew it?
With whom do I desire to share my experience of God?
What situations compel me to communicate my experience with God?
Do I sincerely work for Jesus Priest and Victim, or do I create divisions?
Am I passive?
In this hectic world, shaken up by many variants, we must attentively discern our identity as
Apostles of the Cross.**

It is our hope that this experience with God remains alive, renewed, and so apparent in us that when we are asked what it means to be an Apostle of the Cross, our whole lives will be an eloquent example of this constant experience and of our desire for all souls to come to know the God who loves us from the Cross. This is what we ask from all the members of our beloved Apostleship of the Cross. This is our mission and commitment.

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