

What I learned through this Knee surgery - from Francis

One day Francis was coming back from a preaching tour with Brother Leo

Snow lay deep on the ground, and still more was falling as they struggled along, Leo leading the way. They had tied sacks around their feet. Their hoods were pulled down tight over their heads, and they kept their hands in their sleeves. The wind was blowing through their habits. But they fought their way ahead, praying and shivering.

Suddenly Francis shouted: Little Lamb of God, even if all the Minor Brothers gave the finest examples of holiness and virtue, and healed cripples and could make the blind see, drive out devils, and even bring the dead back to life –

- remember and note that perfect joy does not lie therein!

Brother Leo did not answer, but kept on walking.

A little later Francis exclaimed again:

Even if we knew all there is to know and could predict the future and read the secrets of men's minds and hearts,

- Note that neither is that perfect joy.

Again Brother Leo did not reply as he trudged on.

Farther on, Francis cried out, Even if a Minor Brother could speak the language of angels, describe the course of the stars, know the qualities of plants and the strength of birds and fish and men and every creature on earth,

- Note that neither in this is perfect joy.

Brother Leo leaned still more into the wind,

- which was blowing gusts of snow into his face.
- He was listening more and more intently,
- because he knew that something wonderful was coming

After a long silence Francis shouted out:

Little Lamb of God named Leo after the Lion, even if the Minor Brothers could preach so well that they succeeded in converting the whole world to Christ,

- Note that perfect joy does not lie in that.

They walked on another mile through the snow

And finally, when Brother Leo could take it no more he cried out,

Father Francis, I beg you, for the love of God, tell me, what then is perfect joy!

To which Francis replied:

When we arrive home in a little while, wet to the skin by the snow and freezing cold, plastered with mud and tortured by hunger, and then, when we knock at the door and the Brother Porter asks: Who are you? And we answer: Two of your Brothers. And he says: You're lying. You are two tramps who go around deceiving people and robbing the poor! Get out of here! And he leaves us standing outside in the cold and the snow until late at night, and we humbly and meekly realize how well he knows us, and we knock again, and he angrily strikes us down and beats us with a club,

If we endure all this patiently, thinking only of the sufferings of Christ, and how much we should suffer for the love of him,

- Brother Leo, that is perfect joy.

Now listen well to the ending Brother Leo,
Greater than any gift of the Holy Spirit is Christ's gift to his friends

- of conquering self
- and willingly enduring suffering and trials
- for the love of Jesus

For we cannot take credit for the other gifts of God,

- because they are not ours,
- they come from Him

But we can take credit for trials, sufferings and crosses.

- These are ours

Like Simon of Cyrene who helped Jesus carry his cross

- We may accept a share in the Cross of Jesus
- By offering our suffering to him
- For the love of Him

Jesus accepts this gift and uses it

- For our own good
- And for the good of others

Perfect joy lies in suffering something for the love of Jesus Christ.

Maybe for the first time I have something to offer Jesus

- Maybe you have something you may offer Jesus

The New Horizon

When Jesus Ascended into Heaven

- He took our human nature with him
- He opened up a whole new horizon for humanity
- One that was not possible before his death and Resurrection
 - That of our own resurrection
 - Life everlasting
 - In a new heavens and a new earth

I want to raise your minds and hearts to this new horizon

- Because it is amazing and exciting
- It ought to lead us to live in a new way

Heaven

Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings,

- the state of supreme, eternal happiness.

Psalm 36:8 They shall be inebriated with the richness of Thy house and you shall give them to drink from the torrent of Thy pleasure

God is the source of all goodness,

- In Heaven our desire for goodness will be totally quenched in him

Heaven is also a communion of life and love with

- the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit,
- with the Virgin Mary,
- the angels and all the blessed in heaven.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians chapter 2:9,
“No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man
conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

1 Cor 13:12 “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face
to face.”

This is why Heaven is called the Beatific Vision

The sight of God face-to-face

But sometimes this view of Heaven does not excite us

- The idea of just looking at God forever seems boring
- **Singing in the choirs of angels forever**

We may even fear death and heaven b/c we fear boredom

- Earth seems much more interesting than heaven
- b/c there seems to be nothing to do in heaven.

This is because we have an impoverished understanding of
heaven

Scripture tells us the Universe itself will be renewed

- that Heaven will be a “**New Heavens and a New Earth**”
- **II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1**
- The visible universe itself is destined to be transformed,

What all this means is that

- everything good about this world will be present in
Heaven

That's why the New Testament speaks of Heaven as

- life, light, peace,
- wedding feast, wine of the kingdom,
- the Father's house, many mansions
- the Heavenly Jerusalem,
- These are earthly images

While at the same time God will remove all suffering

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away. And he who sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’”

Heaven will not be just harps and clouds

Heaven will be

- Exploring rather than staring at God
- Endless beginnings rather than merely the end
- Because the whole world will be renewed and transformed

God gave me a glimpse of Heaven in Alaska

- I love the mountains, but what is to the east of the Rockies? Kansas – great American Desert
- Mountains and the Ocean meet at one place
- Girdwood
- Light 24hrs a day
- Lord, why do I live in Kansas?
- Michael this nothing in comparison to heaven
- For the whole world is going to be renewed
- There you may go from peak to peak to peak
- Each time it only gets better

“New Heavens and New Earth” means that

- Every good thing on earth will be in heaven

There will be dogs in heaven

- Psalm 36:6 seems to tell us so
- I don't know if your dog will be in heaven
- But why not dogs that we had relationships with here

What will we be like in Heaven?

The Resurrection of the body means not only that

- the immortal soul will live on after death,
- but that even our “mortal body” will come to life again.

Through His own Resurrected body

- Jesus gives us a glimpse of what our bodies will be like

His body was not bound by time or space

- He could go wherever and whenever he willed
- He could pass through locked doors
- He could change forms and not be recognized
- Yet he could still eat and drink with the Apostles

Like the Risen Body of Jesus, Our new body will be immortal

- We will no longer be subject to
- Sickness, injury, death or decay

We will not be angels in heaven

- But we shall be like the angels in this respect
- We will not longer be under the dominion of nature
- We will not be dependent, bound or subject to the laws of nature

We will not need to breathe, or eat, or drink or sleep;

- Yet we will be able if we want to

In Heaven we will live by the Principle of

- “Freedom from need”

We will have the ability to go anywhere in the world we choose at any moment

- Simply by an act of the will or choice
- St Thomas called this the gift of “agility”

How old will we be in Heaven?

- St Thomas thought we would all be 33 yrs old
- Since this was the age of Jesus when he died and rose

But Heaven is ageless

- Heavenly age is no age and all ages

We will be truly super-human in heaven

- b/c we will share in the very nature of God!
- The Incredibles (Xavier this is what we will be like in Heaven!)

What will we do in Heaven?

Let me suggest three things we will do in heaven:

1. Understand our earthly life by God’s knowledge
2. Share in all other human lives
3. Endless Exploration into God and the New Universe

First, we will review our past life with divine understanding and appreciation of every single experience, good and evil:

- we milk all our meaning dry

This corresponds to the first stages of Heaven known as Purgatory. It might consist of moral reeducation rather than mere punishment, rehabilitation rather than retribution.

Second, we do the same to other's lives from within

- We will know them more intimately and completely than we could ever know our most intimate friend on earth
- b/c we share God's knowledge of one another

The Communion of Saints will be even more interesting than

- Human love on earth
- Think of the first time you fell in love
 - The joy of learning about another person
 - And doing all good things with them
 - Yet without out all the imperfections
 - And not just with one person
 - But with all people

We will have the ability to know every human that ever lived

- Even more intimately than we knew our closest friend on earth.

Who would you like to become best friends with in Heaven?

- Your spouse, or son or daughter
- Maybe a friendship cut short here on earth
 - I think of my two best friends killed in high school and college
- My guardian angel
- Russian emperor Alexander I

- The hero of the resistance against the invasion of Russia by Napoleon
- Commemorated by Leo Tolstoy in *War and Peace*

In 1824 a great flood devastated St. Petersburg.

- Hundreds died and thousands were left homeless.
- The major centers of the proud city were destroyed
- Alexander set out to tour the city.

A famous anecdote is told of Alexander,

- standing anonymously in a flood-ravaged district,
- people milling about hopelessly
- An old man nearby cries out: "God is punishing us for our sins."
- "No," replies Alexander, "Not for our sins but for mine."

Very soon after this Alexander began a tour of the country

- It was not long before word came that he died of Malaria
- The coffin was brought to St. Petersburg and buried
- though no one opened it.

As the years passed more and more people began to ask whether a simple hermit living in Siberia was Tsar Alexander

- Did he renounce supreme power for a life of simplicity?
- The life of a monk
- One day I will ask Him

Who do you want to meet?

We will not only explore our own lives and the lives of others

- We will begin the endlessly fascinating task of exploring, learning and loving all the facets of the inexhaustible nature of God.

The Contemplation of God is not boring

Heaven is

- Dynamic rather than static
- Exploring rather than staring at God
- Endless beginnings rather than merely the end

“Further up and further in”

- Drawn into a stable
- Set the scene with the end of the world
- Closing of the stable door
- Their sadness at the loss of everything good in Narnia
- Bigger on the inside than it was on the outside

From *The Last Battle* by C.S. Lewis chapters fifteen and sixteen
Then they all went forward together, always Westward, for that seemed to be the direction Aslan had meant when he cried out, “Further up and further in.” They kept on stopping to look round and to look behind them, partly because it was so beautiful but partly also because there was something about it which they could not understand.

“Peter,” said Lucy, “where is this, do you suppose?”

“I don’t know,” said the High King. “It reminds me of somewhere but I can’t give it a name. Could it be somewhere we once stayed for a holiday when we were very, very small?”

“It would have to have been a jolly good holiday,” said Eustace. “I bet there isn’t a country like this anywhere in *our* world. Look at the colors! You couldn’t get a blue like the blue on those mountains in our world.”

Suddenly Farsight the Eagle spread his wings, soared thirty or forty feet up into the air, circled round and then alighted on the ground. “Kings and Queens,” he cried, “we have all been blind. We are only beginning to see where we are. From up there I have seen it all – Ettinsmuir, Beaversdam, the Great River, and Cair Paravel still shining on the edge of the Eastern Sea. Narnia is not dead. This is Narnia.”

“But how can it be?” said Peter.... “We saw it all destroyed and the sun put out.”

“And it’s all so different,” said Lucy.

“The Eagle is right,” said the Lord Digory. “Listen, Peter. When Aslan said you could never go back to Narnia, he meant the Narnia you were thinking of. But that was not the real Narnia. That had a beginning and an end. It was only a shadow or a copy of the real Narnia... You need not mourn over Narnia. All of the old Narnia that mattered, all the dear creatures, have been drawn into the real Narnia through the Door. And of course it is different; as different as a real thing is from a shadow or as waking life is from a dream.”

It was the Unicorn who summed up what everyone was feeling. He stamped his right fore-hoof on the ground and neighed, and then cried: “I have come home at last! This is my real country! I belong here. This is the land I have been looking for all my life, though I never knew it till now...

Come further up and further in!”

He shook his mane and sprang forward into a great gallop – a Unicorn’s gallop, which in our world, would have carried him out of sight in a few moments.

But now a most strange thing happened. Everyone else began to run, and they found, to their astonishment, that they could keep up with him...The air flew in their faces as if they were driving fast in a car with the top down...Faster and faster they raced, but no one got hot or tired or out of breath. If one could run without getting tired, I don’t think one would ever want to do anything else.

The Unicorn cried out: “Don’t stop. Further up and further in! Take it in your stride.”

So they ran faster and faster till it was more like flying than running, and even the Eagle overhead was going no faster than they. And they went through winding valley after winding valley and up the steep sides of hills and faster than ever down the other side, following the river and sometimes crossing it and skimming across mountain lakes as if they were living speedboats, till at last at the far end of one long lake which looked as blue as turquoise, they saw a green hill. It’s sides were as steep as the sides of a pyramid and round the very top of it ran a green wall: but above the wall rose the branches of trees whose leaves looked silver and their fruit like gold.

“Further up and further in,” roared the Unicorn, and no one held back...Only when they had reached the very top did they slow up; that was because they found themselves facing great golden gates. And for a moment none of them was bold enough to try if the gates would open. – “Dare we? Is it right? Can it be meant for us?”

But while they were standing thus a great horn, wonderfully loud and sweet, blew from somewhere inside that walled garden and the gates swung open. “Welcome, in the Lion’s name. Come further up and further in.”

This is fiction

- but it certainly helps us think about the Heaven
- and think about it we must
- b/c that reality charges everything here with eternal significance

Colossians 3:1

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

“New Heavens and New Earth” means that

1. Every good thing on earth will be in heaven
2. Every good we do will endure in heaven
 - Everything good will endure!

This is why the Resurrection and Heaven charges every choice and every action in this life with eternal significance

- Every good we do
- Every good we fail to do
- will **affect** what we become for all eternity

When we sin we don’t hurt God, we diminish ourselves

- But with each act of Virtue we expand

By each choice we diminish or expand ourselves

- In the sense of reaching our potential
- And Our potential with God has no limit

Matthew 6:19

- Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth
- But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven
- Reach your potential as a human person

Matthew 25:14-23 Parable of the Talents

- The one who uses what he has well will receive more

If I fail to become a saint

- Oh I will be happy forever
- But not as happy as I could have been

So we want to be a saint for what we get?

- No!
- We want to reach our potential for the Love of God

When we see God face to face

- We want his face to light up and for him to say
- “Wow – you are awesome
- I am amazed by what you have become

We want to reach our potential in order to love God,

- that is to do some good for Him
- To please Him
- To be a real ingredient in the divine happiness
- To be loved by God
- Not merely pitied,
- But to be delighted in as an artist delights in his work
- Or a father in a son

Without the New Horizon opened up by the Death and Resurrection of Christ

- All we do and become ends here with death
- It is all wiped away
- Gone
- It means nothing in the end

This is why people with no faith or hope in the Resurrection of Christ

- begin to despair of meaning and purpose in this life

But with the Resurrection of Jesus

- And the Hope of our own Resurrection
- and a New Heavens and a New Earth
- Every choice, every action, every moment in this life is charged with eternal significance and meaning

It affects our eternity – so make the most of it!

This slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory

This is the significance of the Resurrection and Heaven!

God wants to make all things new

- He can't do it without us

Read
Reflect
Resolution

No one imagined 200 and 700

Your response is leading us to a leap of faith

We want to make our courses more accessible

- New price – 75\$

Fall 12 week courses

- Course descriptions on back

Why the 12 week is so beneficial

- Mid-week boost to your faith
- Regular on-going formation in faith and prayer

Reserve your place now for our fall courses

This will allow us to

- Determine room size at each location
 - Good problem at nativity this summer
- Prepare the right number of course materials

Return the form to the registration table before you leave

- 4 week in the fall – but we don't know where yet
- This enables us to keep you informed

FWO in envelope with Registration form

Wine and conversation

Music