

St. Peter Julian Eymard's Great Retreat of Rome

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GOD IS LOVE

At last, after passing through the desert, I have reached the mountain of love.

What a difficult journey! What a laborious cruise! Here I am before the throne of love; God be praised!

1. **God the Creator.** God has loved man with an eternal love, with the love of a father, with a tender love. All of creation has been the preparation of God's love for the benefit of man, whom He created only on the sixth day, when everything was ready to receive and serve him.

I will never love, nor will I ever be able to love my Creator as He has loved me because I am not eternal, infinite and all-powerful as He is. I ought at least to love Him during my whole lifetime with all my being and all the power of my works; nothing more fitting: The harvest belongs to the owner.

God loved sinful man with a love of mercy, but He punished the guilty angel immediately; and yet man was not less deserving of hell. God had pity on man and willed to save him in spite of His justice. And in order to save man, He drew from the consequences of his sinful state the very matter of his penance and of his holiness—even to the greater glory of God.

Pride had ended in humiliation, ambition in poverty, and sensuality in waywardness of the senses. God made of humility, detachment and mortification the three virtues of perfection, the three nails of Calvary, the three titles of glory of the Lord and man: He humbled Himself (Phil. 2,8), He became poor (2 Cor. 8,9), and Crucified (Gal. 3,1). Oh! How great was God's goodness to man. He cured him then and there; He was his Physician and was to be his Savior.

2. **God the Savior.** He came Himself in person to visit man, to console him, to tell him He loved him, to prove it to him by sharing and relieving his hardships. God loved man and to prove it to him He became his brother in the flesh. He became poor, the poorest of the poor in order to be able to include all men as His brothers. He came as a little child in order to be the brother of children, and of hovel-born children.

God has shared the life of man, the work and the bread of the poor. He has performed all the actions of man in order to experience all the difficulties and sacrifices of man. God has loved man, and has given him all He is and all He has. The Father gave His Son; the Son gave His very Self; the Holy Spirit became man's habitual Sanctifier.

God loves man only for man's own good; He wants to make man holy like Himself in order to share His eternal happiness with him. The Incarnate Word dwelt 33 years among men to teach them what is good, what virtues sanctify them and make them pleasing to God. He taught men all the eternal and temporal truths they need in the present life.

Then in His sorrowful agony, in His humiliations at Jerusalem, in His sufferings on the cross, He atoned, in His Body and in His Soul, for all the sins of thought, word and deed; pride, sensuality and greed. He appeased the wrath of God and satisfied His justice; He fettered the devil, closed hell and opened the heaven—where He awaits His followers to share His glory with them.

Oh! How grateful I should be to this kind Savior! He arranged for me to be born under the most favorable conditions of salvation, of the graces of redemption. He watched over me like the apple of His eye, His entire divine Providence enveloped me, and led me by the hand to the most beautiful and sacred of vocations. Yet the mixed values in Christian and priestly world have proved so harmful to me that I still have not given myself fully to His service and His love.

3. **God-- is man's guest in the Eucharist.** Our Lord so loved man that He could not separate Himself from Him, even in His state of glory. The Eucharist is His Incarnation continued, multiplied, perpetuated to the end of time. He wants to live close to man and continue the three states of His life as Savior; prayer, sacrifice and life-giving food of souls.

He prays in the tabernacle, He immolates Himself on the altar, and He nourishes our soul our souls in Holy Communion. He is man's good neighbor and friend, disguising Himself so as not to be a burden to him. It is a fellowship of love, of goods, of happiness in the measure that man's state as traveler allows it. Really, if we understood well the love of God, the love of Jesus in His birth, in His sufferings, in His Sacrament, we should die of gratitude and of remorse.

But, O God, Jesus is so little loved! How few there are that love Him just to please Him, with their mind, their thoughts and their will! How few love Him with their heart and its noble passion of love! Many believe in Him, respect Him, pray to Him, and receive Him, but like servants, like beggars for their own advantage.

How few there are for whom Jesus sacramental is the love of their life, the first love, a love of bliss! Our Lord is not loved as a spouse, or by very few; as Master—so very few follow in all things; as a friend—few have for Him the thoughtful and selfless love honest-to-goodness people have for a friend. We say; what is natural is always easy. But what is supernatural is more powerful since it has a supernatural force at its disposal, since those who love our Lord supernaturally sacrifice with generosity and joy what is natural, and love Jesus by the contempt of everything, above everything, more than themselves.

The reason is that we love, but loving self all the while, that we want to love self while loving; that we are unwilling to give up our name, our country, our family like a true bride does to follow her beloved; that we are ready to share with Him but not to surrender self to Him.

We are like a ship fastened to the shore; it floats on the water of the sea, but it does not leave its moorings; it merely bobs up and down. We are like a swimmer who prefers these moorings, loosen the thread from the wings of my soul; plunge me into the sea.