

About Direction¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Nemours, Monday, November 5, 1866

[...]

Direction should take place preferably after a few days of retreat, when you are more recollected.

At this time you are not sufficiently recollected; wait a while. This direction is not about your sins, but about your defects. Talk about your defects. I presume that you know them. To make known your defects, if you know them, you begin by telling them as you know them, and then the confessor, who has the grace, will complete what you say. You may know your defects, but you don't have the grace; and so, you will be told what are their cause and effects, their seriousness and what feeds them, as well as the remedies to be applied. You must seek out your defects of character, of body, of mind, of will and heart, as well as your defects in the service of God. You must find these things, and answer clearly about each one.

The defects of the body refer to your character. You are lively or quiet, phlegmatic or tense, stubborn or temperamental. You must know these natural defects that form temperament. In general, there are certain defects that accompany each temperament. For example, if you have a sanguine temperament, you can be violent, with similar defects; if you are temperamental, you can be stubborn, etc.; the same is true of laziness and softness. I tell you, look at all these external defects in your body – whether you are lazy, gluttonous or sensual, whether you are especially extroverted, whether you have a blameful slovenliness in your defects of body and of your senses. You must find the defects you may commit against modesty, and recognize the defects in your relationships with each other, your way of acting with your sisters. Sometimes you may say: I am too brusque. But what are the defects of the abruptness? Another might say: Personally, I'm not abrupt, but I have some fixed ideas. How are you temperamental? Do you have dislikes [for someone] or favorites? You must know all that, otherwise I cannot accompany you.

Remember, my Sisters, that you must correct the exterior before the interior. You must pay attention to external things and see what needs to be corrected. This is consoling, when we see that we are somewhat in charge of ourselves, of our senses. **Then we must see if we have any defects of the heart,** if we have any disorderly affections or dislikes – we must look at all this because it is natural and imperfect. – But I don't consent to these things. – Therefore, there is no sin. I'm not asking you to go to confession – this is direction. Direction is the story of your soul, what are the temptations in your heart toward your neighbor and with yourself – discouragement; with God, if you lack trust. And then, regarding your will: notice what is difficult in obedience; see your dislikes, and what you find difficult – you must see all these things. You will notice that in the battles of nature, the will is a bit weakened and disposed to sin, evidently. Therefore, my good Daughters, see what is involved, you must see all that. [...]

My Sisters, I tell you that the defects of the mind are more difficult to remove than the others. Why is that? Because the body has no power to reflect: when it wants something, it takes it. As for the heart, as soon as it does something, it immediately forgets. But the mind is not like that – it reasons and reflects: it is in control of everything. If the spirit of God does not control the human spirit, it can become evil. Therefore, you must search out the defects of the mind, personal obsessions. Ask yourself whether anything is bothering you, whether you are worried, whether something torments you during prayer,

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during [adoration]. Besides, the mind can also be sick. If one allows impressions of pleasure or pain to persist, what happens? The mind will lose its calm; prayer will no longer be peaceful. The soul becomes entirely sick, because the mind is sick.

Pay close attention to what I am about to say. The body is stubborn, but once conquered it becomes a slave. **The heart tends towards creatures, and embraces self-love. Why?** Because it does not enjoy God, and wants to amuse itself. The heart can easily change. The proof of this is when someone with an impure affection immediately runs to God as soon as God touches it. Such a one no longer holds to this world and may go all the way to perfection, but the mind is different. A defect of the mind is very difficult to control. It is said that generally you cannot correct a proud person, because he will never admit his defect. He worships his own thinking and will not accept any preaching or warning. He ends up adoring his own reasoning. If you expect to overcome an obsession by violence, you are mistaken: by confronting it in this violent way, what are you doing? You get irritated, and feverish. You are no longer dealing with the body and the heart, you are facing the mind. You might say: I don't want to think about this any more, and you believe this will work! Poor Daughter, you will still think about it many more times... – Then, what shall I do? – Patience; you will battle through patience. And then, when you say: I don't want to worry about this any more, do you really believe!.. What is to be done?

The first thing, when sorrow or temptation burdens our minds is to see whether this mental trouble is a sin or only a problem. If it is a sin, there is nothing easier than simply getting rid of it as soon as possible; go to confession. If it is a temptation, never attack it with the will. There is only patience, nothing else. If you want to do violence against the mind, you make yourselves sick; that's the danger. Understand clearly that, when you don't want to sin, you don't sin. However, you must battle against the tendencies of the mind until you finally become the master. When does a thought become a trouble of the mind? When it is not a thought about God or simply about one's duty. That is, when we are concerned about others rather than about ourselves. Fools are always running about, they are never at home. We all tend to do the same, and the devil is always trying to catch us through the mind. For a long time, I thought he was catching us through the heart, but I was wrong – the devil is always trying to fool us through the mind. It is indeed the door of our house.

Be like children, masters of yourselves in the Good Lord. When you go to adoration and Communion, you must be new, appearing as the Good Lord wants you. You must have peace of mind – you must reach that point – you must be submissive to God, determined to follow the will of God, to fulfill it when it becomes evident. Briefly, you must be completely open to the will of God. That's the source of peace. There will be struggles, of course, but they will not bother you because you dwell in the peace of duty, in the peace of grace and the law.

My poor Daughters, now you know clearly what a good direction is. Is that all? Oh no! There's more: **you must see your direction in God.** First, look at your grace of recollection: how you recollect yourself in God. – But, I don't have any. – Then, you are worth nothing; your recollection is not fed. – But I am recollected everywhere. – Then you are lazy: you need something particular to focus on in your recollection, like the presence of God, or again, the intention to offer in homage whatever you are doing; that's a good thought. – But I don't know how to do it. – You must learn, and work on your recollection. Do you know what recollection is? It is the air we breathe. There are humid climates that tire us – where we cannot breathe easily. But that is not your problem – you are breathing fresh air, with sunshine and pure air, besides you are in good health. In the spiritual order, you are in the presence of God, in the beautiful sunshine of his love

You must make a good direction about the grace of God in you. All of you have had some good moments of grace. You should also be aware of the sacrifices that God is asking from you, what are your graces of prayer. – I don't know. – Search for the grace that unites you to God, and makes you fulfill his

holy will: that is the one for you. Sometimes the Good Lord will inspire you; he will attract you to himself either by an interior movement of grace and strength, or by a feeling of consolation. – But, I don't feel those things. – If you are never at home, what do you expect? Our Lord comes, knocks at the door of your soul, and says: Is anybody here? If nobody answers, he goes away, bringing with him the grace that was meant for you. Why were you not at home? You must absolutely look deeply into these ideas. A good direction and a good confession will enable you to make a good retreat.

Seriously, my good Daughters, **you must find your life in the spiritual religious life, in the Eucharistic life**, the divine life. This is a must for you. Live from God himself, purely for God and not for others, otherwise your life will be meaningless. What do I mean when I say you must live in God and for God? What I'm going to tell you is rather strange, but that doesn't matter. Listen. You must learn to find in God your food, your nourishment – you must find in him your strength and your life. In other words: you must learn the state by which you must be fed. I say that you must reach such a spiritual and religious state that you will be able to do without the masters, in order to live in our Lord. And what else? To live without others in order to live in God alone. The principles that I'm giving you are meant to place you in these favorable conditions so that you will go [with the simplicity of] children to the house of your bridegroom, of your father, of your Savior, and remain there with him, knowing how to converse alone with him. Clearly you must learn to speak with him.

Your acts need a religious direction. The direction that I will give you, and that of your Mother [superior], are meant to guide you to our Lord – it is your education. Once you are near God, we will leave you alone with him. We form you and then we tell you: Go now towards the Good Lord and then... And what? I ask you. If after we have shown you the way you come back and say: You are very good; I will stay with you and obey you. My Sisters, if you do that, you are fools or stupid. Would you leave the master to remain with the servant? I tell you: Go to our Lord, and remain with him. I might add that the true religious must have a lot of humility and obedience, but also a lot of freedom and independence – you will come to understand what I'm saying.

The Good Lord gave me the grace not to worry if hearts are attracted to me or not. If ever someone came to tell me that he thinks about me in his heart, I would tell him: My Brother, you really have a great ability to love. But in fact your heart is very small, and you still want to give me some! You are not keeping it entirely for the Good Lord – that's not right. I don't want this either from you, nor from my [other Brothers]. I will also say: Have charity and obedience, but, above all, watch over your heart. I'm not saying that you should distrust everyone, that you should not give your trust to anyone, no – but the heart must end up for God alone. You, women, have great hearts – you have more than we have – you are very fortunate to have that gift, in order to give it to God. But, keep it completely for the Good Lord; may it rest in him. When you feel the need to rest in God, you like to say: God is enough for me. We often hear people say: My God and my All. Then we look into their eyes and say: Is that really true? Is the Good Lord sufficient for you?

[...] **Remember carefully what I am telling you, and put it into practice.** If I love the Good Lord well, I will also love others. But, if my first love is for others, I will stay on the second level, and not succeed in climbing to the top. If I love myself, I cannot go to God. Look at the moon: it is beautiful because it reflects the rays of the sun, because it absorbs sunlight. Here is a soul close to our Lord. God relates with her, loves her; his love brightens everything that surrounds her. **My poor Daughters, begin by loving the Good Lord, and then you can radiate as much as you want.**



Points for reflection:

This detailed self-examination suggested during an annual retreat had as its purpose to awaken our attention to the action of God and our cooperation with his grace. In the text we find the expression “spiritual religious life in the Eucharistic life”. [«vie religieuse spirituelle de la vie eucharistique»] What does this mean?