

**Books for Eymardian Formation
Book # 6**

**The Cenacle: A place of Transformation II
Gift of Self**

*“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.
Just as the living Father sent me, and I have life because of the Father,
so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me.” (Jn 6:56-57)*

**Selection of Instructions of St. Peter Julian to the First Group of Servants
According to the themes of the Cenacle
And of the Rule of Life**

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INTRODUCTION

We have reached the sixth book in the collection *Books for Eymardian Formation: The Cenacle, place of transformation II: gift of self*. The themes contained in the teaching of Father Eymard are leading us to a single conclusion: the gift of self is the summit of our spiritual life.

In an article found in *Review for Religious*, entitled “Towards a method of analyzing a Spirituality”, Father Edward Kinerk, SJ, said the following:

“Every spirituality has a ‘key of authenticity’,
a dimension that allows us to measure the effectiveness of its practices.”

For St. Peter Julian, that key of authenticity for our spiritual life is found in the gift of self. That expression, we know, is open to various interpretations: external generosity, internal recollection, transformation into Christ. In this book, we will discover the meaning that our Founder himself gave to that expression.

There are only a few conferences in this book, because this teaching is basically contained in all the other themes. These however have been chosen as the ones that reveal in greater depth his understanding of the gift of self, and explain more clearly the meaning he gave to these words. These instructions give us some insight on his intimacy with the Lord and the ideal to which he wanted to lead us.

In the Cenacle, the love of Christ reached its highest point in the gift of himself in the Eucharist, a gift that would be sealed in his own blood. “No greater love does one have than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”. Let us take time to meditate these texts profoundly.

The subjects contained in the different books are:

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|-------------------|---|
| Book no. 1. | The Cenacle: the place where love is given: Eucharist. |
| Book no. 2 | The Cenacle: the place where Love is Taught: by Word and Example. |
| Book no. 3 | The Cenacle: the Gathering Place |
| Book no. 4 | The Cenacle: a place of Prayer and Praise |
| Book no. 5 | The Cenacle: a place of Transformation by the Holy Spirit |
| Book no. 6 | The Cenacle: a place of Transformation II: Gift of Self. |
| Book no. 7 | The Cenacle: the place of Mission. |

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HOW TO USE THESE BOOKS

This series of Books contains a selection from the instructions of Father Eymard to the first group of Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, as recorded in notes taken by Sr. Marie of the Blessed Sacrament (Boisgrollier), and in various copies of these notes. This selection was intended to be used mainly by directors of formation, who, faced with an abundance of material, needed help to find the more important or useful subjects for a particular topic or for an organized presentation.

We believe this material could also help all those who are looking for an overview of the themes of the spirituality taught by St. Peter Julian during the period 1858-1868.

Some underlining and bold characters were added to the texts. The reason for this was to facilitate the reading and the teaching, by drawing attention to the development of thought, and to focus on certain phrases in rather long passages. The footnotes at the bottom of the page are generally taken from the complete edition and find their explanation there. We felt that certain omissions were called for. They are indicated by [...]. The full text can be found in the complete edition.

The use of these instructions for formation, will vary according to the creativity of the one using them:

- **preparation for a liturgical feast**
- **conference for a monthly recollection**
- **extracts chosen for adoration in common**
- **conference or excerpt to develop a chapter/ number of the Rule of Life**
- **conference or excerpt to complete an instruction on a theme of the Cenacle (spirituality)**
- **copies of an instruction given to each participant for personal reflection**
- **simple reading followed by discussion**

The points for reflection suggested for the animator can help the discussion or evoke other questions which would be more adapted to the group.

It is my deepest hope that these texts become once again a source of spiritual nourishment for each one of us by fostering a hunger to continue our journey on the paths of our holy Founder and of our first sisters. I present them to you with love and joy,

Sr. Catherine Marie Caron, SSS

Rome, December 2003

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THE GIFT OF SELF



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To Live with Jesus Christ, from Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ¹

Paris, Saturday, July 30, 1859

You must honor our Lord, his interior and Eucharistic life; you must honor him by your life – and this includes three ideas.

1° You must live with Jesus Christ. In the Apocalypse, St. John says: *On Mt. Zion, I saw the Lamb that was slain, and with him one hundred forty-four thousand virgins, singing the song of love, and who never leave the presence of the Lamb that was slain.* (cf. Rv 14:1-4) You, too, are meant to live always with him: a servant lives with her master, a spouse with her husband. If you were separated, if you were obliged to live far from the Holy Eucharist, how unhappy you would be – deprived of everything! Tobias used to say: *“What joy can anyone have who is deprived of the light of the sun?”* (cf. Tb 5:10) What a joy to see the divine sun, to see Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament!

You are meant to live with Jesus Christ, to be his family, his court. There is no longer room for you in the Christian world, among the pious persons of the world – you don't belong there. You would be out of place even in religious communities that do excellent and holy work in the world. You must serve the master, and not serve the neighbor – you have chosen the better part.² You are meant to live with Jesus Christ, to be his family, his court. [Mary] had the better part over Martha, who was busy with external things. She was listening to our Lord, she was at his feet (cf. Lk 10:42). Your place is worthy of envy – the angels envy you. The Blessed Virgin never left the presence of our Lord during thirty years; she was servant and mother.

You should not feel at home in the world. Fish die outside of water. You would be outside of your grace, you would be unhappy, you would not do much good, and you would not be in your vocation. You should be with the Lamb that was slain, near him to sing the mysterious canticle (cf. Rv 14:3), that is your beautiful and heavenly place. You are dead to the world, you should not have any outside contacts, except if necessary; (...) Oh, how beautiful and good it is! I wish you could see this as I see it: the Good Lord is there, hiding his glory, and you, hidden, having only the honor of virtue.³ My Sisters, why should you not be satisfied, why should you not be happy – you receive too much honor from our Lord. This is the end of my first idea.

2° You must live from Jesus Christ, not as preaching and going to the towns, but from Jesus Christ in his interior life. But how do we reach that life? In order to communicate with a person or a thing, we must place ourselves in contact with it. We take bread; we eat, because we want to live: Jesus Christ nourishes us in the Holy Eucharist – we must take this bread, digest it, change ourselves into him, to live from Jesus Christ. To do this, we must act like the child who lives from the milk of his mother, and who is never separated from her. You must do what you do every day in Communion – your soul goes to drink a few drops of precious blood from the side of Christ.

You are living in the light of the Eucharistic sun, and because of this you must be united to our Lord and live with him. You must not live with yourself: your own spirit, your own will, your own name. Put all that aside – you must live from Jesus who was crucified and immolated. Live only from Jesus Christ: have no other life than his, no other name than his. If you want to pray to a saint, or the saints,

¹ All the instructions of this book are taken from the *Instructions to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament*, St. Peter Julian Eymard, Complete Edition, Rome, 2003. In the *Books*, certain titles have been modified to correspond better to the content of the extracts that have been retained, or again to correspond better to the idea that guided the choice of these texts. However, in a footnote at the bottom of the page, we will always include the numbers and titles corresponding to the complete edition. This first instruction has the following number and title: # 154 *Vivre avec Jésus Christ, de Jésus Christ, en Jésus Christ*.

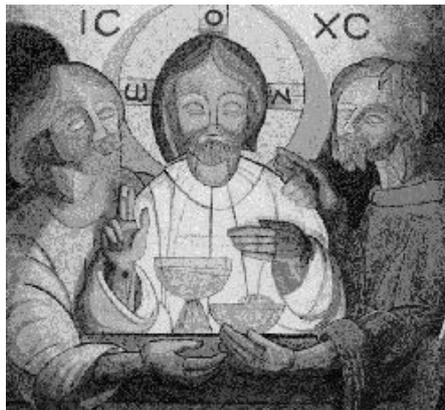
² This means that the works of zeal are not works of the Institute. Priority is given to adoration. Cf. The various texts of the Constitution written by the Founder.

³ At that time the sisters were living externally like simple laypersons, unknown in their neighborhood.

that's fine; but, in final analysis, it is Jesus who nourishes you, who gives you everything. This is not the grace given to other communities – nourish yourselves from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

3° You must live in Jesus Christ. You want to belong totally to him, to live from Jesus interiorly, to see his beauty, to see clearly this divine Solomon, to share his food (cf. 1 Kgs 10:4-6). All this is good – but you must live from him. Why? Because you must abide always in Jesus Christ. Holy Communion brings about a sort of incarnation, but Jesus does not remain in you for long, except through his Spirit. At Communion time, Jesus Christ risen from the dead, palpable, physical and touchable, remains in you only until the sacred species are totally consumed. However, you can enjoy his enlightenment, his graces and his spirit beyond that time. That will depend on you. You need only set God as king of your heart, so that he can reign over your heart and over your will. To do this you must consult him in everything; make him the master of all. You can do this only by a love that combines two lives into one. You will reach that point by losing yourself and pouring yourself out into him. Our Lord says, *Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will manifest himself to him, and we will come to him, and make our dwelling with him* (cf. Jn 14:21-23). This is how the unity of love will be achieved. What love!

We must end this beautiful meditation. May it prepare you well, and put you fully into your vows, since it is the fulfillment of those vows. To live from Jesus Christ – you have done this; to live with Jesus Christ – you have done this; to live in Jesus Christ – you have not yet reached that degree of union in which you lose everything in Jesus Christ... but you will reach that point with the grace of God.



Points for reflection:

For Fr. Eymard, it is not enough for us to be in close proximity to the Eucharist. This calls us to transformation into him who is by our side. Even more, this proximity calls us to a profound union of life with him. How can you explain this in your own words? Notice the biblical texts on which this meditation is based.

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The Complete Gift of Self ⁴

Paris, Tuesday, July 31 1860

During this retreat, you will receive Communion every day. This is not a retreat of conversion but rather a retreat of love; we must love the Good Lord. For spiritual direction, you will come individually – there will be a list. Today, there is not much to say, it is a time for self-searching. Not tonight either; leave me free for today. I need time to put my things in order.

Now, my Sisters, we will begin meditating on the gift of self. You must give yourselves totally to God. Everything depends on that, all the rest is nothing. Giving what we own has value, but it means merely giving back to God what already belongs to him. To give our work entails giving only part of ourselves, the fruit of our labors; but we hold on to “the self”. To give ourselves little by little is not possible, and is an insult to God. He made the world for us and us for himself (cf. 1 Cor 3:21-23). He is our end, our grace. We will be happy only when we have given ourselves to him totally. We shall explain this further on.

What is love? You shall love the Lord your God with your whole mind, your whole heart, and your whole soul and all your strength (Mk 12:30) – that is the law. Jesus Christ came to bring fire (cf. Lk 12:49) – religion consists entirely in loving. He is our goal. Love is giving: two persons in love give themselves to each other. Otherwise we would love ourselves more than God, it would be offensive. **What is the reign of love?** It is nothing else than giving. Of course, God accepts our gift. He reigns in us, according to this saying: *God is love* (1 Jn 4:8). He must live in me as my God, and I must love him as my master. I must obey him as my ultimate purpose, and I must work for him. That’s the beginning, that’s the reign of his love.

What is this gift? We must define it clearly. Evidently, it is a donation, but what are we giving him? Our body, our soul – there’s nothing that does not belong to him, since he gave us everything. An owner rents out a field. During the entire farming season it belongs to the servant who rented it, but the field still belongs to the landowner (cf. 1 Cor 3:9). We give God the use of our being, our will, our senses; we even give him our freedom. In one sense, God cannot take away my freedom, since I am a person of grace and merit. He cannot take freedom away, if he wants to leave me in the state of merit. I give him my will, the use of my being, but it costs me much effort. The world, my passions, the devil attract me – they challenge me to break this contract by saying: It’s too much; it’s not possible. But if I am faithful, this will be the very perfection of my gift: I will serve God in all my actions.

One more quality is needed: the gift must be made out of love, and not out of fear. Fear (...) is mercenary, it is not Christian. Since the Good Lord loves me with a great love, my love for him must also be great; since he loves me with a pure love, my love must also be pure. It is this unwavering love which will be praiseworthy. This is what the Good Lord wants; nothing more, he wants me to give myself totally to him.

See how good God is! Grace is an expression of his love. This wonderful grace is sweet and gentle, in order to dispose my heart for joy. It is strong, attracting me to God. On the other hand, the world tries to draw me to surrender my freedom to it, tearing me between life and death, between heaven and hell. God says: Give yourself to me; and world also says: Give yourself to me. The world offers me its honors, its pleasures, and so on. These are only lies, vanity, and unhappiness. **What must I give? I see clearly that I must give something, but what is it?**

1° I must give my mind. This is no small task: that my thoughts and judgments would only be like the thoughts and judgments of God, to consult his will in preference to mine. You can see this renunciation in religious life. That’s why so many leave; they don’t want to renounce themselves. The mind holds on to its thoughts in spite of God’s promises and warnings. In some ways, we give

⁴ Number 231. *Donation entière de soi.*

more by giving our minds than by giving our heart. Does that surprise you? So, listen. When you give your heart, it is an act – the heart does not think, it cannot have any insights. The proof of this is that people who act according to their heart are inconsistent; duty, pleasure, and self-interest are based only on feeling. But the mind is positive, enlightened and steady – it can sustain us a long time. However, God does not say: Give me your mind. He says: *Give me your heart* (Prv 23:26). It's so easy to give our heart and to love. But to give our mind, to follow the judgment of God and to follow his will is not easy. That is why God did not make this a law – it is the call to perfection for consecrated souls. To give one's heart is required of everybody, but *whoever wishes to come after me*, says our Lord, *must deny himself* (Mt 16:24)

What does it mean to give one's mind? Our Lord makes it a simple condition – he is not talking of the heart; in religious communities, the mind and the will are one. Heresies, schisms, pride do not come from the heart, but from the mind. Unruly affections come from the heart. Give your mind to God; if you let it go, if it no longer belongs to you, you will have his light, his law in its place. This is what God wants. Do not consult the world any more, consult God. The prophet says: *Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him* (1 Cor 6:17).

After receiving the Holy Spirit, the apostles now possessed the truth in their minds; as for their hearts they already loved him. Our Lord said: *Peter, do you love me? – Yes, Lord.* (cf. Jn 21:15-17). Magdalene loved him too; but love had not been sufficient for them to be faithful. After receiving the spirit of truth they were faithful, they were ready to die. If you have the joy of giving your mind to God, you will no longer be mistaken – the spirit of faith, the spirit of God will guide you. **When will I know that I gave my mind to God?** When my thoughts are from God, for God, and in God.

2° The Good Lord placed man's self-determination in his heart [Cf. Sir 37:13].

Our love determines how we act. If what the heart loves is good, we will be good; if it is bad, we will be bad. Disregarding everything else, God wants our heart, because it is the seat of power. God demands our heart; he wants us to love him with a perfect and sovereign love – evidently, because he is our Creator, our Father. It would be insulting to be told that we don't love him. Yet, look at what is happening: we offend God because of things and persons that we love. The one who loves will not disobey, especially if he has a Good Master. We must therefore love God more than and above all things – this is the first degree of love. He must be our ultimate love; he must be the end of all our loving in this world – may all our other loves be flowers that we offer to his love. Do you not notice that self-love prevents us from loving God? That people can draw this little flame away from God who is its source? The heart is made for love; and the mind depends on the heart. An impure⁵ love obscures both intelligence and virtues and can degrade us; all this is part of an impure love.

When will I know that I have given my heart to God? If I think of him, that's a sign that I have given it to him. Our Lord said: *Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be* (Mt 6:21). Naturally, we are happy and delighted to think about what we love. If you think of God, if your heart is inclined to him with joy, that is a sure sign. When we love someone, we try to please that person. The greater the object loved, the more we want to love. That is the sign of giving our heart to God. How far we are! This is only the first degree of love – not its perfection.

3° We must give our will to God, and replace it with his, a kind of exchange. Our Lord said: *Not as I will, but as you will* (cf. Mt 26:39). That is the law. We must give him our will, to do whatever he wants, in general, without conditions. A good servant says: Do you want to hire me? – I'm willing; what can you do? – A little of everything. That's a good servant. So, we must say: My God, whatever you would like. This will never be beyond our strength; grace is greater⁶ than the law. When a servant says: I will give you so many hours of work, but the remaining time will be mine. These are not the words of a good servant, of a loving child for love has no conditions. We must have unconditional love, without reservations.

⁵ Copy A, variant: a *disorderly* love [...] all this stems from a *disorderly* love.

⁶ Copy A, variant: stronger

It is impossible for God to ask us to do something beyond our strength, since he is goodness itself. In human relationships, some extraordinary things are beyond any contract. A hired worker may say: I will do everything you want, even sacrifice my life, and I will defend you until death. When a king is involved, we call this heroism. We must tell our Lord: I will give myself to you and to whatever you want, I accept all sacrifices; such a soul becomes beautiful before God. We must give our mind, our heart, our will. And our body? Shouldn't we give that to God also? You are the master of your freedom; you must give it, so that you may be *holy in body and spirit*, as St. Paul says: *offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God* (cf. Rom 12:1).

4° How can we give our body? By giving the actual condition of our body. That condition comes from God: health, sickness, well-being, and suffering. By doing this you sanctify yourselves in that condition. This is no small matter. When we feel well, we give ourselves perfectly to God. In times of success, there is satisfaction. When the Good Lord touches us with sickness and suffering, we change: we love God in the condition [of well-being], but not beyond it. Do you want to love God? Give your present condition. Who made it so? It was God.

This is not enough; **we must give the Good Lord our talents.** Each one has a status, a task, a skill, an aptitude. We must give it; but this is what we don't give, because God gave it to us as a seed that we cultivated by our education and experience (cf. Mt 25:14-30). Now God makes a contract with us: he will give us his beauty and take ours; he will give us his goodness and take ours. What he gives you will never be an occasion of pride; but since what you give him could lead to pride, God takes it away. A good domestic helper can enjoy the fruit of his work; he has a right to two things: food and wages. God hires us, and our pay is heaven; but the Good Lord gives us something in the meantime to encourage us. When self-love says: That is for me, that's mine – we must rather say: I gave it to God. We must not act like thieves who are always taking something back, not at all.

Do you see now what this gift of self means? Examine yourself well; you will notice that you have not given everything. Every time I make this meditation, I see something I took back, some little corner that I did not give. I acted like old misers who hide their money, or like bad house helpers who always find a way to steal something from their master. How did I do that? By the deception of a self-love that disguises things so skillfully that we are not aware of it. Can that be? Yes, certainly! But enough, now let us close our reflection on this subject. Let's proceed.

It's not much, and yet it's a lot. What do I mean? **We must give our external life to God.** What is that? This costs us more than we think. What is involved? The esteem of the world, of people, of saints, and angels here on earth. Believe me, that costs more than everything else. No longer to enjoy the esteem of good people – I did not say of bad people. Yes, we crown ourselves in their esteem, this is self-love. You must give this self-esteem to the Good Lord; it costs more than all other sacrifices. You must also accept the opposite: God may allow people to forget you: the heart gets sick thinking about it. One of the greatest sacrifices is that of our honor, of our reputation, when we have a little self-love.

And the sacrifice of our affections. More than anything, we hold on to the affection given to us. We work hard for this, especially when we have a right to it. When God is involved, it is a pure and holy heart that loves us. When we have the joy of finding someone who loves us with a pure, holy and divine love; we must give it to him. And if the Good Lord wills that no one will love us in this world, that we will be like strangers, like Jesus in his passion, like his 30 years in Nazareth, forgotten, unknown by everyone – we must give up the esteem of others and whatever the Good Lord wills.

And our external life, is this something more? We must give up our choice social relationships. This, I admit, is an agony and death. When the Good Lord places us with crude people whom we dislike, and when aversion is present, it is a constant struggle. Let us avoid telling the Good Lord: I don't want to go with that person. When you can reach that point, I will admit you non-stop into paradise.

If you don't give yourselves completely to God in this way, you will give yourselves piece by piece. Daily, we take ourselves back a little at a time, like thieves. We give with one hand, and take back with the other.

What do we mean by gift? It is the fruit of love. The greater the love, the purer and greater is the gift of God. Giving is the measure of love. To love the Good Lord sincerely you must give him everything at all times. The sun rises until it reaches its zenith. Meditate on this; it is the foundation of the Christian and religious life. Heaven is only the crowning of this gift. If you have the good fortune of doing this, all will go well.



Point for reflection:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.” The total gift presented in this instruction touches our life in all its dimensions. Note and meditate on the biblical texts referred to. At this moment in your life, what aspect of the gift challenges you the most?

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We Must Not Dwell in Ourselves, in Others, or in Means, but in our Lord⁷

Paris, Tuesday, February 26, 1861

[...]

My poor Daughters, dwell truly in the Good Lord, and don't dwell in yourselves. There is a saying that we should keep to ourselves. In one sense it is good to be quiet in one's own home, that's only natural. But I tell you, **in the order of grace don't dwell in yourselves;** you will not be comfortable. The Good Lord did not make us dwell in our own thoughts, in the affections of our own hearts, in preoccupations over our bodies, in our small possessions. The Good Lord did not create us to limit ourselves in this way; this is very evident. Whatever is less perfect is a limitation. When we make our home in ourselves or in others, we are in prison. The soul is not made for that, it is made for God. We are uneasy, we suffer, we wear ourselves out, and we are sad and discouraged.

Whoever has experienced the Good Lord even a little, loses sight of great men and great saints. When I have seen the sun, how can I admire a star with its little light? After I have seen something (really) beautiful, a smaller object though nice and good, does not even capture my attention. Someone who knows our Lord can no longer be fascinated or enthused except by our Lord. Why? How can I admire the earth once I have seen paradise? When I have seen a masterpiece, how can I admire something defective? [...]

Do not dwell in others, you will only be deceived. Even good and holy persons can only give you what God has given them. If God sees that a person is harming his glory, he will give him only thorns. We must not dwell in ourselves or others. We are always doing this, with a tendency toward dependence that leads us to the earth like slaves living in dens. We catch ourselves attaching ourselves to nothing at all.

In second place, don't dwell in the means. We must dwell in the goal, while the means are to be used. What would you say of someone who likes to stay in a coach saying: I want to stay where I am very comfortable? Or, of someone who attempts to cross the sea like a fly? You will say: My dear friend, your parents and friends are waiting – you'll never get there. If someone admires the road, we tell him: Walk on it, therefore! While admiring these beautiful mountains and valleys, keep moving. Do not remain in external means, in good words, in the good example of people – these are beautiful flowers of God's love; make use of them! We don't remain in a coach, otherwise we will be wasting our time; when someone comes along, we inquire about directions, and we arrive faster because we had stopped to ask.

Understand, my good Daughters, that the saints are meant to give you advice and help; use them, but don't dwell on them. You don't dwell on the food you eat; spiritual nourishment should lead you to God. Let everything that comes to you be used for God, then say "goodbye", "farewell", all is finished. If he sends you a strong grace, treasure it all day long; if he sends you a beautiful inspiration, make an act of virtue; once it's over, don't stay in the past. Avoid the old routine of certain means, like pious persons who have done something once and want to continue doing it. You must be ever new; like in paradise, we will be ever new. God is always good and loving, with a kindness that we have never known; being infinite, he varies his gifts infinitely (cf. Lam 3:22-23). We must be attentive, in the order of grace – we don't notice it – we are always in a new state.

Where must we dwell? With our Lord; a servant remains with her master, the angels with God, a spouse with her husband; you are his servant and his spouse – you must remain with God. **How do we remain there?** It is not simply with our body, since the body is attached to the earth, like a slave. You will remain there through your heart, through your desires, through your thoughts. Life is in the heart. You will remain in God through your soul. Our Lord says: *Where your treasure is, there also*

⁷ Number 297. *Il ne faut pas rester en nous, dans les créatures, dans les moyens, mais en notre Seigneur.*

will your heart be (Mt 6:21). A treasure is something we love; we dwell where it is. Our Lord also says: *Whoever eats me remains in me* (cf. Jn 6:56). We do this when we receive Communion, we abide in him. It is natural that the less perfect abide in the more perfect, that the servant live with the king. Ah yes! My poor Daughters, remain therefore in our Lord; the angels in paradise live in God. Tell me, what have we done till now? In reality, however, we have merely roamed around this world, building castles in Spain; we have stolen from our Lord, we have stolen time, and we have not served him well.

When do we live in our Lord? A sure sign is when our thoughts are in God, when our thoughts follow our heart. A sure sign that we are in the permanent state of love, is when we do not live in our selves or in others; that is the sure sign that we live in God. Go to heaven and see if you can take the saints away from the presence of God. No one can take them away from his throne. It is the same for one who is in God – no one can remove her from her life in God. The devil bothers us: he gives us evil thoughts by telling us: Look at the abyss where you will fall. We are sick and in trouble. Why? Because the devil wanted to turn our sight from heaven to earth. Or else, we concentrate on other people, living always in empathy or antipathy. Don't deny it. We turn away from the Good Lord like those who have lost their way. If we are not careful, we will fall into the abyss.

Therefore, live in our Lord. It seems to me that a person who lives in our Lord, and from our Lord will never be separated from him. Such a person must be very happy. Who can tear her away from her conversation with the king? Even the devils cannot. How happy will she be! She will live in serenity, in the sun, in divine light, higher than the clouds. Our existence is clouded over by self-love and sensuality, not so for the spiritual person. What is happening? **The soul lives for the beautiful paradise of God's love; it must be free.** I keep speaking to you about freedom and independence because I do believe this is the only proof of love of God: freedom from the means and from people that are not of God. One may suffer, because our old nature is always active; but a truly spiritual person cannot be stopped; that is why the devil is so jealous. Personally I never understood such jealousy against our Lord; I never would have believed that it even existed. It does exist in men who want to love a particular woman and who are angry because she belongs to God. What a horrible sin! It did exist among pagans and exists even now among Christians. How sad!

Some do everything they can to estrange souls from God. See to it that neither promises nor threats may ever separate you from our Lord. It is understandable that one may laugh at this, for what can one do with material treasures? They become just so much mud. Once we have contemplated the humiliation, the poverty of our Lord and all that he suffered in his passion, what will we do with worldly honors? They now appear so miserable. For one that loves God with a royal love, of what value is human love? It seems but a spider web that is easily torn apart. Listen to these words of St. Paul: ***I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*** (cf. Gal 2:20). This is a divine life. We have its power and its holiness. Only our freedom can hurt it.

Therefore, place yourselves in our Lord. You are his spouses. If that is too much for you, then you are his servants. You do the work of the angels around the Blessed Sacrament; you are doing the same as the queen of angels, the most Blessed Virgin.



Point for reflection:

In what sense are we talking here about freedom? In what sense are we talking about “remaining in our Lord?”

hhxX : xXHH

Our Lord Wants You Completely for Himself, Only for Himself, and Always for Himself⁸

Paris, Tuesday, June 25, 1861

What is the goal of your Eucharistic vocation? This is what we must examine this morning in a special way before God. Why did you come to his Cenacle? You will answer rightly that this is your goal. But what is God's goal? Our reply is reduced to three ideas: our Lord **wants you completely for himself, only for himself, and always for himself.**

Our Lord wants you completely for himself. In the Church, there are many vocations, many orders, and many graces. Each one has its work, and its mission. Most Christian vocations are mixed, that is, partly for our Lord and partly for the neighbor. There are very few that are purely contemplative, completely at the service of God. Some few communities, however, are purely contemplative, like the Carthusians, men and women, the Capuchins, the Carmelites. They practice their charity towards their neighbor only by prayer and penance, and in this they do not lack in perfection.

As for you, you are in this order of things, except that these communities center on a mystery or a special virtue, more in the past than in the present. Many honor his birth in Bethlehem, his hidden life, his penitential life, his crucified life. They can spend a lifetime doing that; they will never exhaust a mystery of our Lord. Your life is different; you center on Jesus in person – Jesus, living in the present, summarizes all his past states. You honor him as present. That is the difference between the simple contemplative life and the life of adoration. Ordinary contemplatives remain in their contemplation, but you abide in adoration. The Carthusians remain quiet in silence, alone by themselves, – their contemplation becomes their center. You remain in adoration, because you remain in your life. This is an enormous difference.

Our Lord wants you completely for himself, not both for him and for the world. Your entire heart, without division. Your will, all your senses to dispose of, he wants the entire thing; he wants to be master of your senses and all your faculties. *We cannot serve two masters* (Mt 6:24). We say: I gave everything. Yes, surely we gave, but it is so rare to find gifts that are pure, because they are always tainted with self-love. The proof of this is that we take ourselves back. Therefore, when the devil wants to tempt us, we must say: My work does not belong to me, it belongs to my master – the way a servant answers to a stranger. My work belongs to my master; therefore, I cannot work for anyone else. In the same way, if someone asks to take something from the house, a servant must say: I am not in charge, I cannot give or lend out; you must talk to the master. That is the answer of a good servant. A servant cannot enjoy a single thing in the house; it all belongs to the master. She uses it, not to enjoy at her own pleasure, but only as the master intends.

This is your attitude toward our Lord; your work belongs to him. In heaven he will give you a generous recompense. In this world he rewards by his graces and the joy of being in his service. You cannot take back one moment from him, under pain of becoming thieves. If someone asks you for something, you must say: That no longer belongs to me. Your mind exists only to think about our Lord; your heart, to love him with a royal love; your will belongs to our Lord – it's his.

Once a spouse has contracted a covenant before God and men, she no longer belongs to herself. She can no longer dispose of what belongs to our Lord – thoughts, desires, affections, and sufferings, everything belongs to him. Otherwise, she deprives him of his glory, of his rights; and she deprives herself of his grace. When we have signed a contract to sell a house, it no longer belongs to us.

⁸ Number 336. *Notre Seigneur vous veut tout à lui, rien qu'à lui, toujours à lui.* **N.B. This instruction is found also in Book # 7, Section A.**

When we have sold a field, we can no longer harvest from it. The same is true in relation to our Lord: Your will, your heart, your mind, everything belongs to him (cf. 1 Cor 3:9). The field belongs to him, and he cultivates it. We merely help him.

You must belong completely to our Lord. You cannot belong to any greater king, to a richer spouse – why take yourself away from him? To whom will you give yourself? Our Lord made you come in order to be completely for him, not for others. Consider yourselves fortunate. Let me ask you: wasn't Esther happy when she was chosen to be the wife of Ahasuerus? (cf. Est 2:17) All she had was her education – how her situation changed!

Our Lord chose you for his adorable service; you should not take yourself back any more – that would be stealing from his glory. You must belong only to him; that is clear. In fact, he said it: *you cannot serve two masters* (Mt 6:24), love two different persons. He knows how we are made, that we have only one dominant idea, only one royal affection – he wants it whole and entire for himself, not a single division. He does not even want you to belong to the angels: the spouse of the king does not belong to his ministers or to second-rank princes – she is sacred. You belong only to our Lord. If you would have the misfortune to give yourself to another, you would be a sacrilegious spouse, because you would break the alliance you contracted with him. We must love only one spouse, not two.

I ask you: how could a queen love a domestic helper, how could the one whom Jesus loves fall in love with another? She would have lost her honor, her common sense; you must belong only to him. See what our Lord has done so that you will belong only to him: in order to remove the temptation to divide your attention, he wants to be your sole occupation, by not giving you any exterior ministry. You will not take care of the sick nor do works of charity for fear that your heart become divided and your spirit become anxious. Our Lord is great enough to fill your entire life.

Notice also how he works in the order of contemplation: so that the quest for perfection might not become temptation for you, he does not want to leave you focused on your perfection, or your contemplation. He wants to put you at his adorable service, where you will try only to please him. You will not belong to the world, to charitable works, and you will not even belong to yourself, where self-satisfaction could dominate; or if you would serve him, you serve him only for your own satisfaction, for your own advantage, and not for his eternal glory. So that you will not have that kind of goal, what does our Lord do? So that you will have no time to think about yourself, there will always be an adoration time following upon another: in the morning, you will have Communion, during the day two adorations, and then at eventide. You don't yet have nocturnal adoration as we do. Day adoration leads to another in the evening, so that we have no time to think about ourselves.

In the world vanity becomes a slavery. A worldly woman thinks only of enhancing her appearance two, three, four times a day at her dressing table. But you merely need to prepare yourself, gather your bouquet of flowers to bring to our Lord. You are not even tempted to think about yourself, but only about him. See how we value this: our Lord **must be your thought, your affection, your law; you must not have a human center** – your center, your goal can be neither me, nor your superior, nor an angel. There must be no intermediary between our Lord and you. [...]

The one hundred forty-four thousand are always on Mount Zion, with the Lamb, singing a hymn of praise (cf. Rv 14:1-3); and they are bound to his person. Our Lord wants you to be always at his service; belong to him alone. Respect is given to your state, your condition as adorers; it is only right that our Lord would always have his court as in heaven, his family as at Nazareth where he had the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. It is only right that he have his court and his family here on earth. That is why our Lord chose you to belong completely to himself, only for himself, and always for himself. He does not want you to be like those domestic helpers who say: How much time will I have for myself, how many hours, one day a week? The angels in paradise have no scheduled hours. Can you take a holiday from adoration? No, never. With these three thoughts – **completely, only, and always for Our Lord** – you will succeed. Go forward in such a way that you will always go to his very person.

The Gift of Self⁹

Paris, Friday, July 26, 1861

My Sisters, we finished the first chapter of the Rule; now we go to the second. However, to catch the real secret of the Rule, **to enter into the grace of your vocation, into its perfection, you must not forget that everything depends on only one thing – the gift of yourselves, a complete gift to the service of love of our Lord in the most Blessed Sacrament.**

Giving is a good thing – it means making a donation, a gift. It involves returning what we have received; but this is not the same as giving oneself. Our Lord requires giving as a condition for evangelical service: *Go, sell what you have and give to the poor, then come, follow me; and you will have treasure in heaven* (cf. Mt 19:21). Abandon everything, come, give yourself in your poverty as my follower, and I will give you everything. Our Lord says that this is a big sacrifice, for he adds: *Everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life* (cf. Mt 19:29). Our Lord says that this is costly: our poor nature wants to provide for itself; we always want to have something in reserve, out of fear of misfortune. That is the first step, and we will receive a hundredfold. The proof is that our Lord does not want to wait till the next world to reward us. We left one house, and we gain a hundred others; we left one father and mother, and we find even more dedicated and gentle ones in the spiritual order. It seems that we lose everything and we gain everything.

What must we do? **Love has no conditions:** when we start placing conditions, love is no longer perfect. For God, what is essential is that we keep nothing for ourselves; unless we do that, we will not adore God with our whole mind, our whole heart, and all our strength. The Good Lord is so good that, in the law, he places two things: commandment and counsel. We do more than people who keep only the commandments; we keep some of the counsels. But, I must say that we cannot fly – the feathers in our wings are still bound; we cannot enjoy God as yet. Our Lord wanted to give himself completely to us in the perfection of his love, but he requires the gift of ourselves, in order to fill us completely.

Now, what is this gift of self? It is a contract by which we give ourselves purely and simply, perpetually, without any condition, without any self-interest, without any other reward than that of serving our Lord and being pleasing to him. The gift of self out of love has no parallel on earth; nothing can compare with it.

For example, a house-helper gives his freedom for a year – he gives his hands and his work, but he keeps his own thoughts. He can resign any time; he gives, yes, but it is the gift of one who works for pay. There is also the marriage covenant between a man and a woman: this is a more intimate gift; in itself it is more perfect. It is a perpetual bond, a sharing of goods; however, since death can separate them, we ordinarily say that one inherits from the other, that one mourns the other, *but then becomes free to marry* (cf. 1 Cor 7:39), as St. Paul says. This sharing of goods and of money is perfect in one sense, and very imperfect in another – it is more to enjoy life than to sacrifice it. Filial piety is more perfect: a child serves his parents; but as the child grows, so does self-love – the thought comes: I will inherit from my father and mother. Every time there is self-interest, love is not perfect. This does not mean that we should not desire the kingdom of heaven... but with a more perfect love.

This religious gift is perfect love: there is none more perfect on earth and in heaven. The gift of self on earth has greater freedom; in heaven, it is a gift of the necessity of love, since the soul goes to God out of a necessity of joy. Here on earth, it is not that way: the gift of self is a sacrifice; it is the most glorious and most noble act that we could do – to give oneself completely to God. If this gift is perpetual, for example through vows, then we call the person a consecrated person – she belongs to

⁹ Number 355. *Le don de soi. Explication de la règle. (Explanation of the Rule)*

God. This is much greater than the other unions where the persons keep their freedom; here, it is a sacrifice.

Do you know that it is very difficult to give one's mind, one's way of seeing things, of thinking and of judging? To see, to think and to judge only according to the mind of our Lord, in the spirit of obedience and humility, is the most difficult thing for most human beings. We hold on to our minds more than to material belongings. Yet this is what we must give. To give our heart is even greater still. I'm not talking about wayward affections for creatures, for these are easily interchangeable and the heart will lose nothing. But to surrender one's attachment to oneself so as to love oneself only in God... Such a gift will often fluctuate, for the heart tends to take itself back. That gift must be constantly renewed. The gift of the will can be called the sacrificial holocaust. Our very humanity consists of heart and will. By the vow of obedience we give ourselves forever without hope of reward. I imagine that our Lord must be pleased with such a gift.

If we stopped there, the gift would be very incomplete. Human nature caters first to the body rather than the soul. My good Daughters, see how easily we make the sacrifice of our mind; we often do it to avoid offending a guardian or master; we renounce it out of self-interest, and even simply to be polite. The heart follows by detaching itself from everything; so does the will. Merely to follow the example of worldly persons – would be embarrassing for us. They serve a human master with greater devotion [than we serve God], I say even more, with passionate devotion, lowering themselves at his feet. How humiliating for a person who should love the Good Lord.

My Sisters, **the gift of the body is greater than that of the soul**. This is not the first time that I tell you this; make no mistake: it is harder to give one's body than one's soul. It is more difficult to break small habits, to sacrifice little things, than to make the biggest spiritual sacrifices. Experience proves this: people reject religious life, because of a change of diet that would do them much good. They even hesitate for the following reasons: What is your resting time, what kind of food do you eat? I see this every day. When I see that someone begins by thinking about his body, I say: Here is someone coming for himself. This really happens! When the soul is happy, the body will follow. This makes me the saddest – One day, a priest was asking me the most detailed questions: what was our diet, our food, did we eat meat? I could not believe my ears! – My response was absolutely negative; I did not want him at any price.

It seems that **the gift of one's diet**, accepting a common diet, is an extraordinary mortification for many. Why? We are more earthly than spiritual. We are slaves to our body. What we admire in penitents is that they live on the simplest of diets. Why? In order to spiritualize their body, they gave it only what it needs so as not to die. God performed miracles; giving them health and longevity that were beyond explanation. There were some hermits who lived on inadequate food, hardly eating anything, performing surprising lacerations; yet it seems that God enjoyed giving them good health. They deprived themselves of everything and God gave them good health. Is it nothing to give one's health to God, to serve him without preoccupation for one's health? If you have reached that point, if I were Pope, I would canonize you while you are still alive. There's nothing greater that you could do. Nevertheless, we must reach that point of not worrying about our health. The saints did it.

I am not saying that when we are sick we must not take care of ourselves. But, we are cured as the Good Lord wants, as obedience wants, not as we will. Perhaps you have not experienced this, but certainly, of all the virtues and of all the mortifications, this is the one that crowns them all, to give one's health. Such a person is perfect and will be well rewarded. This is proof that she is dead to herself. Don't we feel anything? Of course, very intensely and painfully, but the love of God is stronger. We must give our health.

The gift of one's life, if only we knew how long it will last: by following a diet, by taking care of my body, I can live one year, ten years longer by taking good care of myself. As things are I might die one year, four or five years sooner. Although I am not obliged to do so in justice, I will take the latter part, not only I do nothing wrong, but it is better, and most people do it. A merchant says: I see clearly that my health is diminishing, but I can still work for one year to increase my fortune, or to

guarantee food for my children; later I will not be able any more – I must continue. A soldier may be asked: Where are you going? – I am going to fight: it is my duty. – He will give his life, often at the whim of some ruler, and never refusing. How many people risk their life for various [selfish] motives!

I was telling someone: You spend the night in the ballroom or in the theater – what if the Good Lord would ask you what the world is asking you, - don't you see that you are killing yourself? – I'm enjoying myself; I prefer to die rather than not enjoy myself. In the world they say: She is doing right, even if she is shortening her life by thirty or forty years. And for myself, could I not do for God as much as I would do for the world? The world is so generous to satisfy its passions; getting up at night is not good for our natural health; to live one year less, so what? Besides, the Good Lord does not punish us in that way; if you give him a few grams of health, he will return you a hundredfold. The Good Lord is not a tyrant; he does not find enjoyment in causing our death. He wants us to die to our passions, to our self-love, in order to make us live from his love. We must stress this, my poor Daughters. I hear people say: I really love the Good Lord; I give him my heart, my will, my thoughts. I don't press the point with them: they're not able to understand. They give what they can retract; they keep the best for themselves.

The devil knew this very well when he placed Job on a dunghill. Job had sacrificed his goods, his children. Even his friends came to insult him. The devil said: *Man gives everything to protect his body, his skin; hit him there and you will see if he is still patient—if he will bless you face to face* (cf. Jb 1:11). He attacked Job from head to foot, and placed him on a dunghill – worse than a dunghill since the worms were eating his flesh. Job bore this trial – there could not be any greater one – and God gave him a hundredfold.

My good Daughters, we renounce everything to come into religious life, but by nature we are greedy. We continue looking for everything that we liked, slowly and patiently, in a way that is not noticeable – we end up recovering everything that we lost. Be careful of this. We must sacrifice everything; we are on a battlefield – we must fight till the end, till the wound reaches our heart, like our Lord on the cross. Then all will go right.

When our human nature returns to its fears, its thoughts: What should I do, what will happen to me? – Are you still at that stage? Can't you see the work of the devil? Our human nature wants to drag us down. [...] God is the life of the body and of the soul; don't look back on what you have given. Let us examine ourselves constantly on this point; we are thieves, we constantly repeat our crimes, stealing from our sacrifices: we offer and then take back. How good Lord must be! This is why we must keep our gift of self ever before our eyes; we must nourish it, renew it – this is the Christian life, the religious life: *My son, give me your heart* (Pr 23:26). God seems to be repeating it: *You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind* (cf. Mt 22:37). The law excludes nothing at all.

That is the main concept of your entire Rule: the gift of yourself out of love, not out of self-interest. You must serve our Lord as he wills: you must serve him always, give yourself completely to him – the more you give, the more you will receive. Give everything, and our Lord will make it bear fruit a hundredfold. What you don't give will cause the rest to be lost: it is like a drop of water that can eventually destroy an entire building, like money that has not been deposited and produces nothing. Only God can make your gift bear fruit.

- ❖ Cf. “Second Anniversary of the Foundation”, July 31, 1861: Booklet # 3, Section E.
- ❖ See also: “Advent”, December 10, 1861: Booklet # 1, Section B.

Point for reflection:

In your own words, summarize this teaching in writing, and make a link with the life of the Founder, with the Rule of Life, and with your own life.

Recollection, Our Life in God^{10/11}

Paris, Friday, September 19, 1862

My Sisters, use your time well; you have only two days remaining in your retreat. The end is more important than the beginning. It is not a question of merely making resolutions, but of giving oneself to the Good Lord. Let's take advantage of our time. Today or tomorrow, make sure that I see you once, to tell me how your retreat went.

Today, we will meditate on the life of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. It would be useless, my good Sisters, to prepare a beautiful dinner, if you did not eat anything, if you could not digest it well. It would be useless for you to hear spiritual words, if you don't digest them. What do we mean by digestion? This is recollection. Digestion takes place when internal heat produces the transformation of food. It follows that recollection, the interior grace of our Lord, produces this transformation in us. This is true: a soul that knows how to be recollected knows everything.

To know how to be recollected in our Lord Jesus Christ is to have found a treasure, not merely to receive it, but to live out in practice the life of our Lord himself. A soul that knows how to be recollected knows how to converse with our Lord, to be united with him. A soul that does not know how to be recollected is one that knows how to feed only on alms received from others; it is inadequately fed. It nourishes its love only on words, on what it sees, on what it feels. The result is that it is very poorly nourished, always hungry, and never has what it needs. People prefer acts of penance, acts of virtue, rather than recollection, because this is difficult. If we were not so lightheaded, it seems that this would not be so difficult. Basically, there is some truth there.

There are two ways of leading souls to our Lord: by the service of others: this road is longer. The second is more perfect, going to our Lord by the soul. This is my advice to you. This way is more perfect and the grace of your vocation, since you are called to honor our Lord interiorly, as your rule says. If you begin courageously, our Lord will finish the task generously. However, you must give yourselves; mortify your senses, in order to attain recollection of soul. One can learn very quickly how to go to God, knowing that his love abides in us; we merely need to seek within ourselves. That is why we read in the Sacred Scriptures: *The kingdom of God is within you* (cf. Lk 17:21). Where? In his love: *I will lead her soul to solitude, and there, I will speak to her heart* (cf. Hos 2:16). Where is this solitude? Within ourselves.

We read in the prophet David: *I will listen within me to what the Lord God has to say* (cf. Ps 84:9). Is he therefore within me, that I might listen to him? You know a little about this already, my good Daughters, since you are journeying towards the Good Lord. You know very well how to listen to him. Go through your soul; if you go through your senses, you will be wasting your time. Our Lord shows us the way. We tend to follow our mind because it entertains us, but that is not the right way. By using other people or by focusing on our senses, we discover that our feeble will is lazy and slothful. Don't take that way; it's not good for you.

What then is this type of recollection? It is the interior life in itself. It is the life of self in God, the soul that leaves self, that leaves behind everything of this world, and flies *directly into God, into Jesus Christ* (cf. Gal 2:20), to use the words of St. Paul. Such a soul passes through the senses, through everything material, as our Lord passed through his tomb to rise from the dead. The soul goes to its God; it no longer dwells with itself, as I was saying yesterday. It would expose itself to a

¹⁰ Number 447. *Le recueillement, la vie de soi en Dieu.*

¹¹ N.B. This instruction is also found in Book # 4, Section C.

thousand troubles by staying with itself. It is like a master that commands: the soul obeys and that's very good. She loves the master more than all things, remaining with him, that is what you should do. Remain in our Lord; you are at home in his house. It is his home, and he feeds you with fatherly love. From the material point of view you are in his house; from a spiritual point of view we can say: you are at his door.

One who loves the master must honor him. Anyone who loves another more than self will put aside personal interests to do what the beloved wishes. Love is nothing other than an outpouring into the person loved. You should go first, how can you expect the loved one to come to you? A king is not invited into a stable; you are that stable. Go rather toward the one who gives, the soul goes towards God, and the adorer towards the Lord, that is understandable. God draws his creatures, attracting them by interior grace. It would be unnatural for a soul to draw God to itself. Come out of yourselves, then; go to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, where you will find him.

How will you do this? I tell you, **leave yourself behind;** form the habit to stop thinking, stop wanting anything in yourself. One who loves sees no difficulty. Where there is love, thoughts follow the heart. The greater our love the more sacrifices seem pleasant. The proof of love is in sacrifice; the thoughts of the heart will draw the thoughts of the mind. The goal is to change oneself into our Lord who is so good, so holy, and so loveable – who is everything. Every virtue – every grace, every good – flows from his heart. After seeing him, it's impossible not to love him. His voice captivates both heart and senses. In paradise, at first sight of him, we will never lose sight of his most gentle goodness. If we loved a bit more, we could not live without thinking of our Lord. You will say, this is supernatural. Yes, it's both supernatural and natural at the same time. His grace within us is attracting us; that's supernatural. Our body and its faculties are like instruments; that's the natural action. We must bring both body and soul, they are attracted by a supernatural principle.

What does our Lord think, what is he doing, what is he saying, and what does he want? We normally ask such questions with our parents. In the presence of a teacher or a genius, we are afraid to think. What did papa say? The Christian asks: What did the Pope say? The interior soul asks: What did our Lord say? How will you know? By consulting him through an interior life. The soul sees God's truth better than with physical eyes. The movement of grace and its power is more convincing than sight; this conviction is a supernatural vision. The soul sees God, senses his truth, and can no longer doubt. However, we must rid ourselves of everything that is disturbing, everything that prevents us from seeing God. He himself is within us, as I said earlier. This happens quickly: the soul merely consults God; love acts more quickly than words. With a simple glance, you know that love says everything; one word says it all.

This is the interior life. In the interior life, the soul finds its practical judgments – its advice, the law of its heart. Our Lord is the master, she is the servant. The soul can do without many things because it is under the obedience, the direction of our Lord himself. Its rule is direct obedience. To guide its obedience and its holiness, it does not need a confessor nor books – none of that. Our Lord entrusts to the confessor the interior guidance, conscience, vocation; principles must still be given. As for love, that is not the concern of the confessor. Do we not see, desire, or hear something? Our Lord reserves for himself the guidance of our love. When we sought guidance for our hearts, it led to nothing. I would not dare say this if you were not my daughters. Do you not see that you turn your heart toward him, if he is too kind and understanding?

All this is too mysterious for people in the world. **Our Lord reserves for himself the direction of our primary love.** The soul who goes directly to him to guide its love finds our Lord. There is no need of an intermediary for a soul that loves: *I will lead her into solitude, and there, I will talk to her heart* (cf. Hos 2:16). You, pious souls, always want an intermediary to take your heart and give it to God. But all that is muddy water, cobwebs that cover everything. The soul does not have the courage to take its own heart to give it to God; that soul will only regress in goodness, because it is not properly centered. This soul would like to express its love, but it cannot. It would be sufficient to tell her that she is not wise, but our Lord does not want us to say this. These are mysteries that must be

respected. It is *the secret of the king* (Tb 12:7), as the Holy Spirit says. There are some things that must be respected, never verbalized. If you talk about them, you will break your heart.

Our Lord has three loves: love of the law: this belongs to the director. Here you are under obedience to the law. There is the obedience of virtue: this, too, belongs to the director. These two laws belong to the director; leave them to him. There is the direction of love: do not go there; this is the Holy of Holies. We are only servants who must remain in the antechamber. This is *the secret of the king* (Tb 12:7), as the Holy Spirit says. The groom speaks and the bride listens.

Place yourselves, therefore, at the disposition of our Lord. If you are not recollected, you will not understand this delicate feeling, because, from time to time, he touches your heart. You are used to being guided like a blind man. Be careful. **As a soul advances in the interior life of love, our Lord takes the place of the guides** – and he is enough. Occasionally, however, he sends certain situations wherein we must humble ourselves; then consult a director. If you were pure enough, courageous enough, it would be better to suffer – but go, if you wish.

The interior life not only gives life to the way of truth, but it is the interior path. You love our Lord as he loves you, his love is ever varied. He loves our souls as he created them, with their particular graces; as a consequence, the soul must act according to its gifts. **We must abandon ourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit.** He forms us; he is as in his temple (cf. 1 Cor 6:19); we must abandon ourselves by giving ourselves to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if you want to understand, live from love – there is no other way to understand. The words of our Lord are so strong and powerful, that we cannot hear them. He communicates only as love knows how – a fire that is felt. Put yourself into this fire.

This is the love of Jesus Christ, wanting to enlighten us in him. How? Don't ask! The heart knows. This cannot be expressed, for words are inadequate. To transform oneself into our Lord is the most difficult thing to do. **What can a person do to allow our Lord to become his soul, his thought, to take his place?** Here is the ordinary means – I cannot speak about the other means because I don't know them. When you go toward our Lord, begin by exterior recollection: close the door to externals, otherwise, you will not succeed. If you don't do this, your senses will become an open door and you will be agitated. You will need to treat it like a sick patient. Begin by closing the doors of the senses, if you want to go towards to our Lord.

When a soul wants to go towards our Lord, it closes its eyes. Let us be clear: the soul sees our Lord, and our Lord looks at her. He is there exposed on the altar. This is my own preferred attraction. Our Lord is visible here. It is possible to proceed differently. Still, when I speak of closing our eyes, I mean closing them to creatures. If you are very attentive to our Lord, if you pay less attention to what is around you, you will be more recollected than distracted. This will happen. Imagine a wounded soldier: he is losing blood, but he does not feel it.

That is the first disposition. When you have done that, you must place your soul in silence at the feet of our Lord, without babbling, without searching for formulas – nothing. We must place our soul in the adoration of silence, present there like one who is dead, completely ready to listen to our Lord. The soul waits for him to come, fully disposed to listen to him. This is very important. That is why you must not begin your adorations with vocal prayers, like the *Our Father* and others that you have long known by heart. Your mind is no longer active; your heart murmurs without clear words. If you want to listen to our Lord, do what I say. Try it, even for a moment. If you are not ready to listen to the Good Lord, how can he speak to you?

Reject all absurd thoughts. I want you to act like the Prophet who said: *I hold my soul in my hands, and I will always hold it* (cf. Ps 130:2). We have not reached that point yet. Sometimes our Lord will make you wait. He gives you time to free yourself from all else. To desire virtue, the soul must free itself from itself, so that it can become master of itself. Even if you remained there one hour merely trying to control yourself, that will be worth more than all the rest. Doesn't the sun give more light in one minute than all other lights put together? The Good Lord comes into us with joy.

How should one meditate? You can begin with your imagination, if you feel dry. This is not difficult. There you will be recollected, at peace, on a calm sea. Or [you can take] a grace, a mystery, a truth, and feed on it. Or, our Lord will place you in a state of sweetness, a heavenly emotion. Or to reflect on the silence of virtue, you can take something from the life of the saints. For example, Mary Magdalene, listening at the feet of Jesus, weeping (cf. Lk 7:38). Personally, I like this approach. It is helpful to imagine her there. Then, imitate her silence. At another time, reflect on the Blessed Virgin adoring our Lord as a child, or before the tabernacle. This is very important, even if it should last only for a few minutes, let us control the imagination by giving it some picture.

Is that all? No, we must be silent, in order to listen to our Lord. This is a time of longing, of waiting; longing for his coming, to let him speak. Then the conversation begins: God speaks, the soul responds, as the bride does in the Scriptures. The soul calls, searches; the Good Lord is there, watching – he is pleased to see your struggles. The soul then is searching, flying, running; and our Lord is satisfied, and accompanies her. But, as this loving bride wants to love and devote herself to him, she runs and waits. This soul must have reached a certain degree [of perfection]. If you take a prepared subject, and enter into conversation with our Lord, you will be drawn away from his person. When you are recollected you enter into the spirit of the person. You already do this, my poor Daughters, although you would not describe it in this way. Do you not understand that once you sit down with him, you will have food and rest, and all you need to work? You will be happy in a steady center. Go then!

That is recollection in God. You must apply your attention to it. Sometimes you may be at a loss: What shall I do during this retreat in order to please the Good Lord? Do what I just said. You have been clothed and adorned; now, he takes you by the hand. What are you waiting for? Why remain in the outer chamber? Go then. There are too many souls who want to go to God, but are afraid of the solitude, the nothingness. There are very few who want to go into this Cenacle of his love. At least, may there be a few. Don't say: I do not have the learning; I did not receive a brilliant education. All you need is a heart; if you did not have one, you would not be here. You left your home; why remain in the mud-house that we call self-love? You should have stayed home. *Penetrate into that house,* (cf. 2 Cor 5:1-5), as St. Paul said, and do you know what will happen? You will be happy forever, you will be living in our Lord, and you will fulfill these beautiful words: *He who eats me will remain in me* (cf. Jn 6:56). Is there another paradise on earth or in heaven? How pitiful we are! We know these things, but we don't think about them. My good Daughters, concentrate on this. Practice recollection; begin by entering into silence. Go towards our Lord by leaving yourselves behind.

One thing I omitted is that **to go toward the Good Lord you must come out of yourself.** Never look back, or you will be terrified by your faults, your defects, or questions about grace. You will be held back if you cannot find the source of the evil. When walking in a high place, it is wise not to look down, to avoid becoming dizzy.¹² **Keep your eyes on the Lord who walks ahead of you** to lead you to his tabernacle, to his Cenacle of love, from where he sends out invitations to paradise. Do not hold back, or you will no longer see him. Do not waste time thinking about yourself. Why worry about all that? Even if God himself granted you all the Christian and religious virtues, how would you carry all this baggage when the Lord himself chooses to carry it himself and to give you his crown and his virtues? Keep in mind that if the Lord warns you it is because he wants you to go forward, to detach and rid yourself of your own ego. [...] Free yourself then from holding on to this so-called treasure, come out of yourself and go into our Lord. In him you will find all you need.

One day [I heard someone say, or rather,] I read in a life of the saints that a king married a servant-girl, who eventually became both queen of France and a saint. Prior to the wedding, the girl said, I have nothing; I am but a servant. The king replied, I am the king of France and very rich. I don't want you to bring me anything. Once you are on the royal throne, just know that I am the one who placed you there. The marriage took place, and the servant became both queen and saint, for she has been canonized. Although you are nothing, our Lord wants you as a spouse. A spouse must leave her

¹² Alternate reading: our head would start spinning.

parents. Our Lord offers you a noble kingdom, wealth, and all you need. Come with nothing; he will give you everything. However, he asks only one condition, that you truly have nothing, for **he wishes to fulfill all your needs.** Ah! My Sisters, may the Lord be enough for you!



Points for reflection:

This instruction and the one that follows are two parts of a whole. Recollection has two dimensions: “Make your home in me, as I make my home in you”. Here our Founder is teaching us to live (make our home) in our Lord. How are you living this teaching? Make some practical resolution.

hhxX : xXHH

The Life of Our Lord in Us¹³

Paris, Friday, September 19, 1862

In general, I don't know how you're feeling, but I presume that your soul is nourishing itself with the food that is being offered you – not everything, because there's too much. We don't eat everything served at table – we choose. Notice that very little is needed for a soul that is well prepared. Take what helps you. When God speaks, he says very little: a single word says everything. That word touches the soul and places it in the wealth of God. **If you understood clearly this morning's meditation, you would understand many things: God is your center – he is our real center – the center of our life is in God.** I ask you to promise to make this morning's meditation your first choice: that is what we call the kingdom of God, or, if you prefer, of you in God. This morning, I said something in passing – I'm not sure if I can express it properly, since I did not have time to think about it before God, to ask God's help.

Recollection means pouring ourselves into God – that's the first part. The second part is making room for God to live in us – our Lord in us.

At first, we are the ones going into God. We go there by choice and out of love, renouncing everything along the way. That's fine! Once a soul resides in God, the reverse occurs, as I told you frequently in the past. These truths are not easy to grasp. Our Lord says: *Whoever eats me remains in me* (cf. Jn 6:56). First we go, then there is the return. Our Lord says: *Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and we will make our home in him* (Jn 14:23). Whoever loves: that's the first degree of love – recollection. Then, God will come because God is love (1 Jn 4:8): the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the holy Trinity abides in us, because we love him in our charity.

Further on our Lord says: *Whoever loves me, I myself will manifest myself to him* (cf. Jn 14:21). Note that he reveals himself. In what way? In the way of love. This is what we must dwell on, to catch the meaning; what is this return? It seems unnecessary. Our Lord should have said, "Whoever loves me abides in me." What more do we need, since he becomes our very essence? When our Lord lives in us, he gives us what he is in himself, our Lord lives in us and we in him. That is the return gift. What then? This reciprocity is not easy to explain, since the soul already abides in him. Here is what I think: the soul gives itself and our Lord accepts, this part is clear. Our Lord does not take away our freedom but only our self-mastery. Controlling everything, our Lord accepted the gift of our freedom, so that we may have merit, and that we may offer him new acts of worship. Our Lord is now in charge; he has become the master.

There are three ideas that explain this abiding of our Lord in our soul. These three ideas are on the obelisque of St. Peter's in Rome, erected by (Pope) Sixtus V: Jesus Christ lives, he reigns, he commands – **and there is a fourth thing...** here are the operative words.

Jesus Christ lives in us, but how? By his death our Lord has given up his natural life by which he offered sacrifices of suffering and of virtue. All his sacrifices flowed freely and meritoriously from his human life. Since he has entered into glory, our Lord no longer persists in his human life. He wants to take it back, in order to continue this life in a loving way, for the glory of the Father and the sanctification of his people. For this purpose, he created a sacrament of union by which the soul becomes one with him. When the soul abandons its self-mastery, our Lord becomes its superior and master. One can say, "You are my soul, you are my body. I do this by free choice, out of love, and by way of consecration."

This is our Lord's response: *You give yourself to me, and I give myself to you. That is only just: you let me live in you, one with you as your Savior. I am your holiness, your perfection – some day I shall*

¹³ Number 449. *La vie de notre Seigneur en nous.*

be your reward. I will give you all my eternal wealth, since you give me everything you have: we will make an exchange of life. I will take your place: I will be in your house – I will be the head (cf. Col 1:18), you will be the members (cf. 1 Cor 12:27). I will command, and you will obey. Then all your sufferings will be mine, since I have become one with you. When you make some act of virtue, the glory will not be yours, but mine: like a soldier, your reward will be the victory.

The soul says: You will be my head, I will give you mine along with my members. You can no longer use your own body to suffer, since it is glorious; I will give you mine, in order to give you a new life. Our Lord accepts. My good Daughters, that is why we call **the Eucharist the renewal, the extension of the incarnation.** Our Lord is now our life: why? It is not for him, since he is already crowned in his sacred humanity; he has glory and power, he is crowned on the throne of his Father – that suffices for him. Since we are his juniors, and since he loves us in the redemption, this good and genuine Joseph (cf. Gn 45:4-11), who is Jesus, does not want his brothers to live in misery, he wants to share with us: the Father honors his Son in his chosen ones, in such a way that the Son comes to us so that his Father can honor us in him as his chosen ones.

Do you see now what this union of our Lord in himself is? He is the one who lives anew, just as he is the power, the grace, and the light. We are like free instruments, his co-workers. This association is very real – it's no exaggeration. St. John talks about it constantly: we form a society of love and of life. Ah! What a joy! These two flames come together and form one hearth. Heaven is not a society of life; heaven is a crown of justice that we have won; it is not a free gift as it is in the case of children who die after baptism. It is a crown that we must earn, that we can earn only through the one who gives it, our Lord himself (cf. 2 Tm 4:7-8).

Our Lord is in us to the same degree that we are in him, by the union that gives us this power. Therefore, enter into him; it is just and necessary that it be that way – that your life, united with our Lord, be a divine life. To effect this union, **something like the incarnation occurs.** There was an infinite merit through the union of the divine person; likewise, in us, through union with our Lord. We are not God, but our works are infinite and divine through our Lord. You understand; that is how it works. In that way, when I suffer, what a joy! I give him anew his ability to suffer for his Father. Our Lord is happy to see that what he can no longer do, the soul does, when it exercises his virtues. The soul restores to him the virtues that he can no longer practice. Our Lord once again becomes humble, mild, and mortified – the Father crowns him a second time in me. What a joy!

My good Sisters, when you work, let this thought encourage you; it is true. Notice what our Lord said to St. Paul, who was then still called Saul: *Why are you persecuting me? – Who are you, Lord? -- I am Jesus of Nazareth that you are persecuting* (Acts 22:7-8). He could have said: You are persecuting my children, my servants. He takes himself as he is: the members belong to the head, and the head to the body. It is true: *Whatever you do to these little ones, you are doing it to me* (cf. Mt 25:40). How great this is! The soul really becomes great! You understand that there no question of coming to embellish yourself, to honor yourself with your own merits. These are insignificant – you do it through union with our Lord. If he enters into you, enter into him. You know what a spout of water is: the water goes up to a certain level, in such a way that its ascending motion is equal to its descent¹⁴. When you go to our Lord, you give him the power to come back to you in return.

Our Lord is not satisfied with living in us: he is not only holiness and power – he is love. Our Lord did not live a single moment without loving his Father, and with a meritorious love, ever glorifying him in a new way. We will give him the ability to repeat this. Then what does our Lord do? We give him the same conditions; with this difference that it is no longer the body that he took in the womb of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, but our own body that he takes to incorporate it through love. It is not through us that he loves his Father; no, he does that through himself. You understand that the less perfect must go through the more perfect, that the finite must pass into the infinite. And so he takes our free heart, places it into his, and through our heart his becomes what it was in the

¹⁴ The copy gives the opposite: *its descending motion is equal to its ascent.*

womb of Mary and in his passion. That is why, according to one of the Fathers of the Church, a Christian is another living Jesus Christ.

May he come into you, so that the Father may say: *This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Mt 3:17). My poor Daughters, this must happen. But what kind of love will you have so that the Trinity should come into you? Let's be reasonable. You know, or perhaps you don't know this principle: love can prevail only between equals. Two souls must be on the same level: if one friend is higher than the other, he must descend – that's understood. Here we have the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit – the holy Trinity – who loves you with a tender and personal love. And the Good Lord wants us to love him. **The blessed Trinity wants to be united with us**, not as equals – impossible – but by a union of life. Is that clear?

How shall we, poor creatures, rise to that level? Through graces... but you understand clearly that these are alms given to a beggar: a subject cannot approach the king as an equal, since he lives from almsgivings. Love is not enough to reach the heights of divine love. How shall we arrive there, if not by uniting ourselves to the divine love of our Lord? Since he is human, I can give him my hand: he is my brother – there is equality of nature, of human condition. Since he is God, since the Word took our human nature – I find myself lifted up to him. It is through Jesus my Savior and brother that my love for the Trinity becomes, I dare not say divine, but great, because of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine how pleased the Father must be, as he says: This is my son, my daughter, that finds happiness in coming to us? The Son is pleased to come and incarnate himself in his spouse; and the Holy Spirit is pleased to come into his temple.

You must give yourselves to our Lord to the extent that your heart will become his heart, and your life, his life. My poor Daughters, what must we do? Just as we do with fire. We ignite it with a match. In any case, you cannot start a fire without fire. *God is love* (1 Jn 4:8), and we are love – these two loves come together in Jesus Christ. Everything is there. What happens then? When I love, it is now Jesus Christ who loves in me; otherwise how can you explain that love continues in heaven: God is greater than the angels – how can we love, if not through our Lord?

Our Lord does not reign in us only through love; there is something else besides the life of love. What is it? The life of sacrifice is our Lord completing his sacramental life in us. Here is a wonderful thought: since every Christian gives a new life to Jesus Christ, everything in the life of Our Savior is therefore present: Jesus dying on the cross, his evangelical life, the child Jesus – whatever you wish. He relives his entire life in us.

As St. Paul says: *I cannot die unless Jesus is complete* (cf. Col 1:24). **If I must reach the holiness of his perfection, what must I do?** Listen, my poor Daughters, that is not your concern – God does it. To live in you, to establish union with you, our Lord gives you all his states, all the phases of his life¹⁵. Our Lord makes you pass through his entire life in one day: there you will find his birth, his hidden life, his passion and death. He does this inside of you: he varies your states and your graces, sacrifices even more so out of love. The result is that his thirty-three years flash before you. Do you not realize that your inner states change? It is our Lord who matures in you, and lets you experience a certain time of his life, a particular suffering, so that he can tell his Father: I renew my birth, my passion in this soul. Great souls pass through the entire life of our Lord in one day; small souls take a lifetime – are you small souls? We never return to the past, since our Lord never went back on his steps – we don't return to the years past: graces are ahead, waiting for you.

I said that Jesus Christ renews in you various events of his life. Are you tempted? Remember how Jesus was tempted: the devil went to tempt him in the desert; our Lord rejected him. You experience humiliations and persecutions, but our Lord can no longer experience these. Then comes the great sacrifice of Calvary: death. Our Lord chooses your states: therefore, follow our Lord; don't try to change your states. In that case there would be two masters, and our Lord will go away if you want to resume being your own master, but there's no way. Since sacrifice and suffering give the

¹⁵ This teaching on states of soul is typical of the French School of Spirituality.

greatest glory to his Father, he hopes for just one thing: to convince us to renew his sacrifices, his sufferings, in order to offer them to his Father. He wants to do this with you, through you. A Christian is another Jesus Christ: understand well what a Christian is. Since our Lord has taken flesh in us, the devil tempts Jesus Christ in us, to hand him over, like Judas. When you meditate, therefore, meditate on the life of Jesus Christ in you. How beautiful it is. [...]

What must we do in this state? Try to enter deeply into our Lord: remain in our Lord and don't leave, because he will remain. Therefore, be recollected. Then, something will happen that I cannot explain: our Lord enjoyed the beatific vision – except in his passion when it became terrible – his human soul always saw the beauty of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. This contemplation made him happy for the soul cannot see God without being happy, in spite of sacrifice. In his passion, this changed, since he lived it out of justice and our Lord was frightened. My good Daughters, you will have the beatific vision of our Lord, yes, but not in the same way. You will have the beatific vision of our Lord: you will experience him within you; you will experience him by a tender love.

My poor Daughters, when we love someone with a very delicate love, do we not feel his presence, his breath, through a gentle awareness? Our Lord is there more than a father or a mother; he gives himself. That is my point. **The soul experiences a joy, a peace – a feeling of peace that I cannot define**, this is real. Of course, the beatific vision must have its sacrifices, because it occurs in the midst of the greatest temptations, even despair. But, the sky remains calm: that is where the Good Lord dwells. When the storm has passed, our Lord will reappear.

The *Imitation* goes further when it says that, **if we had the purity of love, we would always be contemplatives**. It adds more: that we would enjoy the delights of God, that we would share the joy of the saints in heaven – not that of glory, but that of love. Surely, love must bring happiness: when love goes beyond people and feelings, happiness necessarily follows. Consider the saints; their lives were happy, they delighted in God. This does not mean that there will be no suffering on the human level. In our higher faculties we find joy, but a strong and powerful joy – only the saints know this. You might say: I am not a saint. How unfortunate! If we love imperfectly, the Good Lord will not give us this joy; he gives it only to those who belong completely to him. If he wanted to give it to us, we should tell him: But, Lord, you will be mistaken; you will hurt yourself to make me believe that I love you as much as you love me. If you feel nothing, it is a blessing: he is acting, he is at home – this happiness is not something we praise, because it is the glory of Jesus Christ in us¹⁶.



Point for reflection:

“The pouring of God into us” is an expression drawn from the spiritual masters of the Flemish School. Here, Peter Julian makes it the consequence of the complete gift of self. This pouring into God becomes a life. Even the human emotions form part of this union with Jesus Christ and of his life in us. What points strike you in this teaching?

hhxX : xXHH

¹⁶ Possible interpretation: « Si vous ne sentez pas, c'est un bonheur, il le fait, car il est en lui-même ce bonheur, on ne l'exalte pas, parce que c'est la gloire de Jésus Christ en nous ». That is: “We should not glorify ourselves if we experience this joy, since it is Jesus Christ himself who does it, who is our joy in us.”

It Is Necessary for Us to Love Our Lord¹⁷

Nemours, Thursday, November 8, 1866

Let us place ourselves in the presence of our Lord by an act of faith, etc.

[...].

My Daughters, we are in the middle of the retreat. In the first part, we spent much time on what God has done for us. He showed us his graces – we had time to see what he has given us: he created us out of love; he placed us in the best situation for our salvation. God could not have done more to show us his love.

Now what shall we do for him? That is the question. We must love him – that's why we come to consecrate ourselves, to commit ourselves to his love. Why? Because our Lord has loved us so much. Therefore, we must love him – this is our state of life.

Now that we have entered religious life, we must enter into love, because this is a state of love. And, by vocation, **you make the vow to love because you make the vow of virginity which is nothing else than the vow of love.** The other vows are merely a profession of evangelical virtues. By this vow of love we say: My God, I vow to love only you forever; consequently, no one else will have my heart. It's final; I made the vow of virginity. Formerly, this was the only vow, and by this vow of virginity one became a religious in the Church. In the ritual books we find the consecration of a virgin, followed by return to the family. Later, there arose monasteries where the virgins could withdraw from the world.

Since you made this vow, you must love our Lord completely with a virginal love. This is the greatest of all the vows. It takes precedence over the others because it consecrates you, while the others do not. You wanted to gain merit and enter into the way of the Gospel. Obedience is the way of merit, but it is not the way of excellence. Virginity or chastity consecrates you by vow; you immediately rise in dignity, and your body becomes sacred.

In the Church you are called consecrated. However, you are not consecrated as bishops and priests whose head and hands are consecrated. Why, then, are you consecrated? Because by vow you are consecrated to our Lord Jesus Christ who called you to be his brides by a divine covenant. That is why this vow is so beautiful – because its seat is in the heart. That's why our Lord is so jealous (cf. Dt 4:24). What a beautiful state of life! Therefore, you must love our Lord, because he has chosen you, and because you have chosen him.

Were you to mix the love of God with the love of others, it would be offensive. The Church has a horrible word for a woman who is not faithful to her husband: it is called adultery – if she commits sins she becomes an adulterous woman. In the same way, if a Christian virgin sadly violates her vow of virginity, she will be known not merely as adulterous but as sacrilegious. That is the name for the sin committed when someone profanes the sacred Host, a church, a ciborium, a chalice – we call that a sacrilege, a profanation. And a virgin who violates her chastity becomes sacrilegious. Why? Because she no longer wants to love our Lord – she no longer wants to belong to our Lord. A wife belongs to her husband. A husband like our Lord must possess her entire heart, all her rights. If a virgin attaches herself naturally to others, this is a sacrilege.

You must therefore love our Lord as faithful spouses. You are joined to him and to no one else. You will be crowned with this title or condemned by it. Since you are vowed and consecrated, you must now surrender yourself to our Lord. That's clear! But what does it mean? You must surrender yourself to the love of your spouse. Love is fully satisfied only in heaven. In your lifetime you are on

¹⁷ Number 612. *C'est une nécessité pour nous d'aimer notre Seigneur.*

the way, and our Lord sends his angels once in a while to console you – he himself comes occasionally to visit you. He wants you to be wise and prudent virgins, not foolish ones (Mt 25:1-13). To love him is your glorious privilege. How can you not love him, you who have the privilege of being always with your divine spouse? You are his betrothed while on earth. The contract is made, but the wedding, the heavenly marriage, will take place only in heaven. And so now you are with your divine spouse – you live with him, he receives your service as you give it to him. You are a member of his Eucharistic family. How could you not love him? And he condescends not only to visit you, but to live with you.

[...]

Our Lord wants you in his home: he himself wants to adorn you with virtues, so that on the wedding day, he may lead you to his Father and tell him: This is the spouse that I raised, that I nourished; I bring her to you; accept her, Holy Father. That is your state. Others don't live in our Lord's home as you do. You remain there. Our Lord himself instructs you: he is the law, the center of your life. You are not religious in order to be religious, but rather to be adorers. Without that, you would have done better to go elsewhere.

Besides, you are not here for any (human) person. No. **You are not here for your neighbor** except in the zeal of your prayer and penance. Therefore, you are not here to serve your neighbor, but exclusively for our Lord. **You are not here for your superiors.** They are your fathers and your mothers who are meant to guide you and train you in the service of the master. They are obliged to nourish and cloth you, so that will not be concerned about that. Everything here is for you; you are for no one other than for our Lord. And so I say: Take care to serve your master at all times, because if you don't serve him, you will be doubly guilty: against our Lord and against the Society that nourishes you. Everything is contained in that.

And were it true that other religious loved our Lord more than you, you should be driven away. Since our Lord has flooded you with insights and graces, if you serve him badly, you would be guiltier than others. It would be better to send you away. Beware! You must excel in serving our Lord, not from virtue, but from the fact that it is your state of life, your work – you are obliged as servants. That would be the limit if, having a very small heart that God expands by his grace – this heart would turn inwards to love itself. Oh God...! This would be like throwing a ciborium into the mud...! If you make others the central object of your love – O God...! That would be to steal from our Lord – to tear yourselves away from him in order to give yourselves to another. God forbid...!

In the religious life you should love each other equally. Be attentive to this – you should not love one more than another. Why? Because you form a circle around God, you should love each other in our Lord. May God watch over you! I really think that your hearts are free from [the bond of] all human affection, from all personal attachments. If not, you would be displeasing our Lord, and you would be very unhappy. To love our superiors as a means is fine. God uses them to help us in our weakness, but here you don't need all that. Love your superiors with a filial love. But if we could use a piece of wood to become a superior who maintains the rule, that would be wonderful, because it would be the grace of authority. Therefore, love our Lord very well; [I repeat] love him very well.

While St. Paul was preaching about the apostolate, he said: *It is a necessity for me, it is my ministry; Jesus Christ has given me this grace.* And he goes further by saying: *Woe to me if I do not evangelize*, -- yes, this was his state of life! – *Woe to me if I do not evangelize* (cf. 1 Cor 9:16). Well! Woe to you, my Sisters, if you don't love, and if your love is not singlehearted! The purpose of your cloister is that the world will not come to distract you from your love.

Now, how must you love our Lord? Here's the answer: you must love him as he loves you. That's the answer. Friendship establishes equality in relationships, in sentiments, because that is what love is – union between two persons. Our Lord loves you with a love of benevolence; you also must love him in this way. And how does our Lord love you? You know it already: He has always loved you; he loves you as he loves his Father. And how does he love his Father? He loves himself in his Father, through his Father, and for his Father. The Word loves his Father by means of a constant

relationship of what he is by love – he returns his glory to his Father, and his Father sends it back to him (cf. Jn 12:28; 13:31-32; 17:1). This movement takes place by the relationship that he has with his Word, and in this relationship consists their happiness.

Our Lord gives you everything he has: his body, his mind, his merits, and his heart – all that belongs to you. **You must give him the same thing:** your mind that he may form it, your will that you may be happy in serving him, your body that you may continue therein his divine and human virtues. Is that clear? Then there will be a constant relationship of his heart with your heart, of his faculties with your faculties, of his body with your body – in a word, of his entire person with yours. And that is why you must love him as you are loved: our Lord loves you by his entire person – therefore, you must love him by your entire person. Our Lord tells you: I am constantly thinking of you; can you not constantly think of me? Our Lord gives us everything he is; can we not give him our affection, our gratitude? That is the least we can do in return.

Our Lord tells you: here is my body – I give it to you to eat; I give it to you as nourishment, so that it may make its way into your body. Why do you not enter into that relationship? Our Lord suffers if you don't respond to his love. Our Lord loves you with such ardor, such power; he loves us with an infinite love as he loves his Father – and how does he love him? As he [the Father] loves him, nothing else. And in seeing his little creature, he says: I love you with a passionate love – I love you, I am in love with you. And our Lord is despised by an earth-worm that prefers a man or an animal to himself. And our Lord is humiliated. See how our Lord loves us – and he will always love us.

When we love someone we look at him. So, our Lord is always looking at you with eyes of love. This glance is not concerned with your features, but with your heart. Our Lord looks at you with eyes of goodness, with the tenderness of a father. And now, why will you not look at him also – your loving eyes should see only our Lord. You might say: But there is a wall that prevents me from seeing him. – Get away! Isn't the body of our Lord transparent for those who love him? **Do you know what life is?** Life is an acquaintance, life is love; and love is always a painter. Our Lord's eyes follow you everywhere; his heart follows you everywhere (cf. Ps 138:1-18). He sends you an outpouring flood of his love, but his body remains in the sacred Host.

There you are! Besides, our Lord always wishes us well. He always wants to help us, to shower us with gifts. Our Lord's presence is gracious. Why not consider him as doing everything out of love for you; why not do for him whatever you are doing in your rooms, in your work – so that everything becomes homage for him. Is that clear? **What is love?** It is a flame that mounts from the hearth to the sky. You should be nothing else than a flame – doing everything out of love. If you fail to do this, you are only a puff of smoke. What! You will not love the Good Lord! He loves you constantly, and he will always love you with an ever-growing love as in heaven: love always goes on increasing – it is always a new grace as in paradise. Our Lord is always the same in his nature, yet always varying his gifts of grace and contemplation.

The love of today is always stronger than yesterday's love. This means that our Lord loves you in an ever new way (cf. Lm 3:23). His friendship is always fresh, and he will love you always anew until the end of your life. It is like a flower opening to the sun. You must love him always anew. You must be able to tell him: Today, I love you more than yesterday. Why? Because I have one more day, more graces, more debts of love (cf. Ps 144:2). You must pay your debts, you must live out of love, out of gratitude, out of homage in all that you do, not attributing to yourself anything whatever (cf. Is 26:12) – that would be stealing from your master. The person, the ego are always there. But, little by little, we must burn the straw that accumulates every day and say: I love our Lord. And doing this you are not doing anything extraordinary. Nevertheless, you are saying a lot: it means that you are paying your debts.

My poor Daughters, **your love will always be less than that of our Lord.** Many saints weep that they don't love our Lord as he should be loved. The saints are never satisfied. Why? They are never satisfied with their love – they say: Why am I not infinite, so that I could love you as you yourself love me? St. Paul often wept because he sensed the great love of our Lord for him, and how little was

his own love for our Lord – his tears were very, very pleasing to our Lord. We are a little creature who comes to the shore and extends its hands towards its creator to hear God tell us: I love you, pitiful little earthworm... (cf. Is 41:14) In the world, we are not allowed to tell a person of higher rank: I love you – this would be an insult. But we dare to tell God: My God, I love you. We have the courage to speak like this to him. Why? Because he himself gave us this courage. He is not angry: he gave it to us by making us his brothers and sisters. And so we say to Jesus Christ: I love you – and he answers: I love you with an infinite love. Do you understand this love? Without doubt, I'm sure you don't understand!

My poor Daughters, let's move on. To summarize: do you want to love our Lord? **Give yourselves completely to him: live for him, as he lives for you. Search your heart for everything that might give him the greatest pleasure, as he does for you. Love him with your whole heart.** Is that perfection? No! That's only the beginning. So, what's next? Can you be proud when you look at our Lord? As for him, he was not proud. Go and look at our Lord: it will be impossible for you not to love him. And then, you will renew your vow of chastity, of virginity: that is the vow of love, it is the flower of your life. The other vows are the tree, but this one is the flower. Renew it often by saying: My God, I consecrate myself to you in order to love you with a virginal love – how shall I say it – in order to love you with a love of blood, with an eternal love.



Points for reflection:

Here Peter Julian presents the vow of virginity as the basic expression of the complete love that we owe to our Lord. He describes the love of our Lord for us at the present moment. What Scripture passages come to your mind after hearing this instruction? Finite love responds to an infinite love. The vow of virginity is the vow of love. What are the main points in this instruction?

hhxX : xXHH

We Must Give Our Lord Our Personality¹⁸

Nemours, Thursday, November 8, 1866

Let us place ourselves in the presence of our Lord by an act of faith, etc.
[...]

My dear Daughters, in order to love our Lord, we must give ourselves to him as he gives himself to us: we must love him as he loves us. Do you know the greatest gift that we could make to the love of our Lord? Here it is: to give him our person, and forever – I will explain. To give our person to our Lord – there are very few persons who give our Lord their personality, even among religious; there are very few. We give our Lord our goods by the vow of poverty; we give our Lord our body by chastity – and a little of our heart; and we give him our will by the vow of obedience: and we call religious profession a self-holocaust. And while giving all this, we keep our personality. By giving our personality we give more than what is given in religious life. And, what is amazing, God does not dare ask us to make the sacrifice of our personality – he does not dare.

Let me ask why! It is too great! To give one's personality is the heroism of love – but God only asks what is required by law or proposed by counsel. What leads us to give our Lord our personality? There is only one reason: Our Lord gave us his human person. No one except the Word made flesh has given us the sacrifice of his personality. Note well: no saint has ever challenged you to give your personality. Why? Because it is not in the domain of virtue – to give oneself is the highest degree of love.

My Daughters, since you are Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, I challenge you to give our Lord your personality. Since you may not understand the way, I will explain it to you. By your religious vows, you give your life to our Lord. But you don't give yourself; you keep hold of yourself. – Do we keep ourselves? – O yes!

You give your possessions by the vow of poverty so as to preserve yourself for eternal life. Notice that you keep hold of the self. It is said that evangelical poverty means to give everything to Jesus Christ in order to receive a hundredfold – that's the nature of the vow of poverty. Our Lord said: *Whoever leaves home, or his brothers, or his sisters, or his father, or his mother, or his wife, or his children, or his lands for my sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will possess eternal life* (cf. Mk 10:29-30). Those are his words. And so, you enrich yourself in another way. Our Lord also says: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs* (cf. Mt 5:3).

You make the vow of chastity in order to preserve your virginity. While you renounce respectable unions, you do so to choose to make a covenant union, to have Jesus Christ as your spouse. You lose nothing: you leave man behind for the sake of God. You always gain: you give Jesus Christ your heart and your body, but you keep hold of yourself.

By obedience you give your will; but the one who obeys earns a reward. You give the entire tree and its fruits – that is why we call it a holocaust. But, you hold on to yourself, as you do this in order to have eternal life, to be assured of heaven. And why do you leave your family? In order to find a new family, your religious family. While you leave everything, you still have all that you need. You obey very well, but you don't have the problem of commanding and choosing. This is a great sacrifice, but you can say: I sacrifice everything in order to recover everything in Jesus Christ – in order to be a perfect adoror in spirit and in truth.

But to give one's personality is a greater sacrifice, to give oneself, to give the “me”. By religious profession, I give what belongs to me. And what is it that belongs to you? Your body, the legitimate possession of your goods. To belong to God, you embrace a life of penance. Clearly you give what belongs to you – but here we are talking of the self. You give the external freedom that belongs to the self – but the interior, the self, you hold on to. You give what belongs to you, but you don't give yourself – your self, the root and marrow. God does not ask you for your self, because he wants to reward you personally in heaven. He leaves you free, because he wants to crown you: you will become a personality in heaven, as you are on earth; and you will be great in heaven by being faithful to your religious profession on earth. But the one who will be even greater will be the one who gives her personality, because love can go no higher than to give one's person.

You will not find what I am telling you in books of spirituality. You will not find anything about giving your personality, your self to God. It is too perfect, too spiritual. You are beginning to understand what I am saying. **What is this self that I am asking you to give?** This self is what guides and directs our actions. In fools who can no longer reason, the self is no longer in command. They are merely human beings who can no longer reason. And I am saying: From the moment that we lose our reasoning power, we are civilly dead. And again, what is this self? It is the one who commands, who is the center of relationships, of attachments in society. Note well. When we love someone we don't love him by parts. We don't tell him: I love your body – that would be insulting and worthy of an animal. Rather we say: I love your person – that is the self which is made up of soul and body. That is the royal dignity of man: we love the complete person and the qualities that are joined to him. We don't love a dead person; we love the memory of someone's existence, but there is no longer any friendship, any relationship. The center of relationships is the person.

What then is the self? It is the goal of what we do, the reason for every deed. Thus, in the natural order we work for the self, and in the supernatural order to attain eternal life – it is the self that sanctifies¹⁹. The self is the entire person: yes, it is the one who commands, who is everything. It is the absolute end, the supernatural end. There you are, my poor Daughters, I tell you: Do you want to be true adorers of the Blessed Sacrament? Give your personality. – Do you want to do so? Do you understand what you are giving? This is a new way. I will try to explain, and God will do the rest.

In giving your personality you are giving the self. Therefore, you renounce being your own master: you have no more self; you should no longer say: This or that belongs to me. You obey in order to command your self. You should no longer say: I want this or that. No. Take away the self from your life. That is why in the old orders, they found a word “*our*”, which expresses well what I am saying. For example, the Benedictines had adopted certain religious expressions: our cell, our clothes. However, it seems ridiculous in absolutely personal matters, such as our health, etc. Basically, however, it is beautiful, because it removes the personality. I am saying: remove the self, no longer be you – we are no longer the starting point of life's choices. You often make personality your starting point, such as, I don't want to make this little sacrifice; or I want it very much.

In religious life, sacrifices are not prescribed; they are encouraged and personal. You can choose and alter them. Again I tell you: **If you want to be true adorers, if you want to be Eucharistic, give your personality**, the principle of your self. Then, put aside your thoughts. No longer say: my thoughts, my life, me. Put aside all of that if you want to enter the way that I am showing you. And don't think this makes you stupid. Do you believe this is easy? If you do this ten times a day, on one hundred occasions, you are beginning [...]. The Good Lord does not require it. But for those who wish to arrive at identity through love, that is the way they should go.

Let me add **that we have relations with God only through our personality.** In the social world, we look for the master of the house before we ask for domestic helpers or children. When we address a person socially, we praise his qualities, his merits, by saying: You have good qualities, beautiful

¹⁹ Possible interpretation: That is, it is the self that decides, and in the case that it decides to give itself to Jesus Christ, then it is Christ who lives in him and sanctifies him.

things. We praise the person, and if this pleases her, it is only human: [...] This is the start of natural relations – if you want, they are not bad, but it is so. As long as a person has not agreed, the feelings will not follow. Feelings can not act when the will says no. You see now how the personality is in charge. For example, take a Christian who does not want to think of something – his heart desires it, but his will says: No, you will not do that. And so, he will not do it! The will commands the self. We do many things this way, in spite of one's self.

The same thing happens in our relations with God. The human person is at the center: Our Lord, the angels, the saints have relations with our personality. – See how he tells us: *My son, give me your heart* (Prov 23:26) – our Lord is talking to our personality. It is very clear when he says: Humble your spirit and if you are faithful to me, I will give you glory – I will bring you with me to heaven. And then the soul says: I want this very much. And you make a contract. Is this perfect? Yes, but it is not the most perfect. By acting like that, I am working for myself in order to reach paradise. And so, what now? You must give up this personality of principle, of center, of end. You must no longer say: Me. But where am I going then? To our Lord who will be my point of departure, my principle, my end, my law, the will of my will – he will be the master.

In the world, a married woman is under the authority of her husband; [...] she sacrifices her name, her person. Why? Because she loves. You will do the same for our Lord. You take him as your spouse: you make the sacrifice of your passions, of your freedom, of your name, of your person, and our Lord becomes the commander, the point of departure of your life. St. Paul says: *I live* – but immediately he corrects himself – *I am mistaken* – he has given away his life – *it is Jesus Christ who lives in me* (cf. Gal 2:20). There you are. – But I already do this. – If you do this constantly that's wonderful. You can say with St. Paul: Jesus lives in me personally and I live from him and for him, perfectly.

Notice what our Lord says in the gospel: *Whoever eats me will live by me, because of me* (cf. Jn 6:57) – that is the true translation. Jesus Christ has said it: *Whoever eats me will live by me.* Isn't it evident that we live by food? Clearly, Jesus Christ becomes our food, our life. If you give your personality to Jesus Christ, you have no more self; we no longer praise you for your qualities. You should no longer be the center of natural and human relations with your sisters. You are no longer a person.

[...] Therefore, if you are asked to give your personality, you must say: I don't want to be unfaithful to my spouse: I gave him my personality; I can no longer receive anything. That is the difference with the vows of religion. The religious says: I don't want; I would do wrong. But you will say: I cannot. That is the difference: **you start with your status as bride, and the others start with their vows.**

[...] You are no longer serving our Lord so that he will bring you to paradise. You no longer tell him: I give you everything, but you will bring me to heaven, you will give me glory. No, you can no longer say that, once you have given your personality. Understand me rightly: you can no longer say that. You are not rejecting heaven, but you are not looking for heaven to be happy apart from our Lord.

Neither should you say: My God, you will give me your virtues, your merits to enrich me. You are no longer a personality that can be enriched. [...] Nothing at all for yourself; you must enrich only your spouse – you must honor only him. Everything that you receive, you should send it on to your spouse. [...]

You will say: What a sacrifice! To give not only one's life, but to give even one's personality – that's even much more than martyrdom. It is good to give your life. Fine! But you know that you are bravely facing martyrdom: when your head is cut off, you will go to heaven with head and body. It is a triumphal battle, but you know that you are going to heaven. On the other hand, I say: My God, I love you for your good pleasure, for your own happiness, and I am not asking you to make me happy. Do you understand this love, my poor Sisters? My God, I am happy that you be honored, loved by your saints in paradise so that you would not lose anything, because if you had only me, you would be served very badly. I am happy that they love you one hundred times more than I do, and that others

give you what I fail to give you. Do you understand that? Ah! Love the Good Lord very well. Tell him: I am happy that they love you because you deserve it; I am happy that they love you because love is the true and lasting good. To love him for himself – that is worth more than all the religious lives put together.

Why is it that, in religious life, there are so many who hold back? It is because they hold on to their personality²⁰. And in the world, why do people love our Lord so little? Because they don't love him for himself, but for their own self. Here I am talking about a really pure and perfect love of our Lord. Is this possible? Yes, thanks be to God, there are some who love our Lord in this way. Oh, what goodness! Do you understand that our Lord must be happy, that the blessed Trinity Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be happy, and they must be saying: Here is a soul that loves me for myself, for my happiness: she requests neither glory nor honor for herself – at least there is no self-seeking.

Earlier, I was telling you: We are not rejecting heaven by doing this. No. We are more resourceful than the others by saying: No, my God, I am sufficiently rewarded by your allowing me to serve you, to love you. And then we add: Leave me here on earth till the end of the world if you want, you deserve that I love you and I will be happy to glorify you. And we are no longer concerned about paradise, nor the sufferings connected with this world. But God, who needs to place us in paradise, says: *Here is a soul who loves me more than I command, more than the gospels prescribe – here is a soul who loves me for myself.* And then, if the Good Lord had not created paradise, he would create it explicitly for you, because you touch his weakness – you love him for himself. We must be loving – therefore, love very well, since that is paradise. Allow our Lord to worry about your happiness. Concern yourself with glorifying him. Trust him. He will see to your happiness. Your concern is to love him.

In the world, I met some servants who had been serving the same master for fifty years. At first, they had salaries, but then they said: We no longer want salaries: we will serve you like children. We are part of the household: if we get sick you will take care of us. Yes, we find this in servants who say: I love you; that is enough for me – allow me to live with you. And would I not do this for our Lord?

Imagine! If there could be a soul with this attitude who would say to our Lord when seeing the earth purified by fire at the end of the world – because you know that the world will not be destroyed, it will be purified by fire, but it will remain as a constellation: the earth will no longer be sullied by sin, it will be purified by a deluge of fire while remaining along with the elements founded and divinized by our Lord. How could our Lord destroy his manger, his little house of Nazareth, his Calvary where his blood was poured out... that's impossible; what else could happen, since this is the paradise of his love – now, I am saying, if by some impossible circumstances, a soul in love with our Lord would tell him after her resurrection: Do not bring me to heaven. The earth here will be alone; leave me as the only one on earth so that someone could love you here, so that I could keep you company here. At least you will have me to love you and to glorify you. How beautiful that would be! And our Lord would be obliged to make a separate paradise here for that soul, of course!

So now, my poor children, ask our Lord to help you understand very well what I have just said to you; grace is needed. It is a new explanation, like a new doctrine. People don't know what we mean by personality. It is the self – we must give this to the Good Lord. Say to our Lord: Because I am made that way, I give you my personality, my self – you will be my self, me, my person. If you make this exchange, our Lord will become your person. To him the honor, the glory and the affection. Our Lord is your end and your life. Your entire life returns to him. But your life becomes divine, because its driving force is divine. I wish you this grace.

hhxX : xXHH

²⁰ A little later in the text, he deals with some souls who are ready to stay on earth till the end of the world because they have given themselves completely, forgetful of themselves. In contrast, others stay here for the opposite reason: because they hold on to their personality, do not give themselves, and therefore, do not advance.

Points for reflection:

This teaching on the gift of self reflects the spiritual experience of the Founder concerning the gift of his personality. What coloring does this gift add to the vows? Notice the gospel texts that are quoted. The link with Eucharistic adoration. Pray over the underlined texts.

He asks: “Do you want to be true adorers of the Eucharist? Give your personality.” – Do you want to do so? – “Do you understand what you are giving?” Reflect on these questions.



We Must Give Ourselves to God, for God and Not for Ourselves²¹

Nemours, Friday, November 9, 1866

Let us place ourselves in the presence of God, etc.

Let us complete the meditation of last night. We said that we must consecrate to God our personality; that is, the self that commands. We must give him the self that is the center of external relations – who receives praise and affection – the self that is its own end. No doubt, this truth helped you to see that [...] religious life still has something more perfect, namely, to give oneself to God for the sake of God, and not to give oneself to God for your self. You might say: That is very difficult. **Yes, it is very difficult to reach a love of God that is from Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ. However, while this may happen on occasion, here it is question of making this kind of love a state of life.**

Clearly, religious profession of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience determines your state. You are always obliged to live accordingly. You must always live with the desire to do nothing out of routine, to make your life always a state of abnegation of your will. This is very difficult. You must always be in a state, not merely in an activity that is more or less frequent. Yes, this is difficult: we must no longer be anything, nor do anything for self. In fact, you must no longer belong to yourself; you belong entirely to your master.

Now, do not say: I'm no longer esteemed, no longer loved. Do not talk about that [...] You must no longer seek rewards. This is difficult, but not impossible. We can do it once in a while, but can we come to the point that it is a constant state? Yes, because you can reach the point of not judging by yourself, of no longer being for self, of being only an intermediary, of not having anything ending in self – this is loving God for God. To love God in order to become perfect is a beautiful thing in itself, **but there is nothing greater, as you know, than to love the Good Lord for the Good Lord.**

And you have a perfect model of the love of God for God. Where? First of all in the Blessed Virgin. She loved her son for himself, and not for herself. If she could have taken the place of her son on the cross, she would have done it. She never asked for consolations. Our Lord never gave her anything in this world. He left her poor, suffering, abandoned, loving Jesus for Jesus, loving God for God, and the blessed Trinity for the sake of the blessed Trinity. That is why we call her: Mother of Beautiful Love. Why Beautiful love? Because God is beautiful before being good. He is beautiful, and his beauty charms the soul and puts her in ecstasy. His goodness is the outpouring [of himself]. How foolish we are if we are not lifted up to these divine realities.

On earth, we like to see what is beautiful: we look for it – we like to visit museums in order to see the masterpieces of artists. We say: it is beautiful, I want to see these masterpieces of Michelangelo and of Rafael, and we look at them. There are many masterpieces composed by these famous artists. There are some worth nearly a million francs and we say: They are beautiful! We go to see these beautiful things that don't belong to us. We go to see what is beautiful and do not go to see what is good, because we are told: Don't touch, don't take. And you would not do this for the Good Lord? Don't you know that he possesses all beauty, all the greatness of the divine perfections, because they are himself, and he is everything? To realize this and then be preoccupied with our ego. How sad!

Give him your self. That is better. Be willing servants and not mercenaries. Do not say that you are servants of the divine goodness. We are not that ambitious. Do not say like the apostles: *Lord, we have left all to follow you, what will you give us?* Our Lord answered them but in another way. Will he tell them: Peter, I will give you such and so. No. Our Lord speaks in general terms: *Whoever will have left either house, or brothers, or sisters, or his father, or his mother for my sake, will receive a*

²¹ Number 616. *Il faut se donner à Dieu pour Dieu et non pour soi.*

hundredfold in this world and eternal life in the next (cf. Mk 10:28-30). Thus, you shall receive the hundredfold for your religious perfection, and eternal life in the next – heaven above all this, as servants. But the one who says: Lord, I want only one pleasure: I want only the happiness of serving you, to love you forever – permit me to be with you. Doesn't this person merit going to heaven? Of course!

But you might say: Personal interest may be more effective for the sanctification of souls. Here is my answer: Yes, **personal interest for the hundredfold** makes more saints because most people don't see any higher. They know only that, and that is the ordinary way. **But for the motive of pure love**, we can say there are many who are called, and few who are chosen (Mt 22:14). Many see higher, but few want to love God to this degree. It is what we can call abnegation: religious life is an abnegation. So, our Lord does not speak about this, he leaves it to the initiative of love. He opened the door for us saying: Some will imitate me. And then those who understand what he did will say: Lord, I will do what you have done – I will act like you.

What is that? I tell you: **It is to continue the incarnation of our Lord in yourself.** A great thought...! If you could understand it, we would propose to you to give your personality to our Lord. We would propose to you to continue what our Lord did in his incarnation. It is the work of works. That is what the Eternal Word did by hypostatically uniting himself to a human nature; in such a way that God enters into a human body without ceasing to be God. [...]

Therefore, I suggest that you do out of love for our Lord, what he did out of love for you: put yourself in the same state as our Lord did out of love for his Father, and to honor this annihilation of his human person, because he annihilated it, sacrificed it in a sense, and he did this out of love. Therefore, I will do what our Lord did. And since he did it, he will not be surprised that we would want to act like him – then our Lord will be satisfied. Since he so intensely desires that we share in his happiness, his glory and his life in paradise, he must desire that we share also in his merits. And since his utmost desire is to deify me in him, then his utmost love is to identify myself with him. Love is creative. **What did our Lord do in the incarnation?** He immolated, sacrificed his human nature. I propose that you do the same thing. [...] Everything that his human nature was doing, everything was given over to his divine person and he gave everything over to the blessed Trinity.

Now, my good Daughters, I challenge you to do the same thing: Jesus has done it; why not you? – But I am not God. – No, but you have the grace of Jesus Christ, his way of acting; he has shown you the way. If you do this, you give up your personality; you take on the adorable person of Jesus Christ in the place of your person. I ask you: are you the loser? You give up your human person – weak and miserable and unable to do anything – and you take on the adorable person of Jesus Christ. Then you can say with St. Paul: *It is no longer I who live, it is Jesus Christ who lives in me* (cf. Ga 2:20). It is he who commands in me, he who is king, master, friend, spouse, the God of my heart; my heart belongs to him. Any honor given to me belongs to him; the love given to me belongs to him: he is the master – I no longer do anything for myself, because I am no longer my own end. Now I can say: ***It is no longer I who live, it is Jesus Christ who lives in me.*** And later Paul adds: ***Jesus Christ is my life*** (cf. Ph 1:21). St. Paul had reached a degree of pure love. It is not surprising that he would accomplish great things. For St. Paul, Jesus Christ was working in him; he was his master, his end, his life, his love.

Do you understand now? Let me explain further. For example, take a bride: she has no more civil personality – her husband is her all. She dresses and works for him alone. In the divine order and in a more perfect way, it is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ acted as God and as man. And so, in the person of the Word, we have his human nature and his divine nature. Here are two natures that join together with two personalities. Now, in a person there cannot be two personalities. Therefore, our Lord sacrificed his human personality in favor of his divinity since it was more perfect. And notice how our Lord acts: when people ask him some advice as man, our Lord does not answer. Why not? He is no longer a man: he no longer has a human personality that commands his mind and his intelligence independently. **To think, he consults the thoughts of his Father; to judge, he asks him: How do**

you judge this thing? To act: What do you want me to do? The heavenly Father spoke his mind and his will, and our Lord obeyed.

Our Lord never commanded independently as man. If someone asked him something as man, he did not answer. If they insisted, he would get angry. The Pharisees, lying and proud men, came trying to trick him. These poor people did not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ and so their speech was deceitful – they were trying to catch him off guard. To begin, one of them said: *Good Master, I come to present to you some difficulties of the law.* Immediately, our Lord gets angry: his eyes blazing like fire, he speaks impatient words: *Why do you call me good? Only God is good!* (cf. Mt 19:16-17) Why did our Lord say that, since he is good? He is saying: No, I am not good. Purely as man he did not exist; he does not want to receive this praise. Therefore, only God is good. Ah yes! Understand this praise.

[...]

Notice that our Lord never did anything for himself as man. He never worked for himself; he never wanted to receive praise, nor give any. He never wanted to have any riches, nor be treated as a proprietor. [...] He said simply: *I want nothing except to do the will of my Father* (cf. Jn 5:30; 6:38). My human will is submissive to that of God. Further he says: *I search not for my glory, otherwise I would be a liar – man has no glory to look for – but I honor my Father and you dishonor me* (cf. Jn 8:49-50). I honor my Father: that is to say that I humble myself, I make the sacrifice of my person: to him alone be honor and glory forever. [...]

At the wedding in Cana, seeing that the couple would be humiliated, the Blessed Virgin with a foresight full of goodness approached her Son to perform his first miracle. In front of everyone, she said: *They have no more wine...* She did not say: My son. No, she does not say that. And our Lord, fearing that the apostles would see him merely as man and see his relationship to Mary as purely human, said harshly and forcefully to her: *What is there in common between you and me?* [...] The Blessed Virgin was not humiliated, because she understood; but the others were shocked. What a lesson! In this way, our Lord wanted to show us that parents must not have any influence over the things of the spirit.

[...]

My poor Daughters, never receive affection as a way of building up pride, no never. Pass on everything to the person of the Word. That is everything. Then you will renew the incarnation. **Jesus comes into you with his grace, his love – he is your end. You belong to him.** Then our Lord will say: I will renew my incarnation in this person. Her personality will be divine. I will be the center of her affections; my life will belong to her. I will unite myself to her sacramentally by the gift of my self. I will unite myself to her socially: that is, I will be the one living in her body; I will use her mind to glorify my Father as occurs on earth in body and soul. I wish to continue the incarnation by your love²². Yes, this is hard: what people don't do to protect their lives! The body pays the price, is humiliated. It is very necessary that you pay a price. Did not our Lord pay the price? See him in the Garden of Olives: *My Father, may this chalice pass away from me* (cf. Mt 26:39). But he always says: To you be the honor and the glory – to me, humiliation and derision.

You will surely experience warfare, struggles, and temptation. But the master always rewards. Then, you no longer need to think about heaven, about your crown, about looking for merit outside (of Jesus Christ). Jesus Christ is in you. Have you not entered into his person? Isn't Jesus Christ going to heaven with all that belongs to him? Jesus Christ goes directly to paradise; while going there he will take what belongs to him, and that includes you. And he will care for his glory and happiness. That is why I tell you: You are thinking about heaven, my poor Daughters. Ah! Give yourselves to our Lord: that is the paradise that I wish for you.

hhxX : xXHH

²² After having spoken about the person, our Lord ends by speaking directly to the person.

Points for reflection:

The principal points in this teaching are: the beauty of God, the motive of pure love, the continuation of the incarnation of our Lord in us, our response of total love. What touched you the most? What concrete consequences can this have in your life?

