

How Poorly Jesus Christ Is Loved¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Saturday, August 4, 1860

God wants to be the goal of human beings and loved absolutely by them. [...] To draw them to his love he gives them goods in this world and paradise hereafter. God cannot have another goal. [...] The Holy Spirit said: ***You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength.*** (cf. Lk 10:27) This is what it means to be human. St. Augustine draws this conclusion: One who does not love God is not human.

Since we are composed of body and soul, God became man so that we could love God with our whole being. That was how love humbled itself in our Lord. And because that love is something tangible, our love is nourished through our senses and our faith.² St. John says: *Something ..., that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life, this is our subject. That life was made visible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony. What we have seen and heard we are telling you.* (cf. 1 Jn 1:1-2) Jesus Christ wants to be loved, and he did all he could to attract our heart. Our heart lies between the promise of heaven on the one hand and the punishment of hell on the other if it does not love God. Our heart lies between Jesus Christ and the world. The choice is ours.

Why do so few people love our Lord? I'm not talking about the pagans; they don't know him. I'm not talking about the Jews who believe he's an impostor. Nor about the Mohammedans; for them he's not God, but a great prophet. But how is it that the majority of Catholics who know God don't love him? All Christians know Jesus Christ; they were baptized and received Communion. God will always manifest his goodness to the one who gives him his heart. Yet, we cannot find even one in a hundred, one in a thousand, and even that one is filled with doubts. Let us admit that there is one who loves him with the simplicity of love. What about the nine hundred and ninety-nine others? [...]

The number of Easter Communions in Paris seems very edifying. Out of a population of some two million, at least one million five hundred thousand are catholic. Some claim that about seven to eight thousand men receive general Communion in Notre Dame. Notre Dame easily holds four thousand, perhaps even six thousand people. Although I'm convinced that the number is smaller, I'm telling you what newspapers report. How does Jesus Christ enter into all this? I do know that there are many catholic men who don't make their Easter duty. Men are more hostile to Jesus Christ than women, who are more likely to love him. Even among women, I daresay that not one on a thousand really loves Jesus Christ. Men are not evil alone. Either they will entice others into their evil ways or they themselves are spoiled.

My good Sisters, if only you knew the parishes of the northern suburbs of Paris! Where there are one thousand five hundred parishioners, perhaps four or five are practicing. One pastor told me that on his arrival there were four or five. Now he is pleased because their number has grown to forty. When the pastor of Versailles arrived, even the churchwardens were not making their Easter duty. Even if I know there are exceptions, few dioceses are like the ones you know, as at Lyons and Provence. Catholics don't love our Lord Jesus Christ. Very few love him with a perfect love. Even in a large crowd, few will be found. A parish with one or two will be considered fortunate. Any city with five or six who love our

¹ Number 243. *Combien Jésus Christ est peu aimé.*

² Copy A: by our *senses and faith*, instead of Pineau: *by senses of faith*

Lord for himself will be considered spiritually rich. There may not be as many as five in parishes of ten thousand souls.

Convents are a beautiful field, a fountain with a surrounding river that brings freshness and life, a place of rest. There are two kinds of sisters living there. In large convents one may find two or three persons who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a royal and living love. Very often the number will be less. Most will offer only the love of hired help and maids. Very few offer a total and royal love. I know enough about convents to speak this way. Our Lord is well pleased when he finds one who burns like a candle as a holocaust victim. Every other sister will be blessed because of this one individual who is his spouse. All others are merely relatives. Because of Margaret Mary Alacoque at Paray-le-Monial, the Good Lord showered that convent with his blessings!

Among priests, there are few who love Jesus Christ for himself like St. John; unfortunately, very few. If they were like St. Francis Regis, like the saints, they would already have set the world on fire. Very few love Jesus Christ with a perfect love; there are not even one hundred priests in the whole catholic world who love him with a perfect love, a superior love. Look at St. Francis Regis, a man of God who lit a fire, not because of his virtues, but because of the love within him. St. Francis de Sales converted Chablais and part of France. Imagine one hundred priests like him. It was not because he preached, nor because he was a bishop – many others were preaching and were bishops. A St. Francis Xavier converted many kingdoms, several hundred thousands of souls; we cannot count them. Why? They were burning, they were saints. A saint is stronger than others who don't love as he does.

There are many Christians, but very few who love. If there were a hundred lightning rods, God's justice could not strike us. Why is Jesus Christ loved so little? Let me tell you. A pious soul, a Christian, a religious man or woman has an instinctive fear of God. Impossible! Check your own heart; you were afraid like the others; that's why people keep at a distance. I understand that we fear the devil, or a harsh, austere and demanding person... but to fear Jesus Christ! Because of fear, many people don't come to church; they don't want to listen to him, nor read his words. The devil adds to that fear, to the point that people run away from our Lord so that he will not speak. They no longer want to listen to him. When St. Stephen was talking to the Jews, they did not want to hear him. He was saying: *I can see heaven thrown open.* (cf. Acts 7:56) Grinding their teeth against him, they pushed him out of the city and stoned him. During the persecutions, the pagans were saying, This Christian will enchant us. They silenced him because they were afraid of the light of truth.

Non-practicing Catholics will not speak of their foolishness. However, they will speak once they are converted. I didn't want to go to Jesus Christ. He may ask me some sacrifices. I didn't want to see him or hear him. There are people who don't want to look at a holy picture, a crucifix, or a book. There are also people in the world who used to practice, who were very pious, but now they don't want to see a priest or Jesus Christ.

There are two classes. Some have mortal sins, feel guilty and don't care to break with the past. How unfortunate! You love a creature more than Jesus Christ who is offering you heaven. You are idolaters, even catholic idolaters. – This is true. – You will go to hell with your neighbors' goods. – I prefer to keep my money. Jesus Christ gave us everything, but we don't want to give him anything. That's why we cannot go to him. You don't want to forgive, that's a disgrace. – No. Here is a wicked man adoring his own well-being, or some creature: Personally, I don't want [to change].

Consider the other group. Many who are not tied up with the heavy chains of mortal sins, still have little chains and prefer trifles to Jesus Christ. Often I say, You are neither immodest, nor a thief, nor full of hatred, but you don't serve Jesus Christ. So what are you doing? – My business is preventing me; I need to go to confession, pray in the morning and at night, but I don't have time. – But you are wasting

time with other things. These persons are neglecting their salvation. In Paris, there are some very honest men who don't go to Mass. They need to adopt Christian habits, but they refuse.

You may say this does not concern you. There are millions who don't want to hear about Jesus Christ. We must pray that they will come to him in his mercy. Do you know how the devil is keeping them away? Remember the story about the talent that was received: *The man who received the five talents came forward bringing five more. The man with two talents came forward with two more. Lastly came the man who had the one talent. – I had heard you were a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered: so I was afraid and I went off and hid your talent in the ground. – You wicked and lazy servant! You should have deposited my money with the bankers and on my return I would have recovered my capital with interest. Throw him out into the dark where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.* (cf. Mt 25:14-30) The devil protests that Jesus Christ is a strict master, hard and constantly demanding, this is how people think. Jesus seems always strict, carrying a whip or his cross. Faced with that picture, they lose the feeling of his goodness.

Some have a mixed love for Jesus Christ. Now I will speak about you. God grant that it not be so. Some have a divided love. They love and want to be saved, preferring our Lord to the world, but they love selfishly, for their own salvation, to have their share. They surround themselves with practices: many prayers and good deeds, but if anyone asks more of them, they send him away. They set limits to their perfection, their own style of perfection. This is mostly the perfection of religious persons. They have their own circle; to go beyond it is an exaggeration. If asked to go beyond this circle, this person will rebel. Jesus Christ must submit to this person's desires. The talent, then, will not grow. Jesus Christ is like a stranger to whom something is given in passing.

The real obstacle is restricted love. People say that is enough. This attitude begins with venial sin and goes all the way to perfection. This is the general rule, but there are exceptions. Don't you notice that you are not going forward, not soaring? Look inside. There may be a misguided affection, a certain opposition to God's plan that makes you unhappy. A wounded person may still walk, but only with pain. One with even a slight illness does not have the fullness of life. Such a soul will be happy only occasionally, after a sacrifice, or an act of virtue. This, however, is only a single act. The Good Lord wants to draw her by his goodness and gentleness. He hopes that she will surrender. But such a one doesn't want to do more. Her heart and wings are folded in on themselves. I've had enough; the others have done less than I have. Her heart becomes closed to the dew of God's love. She will go back to begging for her bread.

There is nothing sadder in religious life than souls whose love is partial. They don't want to commit mortal sins, yet they don't want to rejoice in God. God also gives himself skimpily only because they are in a state of spiritual greed. If he gave himself, they would say: So, God is pleased. God can do no more, because he cannot deceive us. When one is ill, let no one say that you look well. If our hands are closed, no one can tell us that we are generous. If the Good Lord invites us to come forward, we reply, I cannot run. – We place conditions and say: The Good Lord is not good. Unfortunate one, you are caught in a quagmire and refuse the hand that would pull you out. While in darkness, you see a window. Come, you are only a few steps from a brilliant light. There is only refusal. What can be done? Such a one must be let go, just as we abandon a dying patient.

It is because of his goodness that God refuses to console us when we are weak. We should really ask him for a scolding. The Good Lord is a good father, drawing us to himself through suffering. His grace is proportionate to our actual state. We do ourselves harm when we refuse to give ourselves totally to him, for then he will not reign in us. There are some servile persons who feel good only when the Good Lord scourges them. Wretched creatures, they need to be placed on the bed of the cross. How sad!

Others need both a bit of joy and a bit of sadness, a mixture that God will give them. Many of us are at this point, tied down by a spider web, our feelings are mixed. We have two altars, and adore some idol along with God. We say: Why am I not soaring toward God? Is this possible? Everyone wishes to belong to God, but very few people of good will achieve this. Is it true that one who loves the Good Lord will always be happy? – Yes. – Is there no suffering? – Yes, much like a child who defends his mother and father. There will be both light and darkness, Tabor and Calvary; both are necessary. God is as much a God of consolation as a God of trial. When God's will is in control, we may suffer but we go forward. Jesus Christ cannot reign in souls that are not committed.

Others love perfectly. My Daughters, to learn about this, read chapters seven and eight of the third book of the *Imitation*, these two chapters are so beautiful. When Jesus Christ finds such a one, he says: Here is a flower totally opened purely for me. Her heart is empty, totally for me; I will adorn it for myself. She has no alien affections. He comes in and makes her his sanctuary. That soul is his, he will adorn her and form her, as a bridegroom prepares his bride. When someone says, You will be my God, my goal, my glory, everything, then God is pleased with the one that belongs to him. A husband does not want his spouse to belong to forty men. He is jealous, wanting to reign alone in that heart and on that throne. We don't invite a king to sit in squalor among a thousand of enemies. **What is needed?** A pure heart belonging to him alone. Then God says, Here is a soul that loves me. You should love him more than your sacrifices, your self-love, and have him as your only aim, belonging totally to him. God will say, Here is a soul that is entirely mine; she will complete me by being my hands and my heart. Contentedly, God will work in this soul and guide her, somewhat as he did the Blessed Virgin.

Why do our hearts not love our Lord with a pure love that excludes all the other created things? In spite of good will, we are often afraid that he will be too demanding. As soon as I think of something pleasant, it seems God will ask for it. Then there would be no more joys in this life. I'll have to be like a dead person ! You understand that we must die. Deep in our hearts there is a feeling of sadness, especially if we are on the way of purification and detachment. Removing a spider's web is like drawing out the breath from the lungs of a sick body. We are afraid, because we are already feeling the weight of sacrifice. Although we say, My God, I want to be all yours, we do so with a certain fear. I accept all sacrifices, but I avoid looking at them. This is not wrong, since I hope that the Good Lord will not be strict. This is a natural feeling, and I've experienced it; if you had not experienced it, you would not be in this world. You would be so perfect that I could not talk to you.

Love seems desirable to us, a good and holy thing. It is good to know God's will, his good pleasure, to know him by a clear act of obedience and be dependant on his demanding love, wanting all that God wants. **There may be good intentions, but deep within there is laziness**, a great cowardice. We don't want to be aware of our true motivation: I can see what love is asking from me today, but it is growing. What will be asked from me tomorrow? Anxieties make that poor soul unhappy: today a cross and a second one tomorrow.

When one who first surrenders to God, she talks a lot, but when he opens the door of his gospel of love, she goes away. She is afraid, and no longer wants to listen. **What should be done?** Stop being childish. Our Lord wants only what is best for us, what will lead most perfectly to love. We don't realize that he asks the sacrifice of created things, only to give us more, to give us greater glory in heaven. It is for our own interest, not his. He wants to give us his own life according to our dispositions. We don't ask much from a sick person, nor from a narrow heart; but to a great heart is given the fullness of our Lord. How foolish we are! We are so generous for the world!

[...]

Our Lord wants to draw us to the sweetness of his love by the power of love. If there are consolations, there are also desolations. He comes with his heart and his cross; we would be lost

without that. If only we could love purely without self-love, with a generous love that no longer has conditions, with a love so perfect that it would seem divine. We could no longer bear the delights of this love, because we would be so happy. Meanwhile, the cross is here for us, but we don't have the patience to wait for heaven.

Our Lord said truly: *I give you my peace* [Jn 14:27], giving us a hundred fold even in this world. St. Paul said: *The peace of God is above any feeling* (cf. Ph 4:7); God places the happiness of this world in love. The Blessed Virgin lived out of love, she experienced great happiness and great pain, for one is not present without the other. Meditate upon this; our Lord is not loved, he is seeking for souls. In the past, major religious orders, religious affiliations filled the world. Today very few gather in caves, or withdraw to rocky hollows.³ Yet, our Lord continues his search for souls.

The first objective is to love without conditions. A king cannot accept conditions from a servant; Jesus Christ is the happiness of human persons, and the devil, his enemy, need not interfere. **The second thing is this: have a pure love for God by the sacrifice of self.** This love must be so pure that the angels will envy you. Our Lord chose you, and gave himself for this: Empty your heart for me; love, but without self-love. *Love casts out fear* (cf. 1 Jn 4:18); it needs to give itself. Give yourself to our Lord in return. I will not hide from you the fact that it is better to stay in the world, than to enter a convent with a religious habit without the purity of love. All or nothing. To belong to yourself, to the world, and to your passions is not right. You know very well that you have to die. Where? Die to your heart and to your self-love.

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Point for reflection:

This invitation to a total love includes a clear reflection about the indifference, the apathy and the spiritual mediocrity that afflict the world and the Church. This is an exhortation to a total love: heart, body, and soul. What is challenging you in these words: "My God, I want to be all yours."

❖ Cf. See also: **The Life of Love**, November 5, 1860: Book 1 Section A

³ The caverns of the hermits of old.

