

# On Patience<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament  
Nemours, Thursday, November 8, 1866

**Our Lord had two states: one state of glory – a divine state by means of his divine nature; and a humble and humiliated state by means of his human nature.** In so far as he remained here on earth in a mortal state, he maintained his humiliated state, although he had all the virtues[...]. The same thing happens to us, although in a finite order, with an aspect that is great, beautiful, supernatural and divine, but which is not visible, and should not be so.

**It is an honor for us to share the states of our Lord, his graces.** We have within us some very beautiful graces, the gifts of the Holy Spirit; we have much of divinity itself, merits, and many fruits of eternal life – these are graces even before we cooperate.<sup>2</sup> The Word forms these fruits in us, – this is what makes us beautiful and the holy Trinity abides in us to establish his heaven in us. This can be summarized in one phrase: the holiness of God in us, and we in God, is not visible. A carnal and earthly man knows nothing or very little about this, because pride would overtake him. This greatness in us belongs to God, but the personal aspect belongs to us, and he leaves it with us. What is that? It is our poor nature inherited from Adam, our actual sins, our passions, our defects, our weaknesses, our poverty in a word, our sins. All this is visible, and even if it is forgiven, the scars remain.

**Why does the Good Lord prefer to leave us in our poverty, rather than in our glory;** why does he prefer to leave us in humiliation, rather than in the honor of service? It is to keep us humble. The Good Lord knows that we are so inclined to pride and self-love, to be seen and admired, that, in order to save us, he is obliged to leave us in the mire our weaknesses, in the humiliation of service. Although we don't believe it, it's true. The more saintly we become, the more we are humiliated – the more we are raised up, the more we experience being in the mire. Why? Because this is pleasing to our Lord: we take on his characteristics – we are in humility. Thus, we can say that a little saint is humiliated only a little, because he could not bear any more; a big saint has more humiliation; while a very great saint is like the anathema of the world, with a few exceptions. We must pass through Calvary: we are frightened by what we read in the life of the saints – what they had to bear, how the world maltreated them, condemned and calumniated them. It had to be. The cross is the road to heaven, [...] Therefore, the Good Lord leaves us always in our poverty, to reward us gloriously in heaven. He shows us what we lack, not what we have gained. He is always challenging us: I have earned many treasures, graces, and merits for you, but I want you to work to acquire and deserve them. [...]

St. Paul worked more than all others (cf. 1 Cor 15:10), and yet he adds: I did nothing! Why? Because he measured the way our Lord does, and so he said: I did nothing. Now, that's what you must do. You might have always been pious, you might have always done well: - but: ***You have done nothing: you are useless servants, because you have done nothing more than was strictly necessary*** (cf. Lk 17:10). We must enter into what we really are, into our weakness, so that we can feel the need for God. If you need help, it comes from Jesus Christ our Lord and his grace. He calls you: go live in his company. If you remain alone, you'll get lost. How can you fight against the devil, if you are alone? It's impossible. And what will happen? You will get discouraged: that's all I can say.

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<sup>1</sup> Number 613. *Sur la patience.*

<sup>2</sup> Even before we begin to cooperate with God's grace in us, it has already been freely given to us by God.

**My poor Sister, why do you get discouraged?** – Because I am so bad. – Oh! Are you sure? – Yes, and I am so weak; if an occasion recurs, I will fall. – Then, are you relying on yourself? – No. – And if you are relying on our Lord you will be strong (cf. Ps 124:1); why should you be discouraged? If you are discouraged, how proud you are! It means that you want to act alone! I'm not surprised that you get discouraged. You can say what you want, but when you reach the last of the capital sins, you will have gone through the ladder of your wretchedness. You get discouraged because you are relying on yourself, because you are proud. If you get that impression when you look at your sins, so does everyone else. And if you feel depressed, that's understandable. But, our Lord is there to help you, to serve you – call him, he is standing at the door, offering himself to you and telling you: Call me whenever you want: I will be your strength. – But you already know that I need you. – Yes, but the condition is that you ask me. When you are discouraged, that's because you want to be. – But I pray, and nothing comes. – That's because you have confidence in yourself.

St. Paul said: *I have strength for everything through him who empowers me* (cf. Phil 4:13). And our Lord said: *I am your strength and your reward; without me you can do nothing, but with me you can do all things* (cf. Jn 15:4-5). Now, my Sisters, become aware of your weakness: you are weak because you don't place your confidence in God. Therefore, place your confidence in God, in no one else. When you fail, say: I had confidence in myself, and I got discouraged at being so bad. So then, humble yourself, yes; but don't become discouraged. Pride is what discourages us. The second great sin in the world, after Adam's, occurs when Cain kills his brother: *What did you do to your brother? – Am I supposed to know?* The liar! Then God tells him: *The blood of your brother cries for vengeance against you.* And he gets discouraged, and despairs and says: *My crime is too big,* and he runs away (cf. Gn 4:9-10,13). He should have thrown himself at God's feet and said: I am a great sinner. But, not at all: he despairs, and he is also damned! And Judas: ah! If he had thrown himself at the feet of our Lord, our Lord would have embraced him, and said with even more tenderness: My friend (cf. Mt 26:50).

**Do not be presumptuous: live [in union with] the Good Lord – if you are alone, you will fall.** Sin in you is more negative than positive. I respect you very much, my Sisters, but as I admire you before God, I say this: You sin more negatively than positively, because I presume that you love the Good Lord, but you sin in a negative way, because you rely too much on yourselves. And then, when the least thing happens, self-love comes in, lies, jealousy, sensitivity, laziness. All the capital sins touch you, on a venial level. You relied on yourselves: did the Good Lord have to carry you? That's what happens, my Sisters; then I say: I sinned because I did not turn to God and his grace. I acted badly, I acted out of pride. I will tell you a truth: we fall into negative sins only because we don't turn to God. So then in a time of weakness, we put ourselves in a compromising situation. When something difficult arises, a sacrifice that we have not yet given, we should say: My God, come to my assistance; give me your grace, the humility to accept this humiliation, the patience to bear that person; give me the strength, because I realize my own weakness. The Good Lord likes to hear this from us, of course!

Consider two friends: one is weak and poor; the other noble and strong. But the weak one does not want it said that he was being helped. The other told him: My friend, give me your arm, and I will support you. Because his friend refuses, he is sad. He does not ask me for anything! If the poor one realizes his weakness and says: My friend, I need something... then, his friend will be happy to help him. The Good Lord also is pleased to help us. **Where is your strength? In the peace, in the glance, and in the assistance of our Lord** (cf. Is 30:15). While that is your real strength, where is your holiness? It does not reside in your virtues. Whoever tells you that you are holy would be misleading you, since you aren't. Who among you would dare to say: I have the virtue of humility? You don't have it, for the very reason you claim to possess it. Therefore, no one can tell you that you are virtuous.

**What is virtue?** It's nothing other than the imitation of our Lord. You've always been working on this, going up, climbing the mountain of perfection, but you are still very low: your sanctity does not consist in

your good actions – not at all! You might think that your actions are well done – but, that’s not true. When you have done them you cannot rest, because they are so weak: they are the shreds of good works torn from the cloak of heaven – the Good Lord takes them, and repairs them to prepare our cloak in heaven.

Neither does your holiness consist in your love for God. Don’t believe that! When will you ever love the Good Lord enough to be considered perfect in your love? You might say: I love the Good Lord very much. Even so, you don’t love him perfectly: that will happen only in heaven. – But, I’m trying to love him. – Yes, but you are merely crawling. Holiness does not consist in loving God. Let’s get this clear: I mean, the acquired love of God – you are trying, but you have not attained it yet. – Then, what does holiness consist in? – **The entire work of holiness consists in patience.** – What do you mean? – Yes, in patience; in the work of the virtues, and of the merits of our Lord. – But, is that possible? – Find me another way, if you can. The work of holiness in itself consists only in patience.

**To be a saint you need two things.** First, the matter to be perfected, and secondly, the power to perfect it. Concerning this power, you have it in the will of God, in his grace. But the matter to be perfected, to be shaped, the thing that must be sanctified – that’s you: you are that block of marble – ugly and shapeless, coming from the earth. What must we do with it? **We must shape it into Jesus Christ.** This doesn’t happen overnight. No, it must be washed and shaped after the model of Jesus Christ. An artist does not create a painting in one day: he needs ten, twenty, thirty years, and even more, for example, when making a masterpiece like Michelangelo’s *Last Judgment*. Well, believe me! Can a sculptor, examining and working with his chisel, finish a marble statue in one month? Not at all – he needs five or ten years. A man of genius needs patience, patience to observe and compare – nothing else.

**Now! Do you understand what holiness is?** It is the imitation and the living reproduction of our Lord. You must constantly destroy and constantly build up again. It’s a lifetime job: therefore, you need patience. And what is patience? It is trust in God and mistrust of ourselves. Trust God. If the Good Lord wants you to live with humiliation, then remain there. Advance only as God wants you to advance. You may often say: I really want to love the Good Lord. Then what happens? Some terrible temptation comes from the desert, against faith, charity, and chastity. You reject it, and it returns. Be patient. If you react violently, it will remain with you till you die. What will you do – pull out your hair? You will be victorious, not through violence, but through patience.

Therefore, learn to love patience and say: My God, you want me to be humiliated by the devil; and if you will not deliver me, help me, at least, and do not allow me to offend you. Give me the grace not to offend you, the grace to be faithful to you. And: My God, if you want to leave me in the midst of demons, I accept it, if that is your will. Don’t you realize that this is a martyrdom of the love of God? Notice that the Good Lord is honored in the patience of his servants. There’s no saint in heaven who gives more glory to God than the poor man experiencing his faults. Whatever you do, temptations will not go away if the Good Lord wants them to remain. So, avoid giving yourself a headache, and react properly! We will avoid discouragement, self-love, and pride if we do. I would have prevented a sickness that lasted ten years if I had done that – a nervous condition. As a result, we suffer, and we take on a certain irritability of heart. If only we could get rid of this fire, of these thorns, but we can’t. What shall we do? Good God! I will stay on the dunghill with the holy man Job as long as the Good Lord desires it (cf. Job 2:7-8).

What a beautiful lesson our Lord gives us: **Remember to bear fruit through perseverance [patience]** (cf. Lk 8:15). Did the apostles want to convert everyone in one day? – They were so persuaded about the divinity of our Lord that they wanted everyone to recognize it, and so they suffered. Some of them succeeded in converting only seven persons, like St. James. St. Paul remained three years in Ephesus to preach, and then he tells them: **You know very well how I taught you with my tears and trials** (cf. Acts 20:18-21). In your trials and evil temptations, who can triumph over concupiscence and the old self

(Adam) in you? It is patience. **And what is patience?** It is humility in grace. You must say: My God, alone I can only offend you; but with you I can do all things (cf. Phil 4:13). Our Lord has placed patience in humility and trust in God!

My poor children, I tell you **take on the patience of God** in your sufferings, in your cold-heartedness, in your dryness, and in your old human nature. Isn't the Good Lord patient? He waits for the conversion of a soul for 30, 60, and 80 years, and he leaves it on earth hoping that before she dies, she will tell him: My God, have mercy on me. Isn't he patient? He is the model of patience, the grace of patience. But patience is especially necessary in acquiring virtues. It's a false principle that tells you to place your progress in virtue, in the good that virtues make you accomplish. That's a false principle. The Good Lord does not want to show us the good that we do: only the devil shows it to us – that's not where holiness is. Where, especially, did our Lord show us his holiness? It was in his patience in bearing with his apostles – these very crude men – in his patience during his passion, and in his resignation to all that the Father wanted of him.

**Place your virtue in strengthening yourself in patience.** You will have succeeded once you have acquired humility. Your virtue is to be the fertilizer around God's tree. Place yourself in the roots of the tree, and not on the branches that could break. The Good Lord wants to attract you to himself through humility. The majesty of God comes all the way down to us, and lifts us to himself. That's clear! Be patient – patience is the real good. And how can you explain this? A saint says: I am the greatest sinner on earth, and the people in the world react: he doesn't believe that. But it is precisely because he is a saint that he says this. True saints are convinced that they are the greatest sinners and the most weak in the sight of God. Why? Because they have true humility and because they have patience – patience gives them the time to know their poverty. Briefly, a saint who knows his poverty is really a great saint, while someone who thinks he's great is like a seed on the top of the ground – how can it germinate?

**We must also have the patience of God.** We often have the patience of humility, but we don't possess the patience of piety. Oh yes! The will remains patient in prayer, but when we go to God, we want him to answer immediately and the Good Lord refuses. We ask him one thing, and he gives us something else. He tests us: we ask for fervor and love, and he gives us stupidity and desolation; we ask for light and he gives us darkness; we ask for emotional feelings, and he gives us dryness. We think that if we were burning with love for God and with zeal, we would be better off, but the Good Lord does not think that way. The Good Lord says: I prefer to see you patient and humiliated. And the soul [must] say: If that pleases you, my God, I accept it, providing I do not offend you. In this way, the soul is always contented with God and with the state in which he places her.

Any request boils down to this: My God, what can I do to please you? The Good Lord wants us to ask for something positive, and yet he responds negatively. This is how the Good Lord forms a soul in sanctity, in holy love, and in true holiness. And a soul that is patient with the Good Lord, patient under trial, sees this as necessary. Do you understand that this is the highest form of holiness? Then, sufferings come and go because of patience – there is always an occasion to practice it. Besides, if you are patient you will also be gentle, humble, and fervent! Love God more than his gifts. He does not change. If you are not patient, it will be impossible to become interior and holy souls – impossible to become souls of virtue – No: patience is necessary. Look at the patience needed by a farmer: he needs several months before harvesting, since nature works slowly. The Good Lord wants to take us in hand – he proceeds slowly in all he does, in order to make us dependant on his grace and on his will.

Have courage, my poor Daughters, and realize now that the Good Lord places sanctity in the negative and not in the positive. It is not in the positive, because the Good Lord would then be obliged to give us fervor all the time. That's why God has not placed sanctity in the positive of love, but in the negative – he leaves us with all our weaknesses. When God wants to lift us up in prayer and in contemplation, he

places us in the depths of temptation and of hell, so that we will lift ourselves up by patience, by humility, and by waiting for God. If we observed carefully, we would notice our Lord telling us: Wait; ask. Patience is nothing else than that. St. Paul<sup>3</sup> says: **Patience makes you perfect.** – Only that. What does he mean by that? He wants to say that the world is merely the place of planting for glory (cf. 1 Cor 15:42-44): we sow the seeds for the glory of God – we sow and water. The result of all this is not outward growth, but hidden germination through humility and patience. This hidden germination leads to heaven, if the growth were evident to us, it would be lost – it would burn: the sun of the world would burn everything. Paradise is on the other side. My good Daughters, go and work in the hidden dimension, as much as you can.

**Points for reflection:**

This meditation taken from the retreat of Nemours is a masterpiece of spirituality. The difficulties of spiritual development are presented in a positive light. What are the main points of the meditation?



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<sup>3</sup> Correction: James. (Jas. 1:4)