

Preserving Grace and Making It Bear Fruit. Recollection¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday, May 4, 1860

My Sisters, it is good and right **to receive graces**, but that's not enough; **we must care for them**. And there's still more: **we must let them bear fruit**. You have received many graces, and you will receive them every day. In his goodness, God wants to honor you among the daughters of Israel. Your gratitude should also be very great, because his goodness is infinite. Sometimes you tell me: I don't know what to say. You know how to say thank you; **say thank you like poor people do**. You don't need much eloquence; all you need is a heart. Every perfect gift comes from the goodness of God (cf. Jas 1:17). Therefore, thank him.

They say that gratitude gives us the right to a more important favor. We approach God by his weak point, to have more graces. But it is not enough to receive more; graces must be cared for. If we placed our wealth in a bag riddled with holes (cf. Hg 1:6), we would lose everything. If you receive your graces in a soul which is like a bag riddled holes, or like an open house, you will keep nothing. The stomach cannot digest when it is sick. Graces must be cared for. When you light a fire, but don't shield it, the wind will extinguish it immediately, as though it had never been lit.

Against whom must grace be protected? The devil is a thief. Thieves don't attack the poor. He wants to steal your graces, because he knows their value better than you do. How? In two ways: through sin that dries up the spring of grace when it is mortal, and that muddies the stream when it is venial. The devil wants to make you unfaithful. When he sees you doing something good, he introduces self-love, like those insects that attach themselves to fruits and devour them. And so, if you allow the cancer of vanity / pride to gnaw at the fruits of grace and good inspirations, nothing will remain but a dried up tree. Take good care not to allow yourselves to become unfaithful to the graces of God. The devil tries to make you unfaithful in another way, by letting the graces lie dormant. God does not give his graces to let them lie dormant, to store them away like relics. They are a field to be cultivated carefully for a good harvest. They are a boat whose sails we must unfurl so that it may reach its port, which is paradise.

Therefore, we must work to preserve grace. How?

Above all, act like the Blessed Virgin. We read that she kept all the words of our Lord in her heart, nourishing herself with them (cf. Lk 2:51). You must place all your graces in your heart, and feed on them. Reflect on God's goodness, his love; in a word, everything that is grace. Do this calmly; by entering into yourself you protect yourself from the storms of temptation. Act as you would for a small lamp; you enclose it. With this retreat, you have seen your faults, seen what you must do to become better Servants of the most Blessed Sacrament, good religious. You need recollection. Grace has been conceived in your heart, but since this conception is delicate, without roots, you need recollection.

My Sisters, notice what nature does in a beautiful way: it is in times of tranquility that it is fertile and germinates. It could not do so during storms. Fruits that are very small and tender could not survive. In his providence, the creator protects them. This is also true of the fertility of fish and birds: they reproduce

¹ Number 214. *Conserver la grâce et la faire fructifier. Recueillement*. **This begins the second group of Instructions about Recollection.**

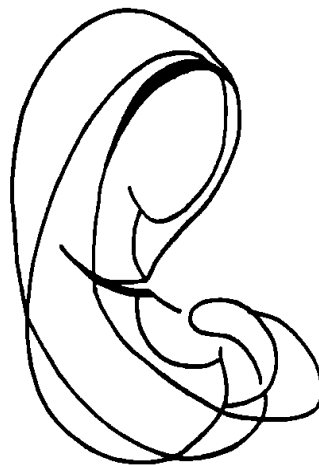
in the calm of springtime when nature seems to be resting. This gives you some idea of how grace works in you. It needs to be fertilized by a recollection that protects it and gives it time to send out roots.

Protect it also from the devil. Especially after the grace of a retreat, he tries very hard to distract a soul, so that she will forget and, through self indulgence, see only exterior things, and lose sight of herself. It is better to be recollected than to act, to keep quiet than to speak, to remain at the feet of our Lord rather than run after him.

We must make the grace bear fruit. Every grace must bear fruit. Grace is like a flower that should become a fruit. What must you do? Die to yourself, so that Jesus Christ may live in you. Every grace leads to this. Do not go ahead of the time of grace; when the Good Lord wishes, he will indicate the time. Then, inspiration will indicate what is good. God will give you strength and power. In that way, you will be very wise, you will draw much profit from your graces.

Do not go back on the past: the Good Lord has forgiven you. – I didn't do anything. – The Good Lord worked for you. – But, I'm doing nothing. – The grace of God is in you: you are doing much if you want. Look at the present. – But what about the future? – The future will have its own graces, sacrifices, and joys: that is not your concern now. *Sufficient for a day is its own evil* (Mt 6:34), said our Lord. And I will say: Each day has its grace that we must not allow to go to waste. – And tomorrow? – Do what you have to do today. If we act in this way, we will not lose our strength and our time – we will belong more to God, and we will be more to ourselves.

Remember that you will advance in perfection to the extent that you advance in recollection, that you will be more present to God. It is not those who run who reach the goal; it is those who reflect and then act with strength. God is not agitated (frantic), but, according the Scriptures, he acts with gentleness and power. Therefore, become great and happy, but (only) according to the good pleasure of God, not from natural contentment (motives). In this way, you will be saints, and the Good Lord will be pleased with you.



Point for reflection:

Notice the examples drawn from nature, the Gospels, and from human emotions. What lessons do you draw from this ?