

Recollection.

Different Ways of Placing Ourselves in the Presence of God¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday, September 16, 1859

My Sisters, we said that recollection is loving attention to God within us. We must be recollected within ourselves. There are several ways of placing ourselves in the presence of God within us, according to these words of our Lord: *Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him* (Jn 14:23). Our Lord says that the Father and the Holy Spirit come to us. They do not come in order to leave, but to make their dwelling there. That's how we will find God within us.

All spiritual masters look for ways of finding him by imagining him either as a king on his throne, or as in heaven where he finds his delights, or as a good father, a good mother. Let each one follow his own attraction. When spiritual things are too rigid, they cannot work. The motives that we use today will not be the same tomorrow; means change. Let them go when they no longer help to reach God. Let's not be too systematic here. If the Good Lord gives a different kind of bread, make use of what fits. If you want to use the means of others and imitate the saints, you don't have their graces. It's better to walk, rather than try to fly without wings. God wants you to go to him through the interior movements that he will give you.

Whatever means you use, do it through faith. Images are deceiving. There is no image of the Blessed Trinity. Do not rely on any symbol: God no longer speaks in the burning bush (cf. Ex 3:1-6), in the thunder and lightning of Sinai (cf. Ex 19:19). You cannot imagine God in that way. You must see him **through the eyes of faith**, and not through the eyes of your body. **See him through a presence of love**, like a blind man talking to his father and mother, knowing they are near. Through faith, the act of the presence of God is quickly made, through an interior motive. If we had to keep repeating: The Good Lord is there – we would get tired. We must rely on faith, before the memory and the curious mind start reasoning, like a man about to die, when the veil has been drawn. – But what about my mind, and my imagination? – They are not needed; only an act of faith. The habit will come, and the presence of God will become less difficult for you.

Another way is to see our Lord in us, to represent him as being real. You can imagine him with a body, since he truly is human. Then the imagination and the senses will be kept busy. You can do this, because our Lord is in you as the second person of the Blessed Trinity. We are not talking about Holy Communion, but **the state of grace**. He is present as God; and in us as God and man. Jesus Christ says: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him* (Jn 6:56).

In the Eucharist, the soul abides in him. Why? Because Jesus Christ seeks this union. He is in me, and, consequently, I am also in him. Our Lord does not say that he will remain there only while the sacred species are there. It would not be worth talking in this way: five or six minutes for those who are warm blooded, depending on physical dispositions. For those who are cold and dry, theologians go up to a quarter of an hour. This is not what our Lord means. He is talking about an habitual presence.

¹ Number 178. *Le recueillement. Différentes manières de se mettre en la présence de Dieu.*

Our Lord attached his presence to the sacred species: once they are consumed, he is no longer there. What has happened? Has he gone out? No. He is as really present as he was under the sacred species, with this difference: he is no longer joined to the species: he is present in his spiritual and pure state, not his sacramental state. His spirit remains there, his soul remains there, and his body also, by concomitance. As long as we don't have the misfortune of chasing him out by sin, our Lord remains in us.

In Holy Communion, our Lord remains in us, whether we are pious and devout, or not. He is inseparably united to the species. Afterwards our Lord remains in us only insofar as we abide in him. He is no longer there, if the soul does nothing and no longer stays in his Eucharistic presence. It follows that it is necessary to welcome the presence of our Lord in us. Our Lord remains without support, without adherence to anything: he needs to attach himself to an act of love, to cling to us. **How does this happen?** Through recollection. That is the easiest and the gentlest way that speaks most to our heart. The presence of our Lord is almost perceptible; we entered in easily through the feelings, because, as Christians, this is our grace: our Lord gives us the means, as St. Paul said: *You belong to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ belongs to God* (cf. 1 Cor 3:23).

Recollect yourselves often. Perform your actions with an awareness of the Eucharist – see yourself as a ciborium, a sanctuary, an exposition. Ask for the answer to your doubts; sustain yourself in love by acts of love; fight against the devil and your enemies by the interior grace of God. In this way you will always see our Lord in you, as he said: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him* (Jn 6:56). Then you will understand these words of St. Paul, referring not to Holy Communion, but to his union with our Lord: *Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me* (cf. Gal 2:20). **That is the mystery of recollection, and that is its center. Practice it well.**²



Points for reflection:

Attention to our God-given attraction, a vision of faith, of the life of grace within – these are all means to place ourselves in the presence of God. St. Peter Julian explains the link between our Eucharistic life and

² N.B. This first series of instructions on recollection are completed by those found in Book 5: “The Cenacle, Place of Transformation”, Section C: Discernment; Attraction.

recollection: notice the biblical texts. Make links with the Eucharistic Prayer, the Rule of Life, and your own experience.