

Recollection: Watching and Resting¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Saturday, May 3, 1862

My Sisters, I think you clearly understood what I said this morning, because what I told our Fathers also concerns you. It probably concerns you even more, because you have the joy of being more recollected than we are. You should be, since you have the pure contemplative life, and thus you should be under the influence of the Blessed Sacrament more than us. **Remain very recollected**, my poor Sisters; that is the necessary condition of your virtue and of your sanctity. Even with all the virtues, you would not grow without recollection. You would be like a wealthy person who places money in pierced sack. It would be useless for you to hear beautiful instructions, freely given, or to have the joy of being at the feet of the Blessed Sacrament. You would be like a tube that gives everything and retains nothing. May God preserve you from this. This would be for you a harmful disloyalty. God will ask an account of his grace. It would be a great misfortune if you did not profit from them.

Recollection is the grace that preserves all virtues, nourishing and perfecting them. Recollection makes us always present to God for him to guide us, and present to ourselves so as to belong to him and to be in him. Without recollection you cannot be humble, mortified and obedient, you cannot practice prayer, since you would be outside yourself. Isn't it recollection that preserves all virtues? Not only that, but a recollected person always at the disposition of God, ready to leave when he gives the signal.

Recollection is a glance, nothing other than an affectionate glance of a soul, that looks at our Lord out of love, always ready to rush wherever he wants. Recollection is also relaxation at the feet of the Good Lord. Whoever is not recollected gets tired in virtue, in good actions, some of which are very difficult and accompanied by sacrifices.

Recollection is a sweet restfulness. At the feet of our Lord, on his heart, one feels so good that one does not experience difficulty. This recollection must be the natural grace of an adorer. The eyes easily stray. The big temptation of adorers is distraction. The imagination plays tricks. What shall I say? This is a kind of fever that tends towards the outside. The devil leads us there. Human nature does not want to remain in a prison. This is a very great temptation.

My poor Daughters, if you were not recollected, you would not be able to stay here, for you would not be happy, for that you must be able to let go of other things, that is what I call being recollected at the feet of the Lord. To remain there, as I said, you must be recollected, if not, you will not stay; if you are recollected, you will always be happy. God makes his presence felt, makes us feel at home. The sun is not always hidden behind clouds. When the clouds pass, we feel the rays of the sun. The Lord may veil himself, but he watches to see if you have the patience to wait for his rays, and for the clouds to disperse before the sun.

Note the Gospel story: The bridegroom had not told the virgins when he would come. Some watched; others slept. Those who went out went to get the oil of recollection, since they did not have any; those who had some remained, waiting for the bridegroom, and they were rewarded by his love because they were ready (cf. Mt 25:1-13). In this way, my good Daughters, remain at the disposition of the Lord. A

¹ Number 409. *Le recueillement, regard et repos.*

word, a glance are worth more than everything else, if you are recollected God will call you; a simple word will suffice to console you. Thus, Magdalene was utterly consoled and happy when our Lord called her by name: *Mary*, and she answered: *My Good Master* (cf. Jn 20:16). She recognized him, and no longer searched – she sat at his feet. That is what you must do. You need not become learned scholars, or do great things in your dedication. What is asked of you is to become recollected. When you are distracted, you are on your own, open to the foolishness and ramblings of your imagination, you are outside of your scope.

Now, there is the recollection of virtue, and that of grace, which God will give you when he wills. You must excel in this exterior recollection by the modesty of your entire body. You can still improve somewhat in this. I don't ask for concentration, when you are doing something in haste while rushing... I'm not talking about recreation – it is permitted to relax a bit, to refresh your mind. But normally, don't center on yourselves, wondering what people will think. That you are very recollected? It would be better to be dead.

Remember that interior recollection should be the basis of your adorations. Prefer going to our Lord to listen to him and place yourself at his feet, rather than any other way. In this inner recollection, our Lord will tell you more in one instant than in a thousand years. His word is divine and penetrating. When you read, do so in order to arrive at recollection. Ask Our Lord to give you this gift. When we love someone we listen to him with affection; we are ready to do what he asks, you should listen with affection. That is what you should do with the grace of the Good Lord. You will be happy only when you are recollected, otherwise yours will be only a passing grace that gives only a little happiness. Happiness is proportioned to recollection. If you reach the point of recollection of detachment, of recollection of love, you will have some delightful moments, for you will be with Our Lord himself.

A small fire gives little heat, but the noonday sun warms deeply, place yourselves entirely in God. If you are only partially recollected, you will be uncomfortable, like being in front of a small fire in the winter. Place yourselves in the recollection of love, this is what makes the saints happy in heaven. Their joy is lasting; while ours is leading to sanctity – that's the difference.



Points for reflection:

What is the link between recollection and the virtues? Notice the picturesque language and the examples from the Gospel in this instruction. Take note especially of the link that the Founder makes between recollection, virtue, happiness, prayer, and life.