

The Dominant Virtue of a Servant of the Blessed Sacrament¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday, December 28, 1860

My Sisters, I have to leave next week, and so I cannot give your retreat. You have enough things to read, and the Good Lord will do the rest.

I² think that you had a good Christmas season. Very often these great feasts are times of trial; we suffer more than we rejoice. In the past, we had this experience – it's true that we are engaged in some ministry: we would go to God through our neighbor rather than through ourselves, through charity rather than through our own piety. What could we do? We must leave contemplation for the apostolate when that is the will of God. St. Mary Magdalene was very comfortable at the feet of the divine gardener, she wanted to remain there, but our Lord told her: *Go to my brothers and to Peter and tell them that I am risen* (cf. Jn 20:17); she went; because at that time it was the most perfect thing to do.

My good Sisters, do you think it's easy for us to be in the midst of these noisy children? Our devotion suffers a bit: with a tiny lamp we go against the wind – if the Good Lord extinguishes it, he will relight it, and we will be grateful. At the moment, we see only mistakes and difficulties, but the Good Lord is consoling us, recollecting us, and then giving us favors. Notice that when a king receives important citizens, he does not bother with intimate friends, there's too much to do; it is only when he is with his family that he shows his personal friendship.

We might say that the Good Lord acts like that during big feasts. He saves his favors for more peaceful moments. Like the father of the prodigal son, he says: *We must welcome him, because it's the day of his resurrection* (cf. Lk 15:24). We cannot always enjoy a grace of recollection at the feet of God: it's very good to be there to contemplate and adore him when we are free – but when he wants something else, we should do it.

Notice our Lord with the Samaritan woman. He said: *My food is to do the will of my Father* (cf. Jn 4:34). We must know how to be with God in everything. If we have only one dress and it's wet, if we have only one road and one driver, we are in trouble. We must be familiar with different roads, and not insist on only one, so as to do the will of the Good Lord. The Blessed Virgin did not speak to the angel with any pious conversation. When he had fulfilled his mission, he greeted the Blessed Virgin; she adored the Word made flesh, and all was finished. We might say to a grace: God sent you, what did he say? It is Jacob's ladder (cf. Gn 28:12), on which the angels carry up our wishes, and descending, bring us graces. This is the movement between God's love and our love. Don't be too hesitant – give yourself totally to our Lord. The angels don't insist on staying in heaven: they come to earth according to God's will – therefore, paradise is the will of God.

My Sisters, I've never developed such a fundamental topic: I'll try to express it. I would like you to reflect on it during your retreat on the first Monday. It is something that I mentioned in different ways in various conferences, but today I want to treat it more deeply.

¹ Number 291. *La vertu dominante d'une Servante du Saint Sacrement.*

² The copy of Guillot starts here: *Mes sœurs, je pense [My Sisters, I think...]*

What should be the dominant virtue of a Religious (Fathers/Brothers) of the Most Blessed Sacrament? What is the dominant virtue of a Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament? We have the same aim and the same goal – we (also) need one dominant virtue. We talk to you about the love of God, that you should belong totally to God: that’s clear. But we need a dominant virtue that gives motivation, which should be as a watchman, the form, and the perfection of the others; we need this. If you interpret my words only from the point of view of adoration, you will not understand them. I purposely did not treat this subject (in the past) – I wanted to give you a hint, so that you would finally guess it yourselves.

What is this virtue? First, let us say what it cannot be. You must not have virtues to glorify yourself in your own eyes or in the eyes of others. None of those virtues, which make a person holy, which are as rays that single her out as different from others. We don’t need virtues that lead others to call us saintly religious or holy men. This would be glorifying the servant, while only Jesus Christ deserves glory. Likewise, a Servant must not be glorified; this is only for the Good Master. Therefore, any brilliant virtue that would be for your glory, a kind of distinction, would be totally useless for you.

You don’t need any extraordinary penance, and neither do we. You don’t need a lot of mortification, or a life of immolation – not at all. If you have these virtues to an outstanding degree, they would become a characteristic of holiness, and people would say: See how repentant she is, how mortified, and I would add: she is not a Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament – she can go to the Trappistines or to some other convent. We must never glorify a person by means of a virtue: you don’t need such a deep humility that people say: See how humble these persons are; they are lower than the earth. Don’t you see that you are placing yourselves on a little throne? How can you set up little thrones before the throne of the Master; that is all we need, to be as the devil before the throne of the Eternal One! See how that Sister is at adoration, she is there like an angel! We see it, and we say it, but it is worthless. We should stop it, since it is not the characteristic of your state. The moment you rise out of the ordinary, all your virtue becomes absolutely worthless.

Your piety should be like your grace: inwardly, you can be whatever you want – but outwardly, nothing at all. You should not have a virtue that distinguishes you. People should not say that you are a saint, because of such and such a virtue, not even because of your love for our Lord, that you be singled out in his love. You might say: this is too much! You would prefer to take something from our Lord for your own glorification? You should not be like the moon in front of the sun, to take away its light. You should not even be distinguished by your perfect service of our Lord. Your adoration so well done that you will be singled out. On earth, we always seem to want to be noticed.

It is the same regarding gifts from God. You should not have any gift that singles you out. The moment that you have one [...] extraordinary gift, like the gift of miracles or prophecy – as soon as you receive any of these gifts, we should ask you to leave. I declare it would be the right decision. If it is a gift that distinguishes a person, you would be queens, and we should send you away. Never would saints be canonized in the Society of the Blessed Sacrament; to canonize a saint would be to place him in front of the throne of our Lord! For all of us to be buried in the church – that’s fine. We should all be saints of that kind.

You might ask then: What should be the dominant virtue of a Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament? You are telling us what we should not be. Try to guess. Look at us, there is nothing unusual, not even in myself. If you look at me closely, I am tall only physically; I have no science –some, but very little. We don’t let it shine as the Parisians do, making mountains out of nothing. Nobles? There is Father de Cuers – but he keeps himself quite simple.³ There is no priest who stands out. People

³ Omitted in Guillot and (*S7bis*): Nobles? There is Father de Cuers – but he keeps himself quite simple.

who are looking for something great go to the Dominicans, or to the Capuchins. Some great men have joined these Orders, and there is something attractive in their habit. Some are bare-footed, with head uncovered in the snow, and people say: Look at that penitent! If he were a religious of the Blessed Sacrament I would tell him: Brother, come here: you shall be cloistered for fifteen days, because you have stolen the glory of the master.

If I stop now, you will not grasp what can be simply stated. Now let me explain it to you: it is **the virtue of St. John the Baptist**. His disciples were jealous of his glory; the servants are jealous of their master's glory, since they have none of their own. *Master, the one that you baptized in the Jordan, everyone is going to him – everyone is abandoning you.* St. John answered, ***You make me happy! The friend of the Bridegroom rejoices to hear the voice of the Bridegroom. He must increase and become great, while I must disappear, become less and bury myself, if I can speak that way.*** (cf. Jn 3:26-30). That's the virtue of St. John the Baptist: for our Lord to grow greater, and for him to grow smaller. He wanted to give away all his disciples, and remain alone: he sent him all that he had. When someone wanted to praise him, he would say: ***You are wrong; I am neither Elijah nor the Prophet: I am only a voice that cries in the wilderness. I am nothing – the Messiah is among you. I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap and to carry them like a slave – I am not worthy*** (cf. Jn 1:21-27). He is exalting the master! This is the virtue of a Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament, to descend, to humble herself, to melt like wax, so that he alone will be great, be served, and reign over us and over the entire world.

Yes! My Sisters, we can use other words than those of John the Baptist. Our Lord said: ***If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself*** (cf. Mt 16:24). This is good for everyone. For religious, it is not enough – we must die to ourselves. Therefore the dominant virtue of a Servant of the Blessed Sacrament is to die to oneself everyday, in order to have Jesus Christ reign in us and in others. It is a virtue of death, as explained by St. Paul in his passage: ***you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Jesus Christ in God*** (cf. Col 3:3). You are like candles that are consumed for the glory of the sovereign master; you should be the flame, you should be there, dying to your self-love.

What then is the dominant virtue of a Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament? Clearly it is death. But since we don't live from death, it is to live from Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. As we are unhappy in this world, let us try to escape, since the world is a thief. Experience that death; it is the only life in God. We don't unite water with fire; that is why by dying to our self-love, we allow our Lord to live.

To sum up:

The dominant virtue of a Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament is to die to herself, so that she may live from our Lord. Notice that when you do something and say: It's for me, then it is worth nothing. It is even less than nothing when you say this is from me. When our Lord comes he will say: Is there something for me? He will go away or he will fight. The moment we say: "Me", the Devil responds: That's good!

This is the highest quality of Eucharistic perfection: our Lord will live in you in proportion to your death to self. Few souls hear and practice these things: they want to go halfway, because they don't want to die. What does grace do for you, and for us? God's grace tends to make us [die] detach ourselves from created things, in order to live from him. Every time we refuse, the Good Lord sends us away; every time that someone wants to live in himself, our Lord sends him out the door. As if Jesus Christ were only a means! There are many who make our Lord Jesus Christ only a means: they take his great and magnificent virtues as a means to crown themselves for their good deeds – virtues that suit their character! Our Lord is their means – they themselves are the goal. One day, they will fall into the pit they themselves have dug.

Learn to die. Know that your life is only a life of dying [to self]. Once you have nothing more to die to, you will be very close to paradise. Our Lord will have no choice; he will crown himself by crowning you. Therefore, learn this very well: don't look for exterior missions that merely crown your self-love. My poor Daughters, would we be rich if we did great works? Our self-love would crown itself with God's graces. But what I have just told you is very different: do it with the grace of God.

