

The Eucharistic Work. Rule Drawn from the Tabernacle¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday [June 4], 1858

May God be blessed for everything! My poor Daughters, providing that God's will be done, and that we allow him to work, all the rest makes no difference to us. We would have liked to go very fast. It didn't happen! Our Lord seems to stop everything, but only because he wants to do something better. The devil is working furiously against the work, and he uses all his malice to fight it and crush it, if that were possible. And so we need only undertake something for the Eucharist to come up against all kinds of opposition.

It seems that God wants to do something very great. Since he sets aside and eliminates all human helps, it means that he wants to act alone in bringing about his work. Personally, I can tell you that I am very happy: the more trials I see, the more storms – and I see many more than you do – I also see the graces attached to them. The more then do I bless God and I am at peace. I say: Well, my God, so much the better.

My good Sisters, God wants to make us die to ourselves, but he has a hard time in working out our death! Our vocation requires so much sanctity. Ask it often from our Lord by telling him: My God, form me yourself for your Eucharistic life. I realize how much I need to die to myself, to detach myself from everything, but I cannot do it alone. Free me from everything, so that I may live only for you. Make the old self die, and create in me a new self (cf. Eph 4:22-24).

My dear Daughters, nearly all the new orders have imitated the rule of the Jesuits: the Marists, the Oblates, and many others. Like them, they have their ministry, their missions, and their schools. Today especially, people like everything that is a work of zeal. That is not for us; we are not copying anyone. **A new rule is needed; and where shall we get it? It is entirely there in the Eucharist.** But, my good Sisters, we must pray: our Lord must give it to us – for that, we must pray hard. Believe me, it is not easy to make a rule: a single number requires much study; many things must be considered: we must experience the virtues. Oh! If our Lord would come and give it himself as he did to St. Francis, it would be finished quickly. But we must ask for it from the depths of the tabernacle².

Founders of Orders ordinarily begins by looking for financial assistance. They approach their neighbors to have the means to survive and then they gather together. We did not proceed like that. We began by gathering around our Lord, and the rest came. Today, when people talk about us, they say: They are not doing much; they are not numerous; they will not succeed, etc. It's true. Our work does not have external glory; but you can be sure that we have done much. No Order began like ours: we had hardly started when three bishops supported us. The Archbishop of Paris adopted us and gave us a place to stay. Our existence was assured and so was yours. Ordinarily, new orders begin before going to the Pope; but we started by going to the Pope, to be very sure of proceeding according to his mind.

¹ Number 24. *L'œuvre eucharistique. Règle puisée près du tabernacle.*

² Father Eymard would give the sisters a provisional Rule on July 16th, and the draft of the Rule of 1859 during the monthly retreat on the following October 6th. Earlier, he had composed some small Rules for the Ladies of Toulon who had hoped to become members of the proposed women's branch. Cf. Letters to Marguerite Guillot dated April 2 and July 26, 1857.

That we are few in number is a great grace. Numbers don't bring about holiness. Some communities fell and crumbled at the time when they were most numerous. Only three or four saints are needed to do great things – and even a single one would suffice to spread the love of our Lord throughout the world. It is not with numbers, brilliance, or reputation, but with holiness that great things are done. Let us become saints as our vocation requires; let us die to ourselves, to the world, then we will begin to grow. Yes, our obscure beginning is a great grace. We need this to be formed in our vocation and molded in the Eucharistic spirit and life.

Although the Eucharist is not new, no Order has yet taken it as its purpose and end. This is our only purpose and end; and we also take it as our means, to spread the Eucharistic fire throughout the world. Yes, my poor Daughters, we are happy to be unknown and that people do not know all the graces enclosed in our vocation. If this were known, we would be swamped. Many would want to come to join us, but we need silence and solitude. We need to remain at the foot of the sacred tabernacle. God keeps us hidden because he sees that we are not yet ready to face broad daylight. We are neither strong enough, nor sufficiently holy.

At first, the news of our beginning in Paris spread far and wide; we were besieged. Fortunately, our Lord dispersed all those people, because we could not have held out. Now, things are very quiet. If people knew our joy, many would want to come to us, because there are many who are suffering. Today, most communities are involved in education. The religious sisters are overwhelmed, worn out by work. They are given good spiritual food, but they don't have the perfection of their vocation. Fortunately, there are still some contemplative souls: the Carmelites, the Poor Clares, and for the men, the Carthusians. How lucky we are to spend our life at the feet of Jesus! And the devil is furious against such a beautiful work: we have more temptations; we feel ever more our unworthiness. People admire the leaves and the flowers on a tree; rather, they should admire its roots, for without them it would not bear fruit. My good Sisters, in order to bear fruit, we must die, hidden in the ground (cf. Jn 12:24).

I told you that everything is new in the Eucharist. Surely then, **we cannot copy the other Orders** whose model and purpose is some past mystery that has come down to us by tradition; in other words, something that exists no longer, that is past, and no longer renews itself. They need to copy the older orders, such as the Jesuits, the Dominicans, and the Franciscans, who have all taken the spirit of their particular founder. It is not the same for us. Since the Eucharist is a perpetual mystery, ever new and living – because it is Jesus Christ himself, he needs no human assistance, nor any mystery. He is self sufficient. **The Eucharist is the summary of all the mysteries and contains them all.** Some great saint remarked that this was the reason Jesus ended his life by instituting it. The sun, that shining star that gives us light and keeps us warm each day, does not take its light and heat from the previous day. Jesus Christ, the resplendent sun that never rises nor sets, who is always in the state of radiance, does not need the assistance of past mysteries. He is like a fire that lights a fire.

Nearly all the Orders of today dedicate themselves to their neighbor, to the apostolate. There are very few contemplatives. In France, we have only the Carthusians. There are also many Trappists, but they are dedicated more to penance than to contemplation: they cultivate the earth, pray the Divine Office, and keep silence. All the others are mostly mixed, and join to contemplation the works of zeal, such as teaching, preaching, foreign missions, etc. Such are the Jesuits, the Marists, and the Dominicans. Carmelites seek their own perfection (sanctification) and the edification of their brothers, and as means, the salvation of souls.

All religious groups have passed through the life cycle: conception, birth, adolescence, and maturity. Many Orders came to know what they should do and what their purpose was only when they arrived at their maturity. It was totally different with us: **from its very beginning, the Society of the Most Blessed**

Sacrament knew its purpose, and existed in all its perfection as to its object and its end. It did not pass through infancy; it attained maturity immediately. And so, although we ourselves are still in the infancy of the perfection of virtues, our end has all its perfection. Our purpose will never be more perfect, since the Eucharist is Jesus Christ, perfection itself. No, my good Sisters, you will never have more, you will never possess more. The one who is making his novitiate among us has no less than the professed; and if he loves our Lord more, he has more, because he better fulfills his purpose who is Jesus Christ, his love.

Other religious think only of the moment when they will pronounce their vows. They are looking only for that moment, because then they will have arrived at perfection, their end. They make novices go through different stages and difficult studies: Jesuits become priests only at thirty years old, Carmelites study theology for seven years, etc. In our order we reach perfection from the start: the religious habit and the vows are like convenient clothing to approach king Jesus. **In our community we must pray, adore, and love.** And Jesus is completely ours; no one can take him away from us, nor deprive us of him. Even if he were not exposed on the altar, we would always have him in the sacred tabernacle.

We priests are much more fortunate than you, because we are prolific: we carry Jesus Christ in ourselves, we produce him every day, and we give him birth like the most Blessed Virgin gave him birth. We continually have the power of transubstantiation. If we understood what a priest is, his dignity, his divine power, and his greatness, what respect we would show him! But, fortunately, his power and dignity are hidden under his weaknesses, under his coarse appearance. This is a great grace, because if God did not leave the priest with his weaknesses and faults, he could not bear so much greatness without being proud. As it is, he sees that he can do nothing by himself, and he refers all the glory to God.

If someone comes to join us, I would ask him: What do you want? Why do you want to join with us? And if he answers: I come to work out my salvation, I would tell him: You came to the wrong door; go elsewhere. Our purpose is not our salvation: it is the service of Jesus Eucharistic; the rest are means. And if someone wanted to be a zealous preacher, I would tell him: You can leave immediately; **our mission is to serve Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament and to spread his Eucharistic kingdom throughout the world.** We must renounce all personal glory, in order to leave all to Jesus Christ. These words of our Lord can really apply to us: *If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me* (Lk 9:23), because we have only one thing to do, only one: to die daily to ourselves, so that there may not be in us any other life except that of Jesus.

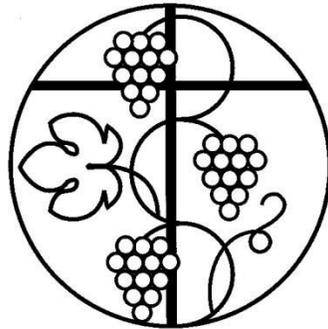
Our very name indicates what we must be. When speaking about different religious orders, such as the Marists and Oblates, we ask: What do they do? What works are they caring for? What is their purpose? What do they have as their goal? Because their name does not say it. They do everything. But once we say: Religious of the Most Blessed Sacrament, people understand that our only purpose is the service of the Holy Eucharist and everything that extends its reign. Notice, my Sisters, that Jesus acts in the Eucharist as God acted in the creation of the world. God created the first man only on the sixth day. He began by creating the sun, the plants, and the animals; in this way he prepared a beautiful palace. Then he created man and gave him everything to enjoy. Our Lord did the same for us: he did not prepare a palace for us, but he prepared us personally, in the midst of the world, by long years full of trials, crosses, and graces, to give us some experience and make us see the emptiness of the world. Then, when the time for the Eucharistic kingdom had come, and all things were ready, he called us.

O my Sisters, what a grace Jesus Christ has given us by calling us to be at the time that he had set to establish the reign of the Holy Eucharist! What difference does it make that we have sorrow, trials, and sufferings, since we have Jesus Christ with us? At the stable in Bethlehem, Mary was not thinking about her sufferings and about the poverty of the grotto; she had Jesus. That was enough; she was happy. During the flight into Egypt, she was not worried about their means of survival; since she was carrying

Jesus, she lacked nothing. The stable was like the most beautiful palace, and the straw in the grotto like the most beautiful throne, since Jesus had chosen it.

Come now, my Daughters, have courage; be happy to possess Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. The **proof of our vocation is the joy and happiness that we have experienced at the feet of Jesus since the beginning. That's why we are very sure that we are where God wants us.** My Sisters, admit that you are happy; appreciate fully your joy. When we are really in the spirit of our vocation, we do everything out of love for Jesus Eucharistic. So, nothing is costly. And when we come to spend a half-hour or an hour at the feet of Jesus, our soul, in this act that is more perfect in itself, receives the reward of its work. It is happy to unite itself and to lose itself in Jesus. It comes to gather new strength to serve him with greater love and devotion. Whoever is really free from all things will find it very easy to approach Jesus and tell him of her love and her joy. Likewise, her life becomes simplified more and more by the unique thought of Jesus Eucharistic: she sees him in everything and refers everything to him. Where she does not see him, those things are of no interest to her.

We can never reach the point of adoring our Lord perfectly and in a manner worthy of him. We are finite beings, while our Lord is infinite. We would have to be as perfect as he is to adore him perfectly. But we can always love and adore him in so far as we are able. He does not ask for anything more.



Points for reflection:

Here, St. Peter Julian shares his experience of the grace of foundation – a practical and spiritual experience. He tries to formulate the originality of the Eucharistic work. In this regard, what points does he emphasize? Which one or ones speak to you the most?