

# The Grain of Wheat<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament  
Paris, Thursday, August 2, 1860

**My Sisters, it is necessary that you should become like the grain of wheat, the substance of which is totally transformed.** We will consider the grain of wheat reaching its condition as a host, becoming Jesus Christ. That will give you an idea of what you need to do to attain eucharistic life. The grain of wheat is cast on earth and there it dies and its life springs from its death. From this death comes forth a seed. The grain becomes a plant. It becomes the wheat. Then we gather the ear, put it in the mill and it becomes flour. It is moistened, becomes a paste, and is put in the fire. We make a Host and then it becomes the body of Jesus Christ. That is what you need to do to become the body of Jesus Christ.

First of all, you need to be thrown into the earth to be buried. **The grain is buried: it is put in the earth** – it is no longer visible. To become Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament, you must enter into the earth and be buried and let yourself be forgotten by the world. It is as if you were dead, as Jesus Christ was before being resurrected. When we do that, when we leave the social world and we come here to begin religious life, it is like a tomb. You are dead to the world. You are buried and you must be without honors or wealth. If you do not make a break with society, you would no longer be in the necessary condition to be the grain of wheat. Your Eucharistic life must come from your death to self; otherwise, you would not be able to attain your purpose.

If we threw the grain of wheat on the road, it would be trampled under the feet of passersby (cf. Lk 8:5) It would become sterile. If your affections kept you in the world, you would be barren in virtue. (cf. Lk 8:14) Here, it is death. You lose your family name<sup>2</sup> and then you do not have a habit. A religious habit is an honor. Later the Good Lord will see what must be done but now you are nothing, nothing at all, and that is what is needed. The more humid the soil in which we place the grain of wheat, the more quickly it germinates. As for me, all I need to do is place you in the earth to see that you die. It is this death that will bring forth the grace of God.

**Look at the ear. As the plant grows, it shows its grain and the wheat comes, and when the wheat is mature, we take the seed, the ear,** and leave aside the straw. It is no longer good for anything except litter for horses and worthless things. The ear is separated from the stalk which bore it. We keep only the grain of wheat. Your natural qualities, your relatives, dignity, everything which was growing and making you grow before, you have been separated from. You were a plant that had other little plants at its feet, which were not growing as beautifully as it was. What happened? Once the wheat was grown, the rest was left to dry and it became straw, nothing more. It is the same here: you must come with your qualities, your good character. All that the world considers good and beautiful must come to our Lord. The rest is set aside, so that it does not become purely natural.

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<sup>1</sup> All the instructions of this book are taken from the *Instructions to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament*, St. Peter Julian Eymard, Complete Edition, Rome, 2003. In the *Books*, certain titles have been modified to correspond better to the content of the extracts that have been retained, or again to correspond better to the idea that guided the choice of these texts. However, in footnote at the bottom of the page, we will always find the number and titles corresponding to the complete edition. This first instruction has the following number and title: 239. *Le grain de froment*.

<sup>2</sup> From Copy A: *vous n'avez plus que votre nom de chrétienne, on vous ôte votre nom* (what remains for you is only your Christian name: we remove your (family) name).

What else do you set aside? Your piety: it will have another orientation; your virtues: we no longer call them virtues – they are only necessary clothing, a garden of flowers. When a garden of flowers has blossomed, we have flowers to offer our Lord. Here, we leave the straw at the door – we take only the pure grain. What is that? As an image let us say that it is your will or, if you prefer, your poor heart. We treat it like the seed, everything is taken away from the grain of wheat and the grain is very content; it suffers if nothings is removed and it falls on the ground. You must be stripped like the grain of wheat. Our Lord does not want any rags, nothing profane. He wants to clothe us with himself (cf. Eph 4:24).

**What is done to the wheat? We put it under the millstone, and grind it into a thousand pieces. Its name has changed completely. Now it is flour.** What is flour? It is the grain reduced to its smallest proportion – here, you are stripped of everything, you must become only flour. A grain is an isolated entity but now it becomes a common entity in a common mixture. You must be stripped of your bark to be joined with others. What then is the millstone that does this? Sacrifice, obedience; in a word, so that all wills become one. Your spirit is ground to become only one, likewise your ideas, and personal judgments which are foreign to the Society, or you will never become flour; you will remain like grain in the storehouse. If we left you as is, we would be causing you great harm. It is necessary to become unleavened bread (1 Cor 5:7) You want it so, don't you? Well, that's fine. [...] You will be ground through obedience, through love. What is the millstone? The love of God. It is love which has set Jesus Christ on fire so that He would die on the cross and that is what one must become.

**What is done with this flour?** All impurities are removed. It is sifted through silk so that only pure flour remains to become Jesus Christ. When it seems that all has been done even the bran is removed. What is left is pure white flour. You are pure, risen in the grace of your vocation – God is so pure that even his angels are seen to have stains: straw, bark, imperfections. We are to remove these daily, first of all by fraternal charity, then by direction – that is their purpose. Until no bark is left at all, nothing, we must winnow the grain through the basket.

**What more has to be done? Look at the flour.** Well, our Lord sees too many imperfections. Notice the flour. It must now be passed in the threshing machine. It is continuously shaken until it passes through the small space in the silk until it become (fine) like gold, which passes through openings of silk. When we open an abscess, we open it profoundly in order to remove anything that would create a second abscess.

My poor Daughters, you need only one condition, one quality only: to be white like the flour of the grain. How is that done? It is mixed with water, that is fraternal charity, so that it may form only one bread. Jesus Christ does more. He joins you to himself with his blood. See how well St. Paul has said it: *Clothe yourselves with Jesus Christ, in order to become true unleavened bread* (1 Cor 5:7). You know that unleavened bread is pure, very pure. Who must be the unleavened bread? You, the Servants of our Lord. **We make you one by means of the water – better to say, through the blood of Jesus Christ.** What unites you? Holy Communion. “*You receive communion,*” said St. Paul to the Corinthians: “*to become only one because you eat the same bread.*” (1 Cor 10:17).

Here, you must all be merged, the elders and the younger, the educated and the simple. Whoever would want to stand out would no longer be unleavened bread, and it would be over. So, therefore, find your joy by loving one another tenderly, without judging and without distinctions (cf. Col 3:11-12) – otherwise there would still be grain or leaven. (cf. 1 Cor 5:6-8). There should be none.

**When all of that has been done, the flour is put in a mold in order to take the form of the Host which will be impressed upon it, and that it may become the body of Jesus Christ.** So with you once you are ready. You will be placed in the mold – there is only one - the mold of the rule of the institute.

We will put you therein order that you may have a single life, a single adoration. Who places you there? Our Lord, I do, the superior – we form you. Notice the dough, how it lets itself be placed. That is what you are to be – I would like to be this bread. Go ahead - we help you to place yourself in the mold, like Jesus Christ on the cross.

Then, when everything is ready **it is necessary to consolidate the impression**. If we left the dough as it is, it would remain mobile, it would not be firm. **It needs to be put through the fire** in order to have consistency, firmness, perfection. If we were satisfied with soft dough, then it would change form continually.

**What is the fire? The Eucharist.** The fire bakes the paste to give it its goodness, its consistency, and somehow its long-life. It is necessary that you should pass through this fire. You must be Like St. Ignatius [of Antioch], going into the midst of the beasts, saying these beautiful words: “I beg you, do not pray for me, as you did for so many Christians whom the lions did not touch. It is a great grace for me: *Fromentum Christi sum* – I am the wheat of Christ. I am the wheat of Jesus and I must be ground by the teeth of beasts to become pure bread, pleasing to God.” How beautiful! **Who is this wheat?** It is you. Here, there are no beasts, so what do we have instead? Freely chosen Christian mortification which removes imperfections, crucifixion through love. *Then I will become pure bread, a true, holy and pleasing sacrifice to God* (cf. Rm 12:1). That requires that we pass through the fire of love, the Eucharist, and receive Communion every day. That is when the dough becomes the Host through the fire. At adoration, you put the dough in the fire, so that it may take its form.

That is not all. The host still does not have its natural consistency. What happens? The priest takes it, and he, who is Jesus Christ at the consecration, changes it into the body of our Lord. Then, only the appearances can be seen. The host has been changed: that is the transubstantiation. That is the miracle; the bread becomes Jesus Christ. **You also, that is what you must become.** We do not have the power to do this for you – it depends on you. We [priests] perform the greatest miracle possible on earth: we change the substance [of bread] – but we cannot change you, transform you. God cannot do it either. You must do this yourselves: you must be both priest and victim. You must give yourselves, you must transform yourselves into Jesus Christ, into his life, into his virtues, and into his resurrection (cf. Rom 6:5). You must do this yourselves. How will you do it? Through Jesus Christ, surely.

In order for the host to be perfect, you must pass through all that I said earlier – from the seed which has been buried in the ground up until transformation. If you want it, it is easy, for **you will not be working alone but with our Lord**. Even more, this transformation has placed you into him: your heart into his heart; your mind into his mind; your will into his will; your body into his body. You must take on the holiness of his body by taking on its wounds. Then it happens very simply. You will go from what is good to what is better, from what is better to what is very good. To the extent that this transformation occurs, you experience more goodness and joy – you are always encouraged by our Lord.

Notice how a sick person feels his strength return when he is eating and drinking – he is rewarded by the pleasure of life. As we receive Jesus Christ in us, since he is beauty and goodness itself, he is formed in us to the extent that we absorb him. Something so good is formed in us that we are encouraged to give ourselves even further. **This transformation takes place by an act of union**, and that is the sole purpose of the graces [we receive]. When Jesus has become perfect in us, we will die, and go to paradise. This transformation is nothing else. It occurs only to give Jesus Christ the joy of living in us, as he had lived on earth. We are rewarded only for Jesus Christ.

My dear daughters, if someone tells you: Did you know that this transformation, this goal of union, is what has built the Church? If someone tells you: If you do not transform yourself, you are paralyzing its sacramental purpose – you are its purpose. You might ask: Is that possible? Everything in life can be summarized with these words: *I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me* (cf. Gal 2:20).

**What will happen? You will be transformed in our Lord.** He will leave you the appearances. Our Lord covers himself with appearances to tell us that we will continue to appear the same, even to have the same exterior faults. He will leave us so in his mercy. We must be only human appearances; no honor is given to appearances and in the Eucharist, the species are nothing. It is something without consistence like air and air is not honored. From the time there is no longer a human personality, we ought to have nothing and say: [not] I, [but] Jesus Christ. **Do you understand what you must become?** To be like the grain of wheat – understand this, and you will be the wheat of the elect.

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**Points for reflection:**

The grain of wheat that becomes a host is an image of the transformation that must be realized in us. This same image of transformation is found in the teachings of St. Augustine. The Rule of Life “To make our life into a Eucharist” invites us to this same spiritual development. What aspect can you find for your life in this process? What is your experience?

