

The Hidden Holiness of Jesus Christ¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday, October 26, 1860

[...]

Let us return to the subject of our hidden life. Be satisfied with the holiness of Jesus Christ, who is hidden. **Jesus Christ has two kinds of holiness.** There is one that is external, in great things, in his glory, in his heroic virtues. Don't seek the holiness of the grandeur of Jesus Christ. That one is less perfect, less esteemed by Jesus. Consider his hidden life, where there is more love. There was more love in Nazareth than on Tabor. In Nazareth he deferred his miracles. Jesus is greater in the stable of Bethlehem than in his wonders and miracles when the natural effect of his power was evident; the perfection of his hidden life, however, is the effect of his love. It is worth more.

Note the holiness of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. He hides his greatness. Everything is small, veiled, annihilating and annihilated; nevertheless he takes up in the Eucharist all the marvels of his love. He places them in their final perfection: the hidden life of his humanity and divinity. This kind of life very beautiful! Jesus Christ loved it so much that he sacrificed everything for it. All of humanity sacrificed to the glory of God. A recognizable virtue is somehow less valuable. Choose a hidden holiness, where there is more love and perfection.

Here's another thought. My poor Daughters, in the presence of our Lord we rarely focus on his hidden life: we rarely honor it and enter perfectly into it. Perhaps you are more perfect than I am, but I admit that our Lord gave me a great insight these days. We go no further than the virtues. There is something that we can understand; – we don't go any further: we don't penetrate this hidden interior of Jesus Christ. We don't understand it. That's why our virtues have no roots: they are more external than internal.

Look closely and you'll see that your recollection and your adorations center on the goodness and the mercy of our Lord for you. That's easier, since there the imagination is nourished, and the sentiment of piety finds some satisfaction. This is not the hidden life of Jesus Christ. Where is it? In Jesus Christ who is denying himself and humiliating himself; in a word, in everything that places us in his hidden life. We rarely go there, we rarely enter into his prayer, into his Eucharistic thought. We are busy with external activity where the heart is fed and finds new life in God. However, we dare not go any further, because we are afraid. How sad! That's what inspires the beautiful words in the *Imitation*: **If once you entered the interior of Jesus Christ, how well you would judge things!**

Another thought follows upon that one: in all my prayers, I have been asking for the success of our mission, hoping that all my brothers and you, might grow stronger by your sanctification, and that you, my Sisters, might become solid and strong in virtue. All my prayers were for external success. It was like a seed that becomes a tree, like a child that becomes an adult. When I ask our Lord for his external glory in the world and in us, and consequently his external reign over sinners and over the world – his final triumph – this is not wrong, but it is far from being perfect! It is not this reign that our Lord desires – what he wants is the reign of his hidden life, of his silence, of his annihilated life in us. I admit that when I was asking something else, I was not thinking of this.

¹ Number 271. *Sainte Philomène. Sainteté cachée de Jésus Christ. [Saint Philomena. Holiness hidden in Jesus Christ]*

Pray that our Lord may let you die by keeping you out of the limelight, letting you be humbled, buried [so to speak]. That's the greatest grace. I don't say that I understand it perfectly, but I'm beginning to enter into it². Everyone backs away from this thought, afraid to step into this cloud of darkness. What happens? Our prayer is not all-powerful, and our heavenly Father does not answer us completely. We ask him for his love and triumph, while he wants us to die to sin; we ask him for our glory so that we can triumph in him and through him – but it must be done in our Lord. **What am I asking?** For good subjects (religious): my God, may they grow in your sight, may the rule be well practiced – I am asking for triumph. I want the rule to be followed; and personally I am very happy to see you serving our Lord well – but I should be asking that you become very humble.

Understand that the silence, the recollection, and the prayer of Magdalene, the conversion of the publican, all that is worth more than all the rest. That is your present situation, my poor Daughters. You must not place yourself in a past state of our Lord, but in the present, he prefers that. This mean and poor nature of ours is always deceiving us! We think that we have done well when we have exalted our Lord in our prayer, when we have invoked all the powers of heaven and earth to bring about his triumph. On the contrary, what he wants is to be nothing with us: humble, ignored, and annihilated. Otherwise, he would not be humble, but great.

This thought contains a treasure that is not learned from books. I cannot express it, I don't have the right words, but I know that light is contained there in the darkness of virtue, that love shapes in this way the final form of the virtues. Until we enter into this sort of tomb, of annihilation with our Lord, we will not understand his love. Besides, our nature is afraid – we prefer singing, stirring up, and doing works of zeal. Poor us! What is more active than flies? They do nothing. And the birds that are always flying in the sky, do they sow and reap? We must not imitate them.



Points for reflection:

Perfection reveals itself in simplicity. Here Father Eymard teaches the sisters the greatness of ordinariness. Can you repeat this teaching in your own words?

² This grace was now just beginning, and Father would enter fully into it only in the great retreat of Rome, as revealed in his *fundamental* meditation of January 29, 1865: *How I gave myself to our Lord*.