

The Science of Love¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Monday November 5, 1860

My Sisters, I think you understood clearly what I told you this morning², and you made your meditation on the life of love. These are truths that dazzle us ordinarily when we hear them for the first time. We see their beauty but not their depth. These truths are not new in themselves, because they are as old as God. As they are new for us, we should not get discouraged if we don't understand them at once and don't grasp them fully. God does not enlighten us as he did Saint Paul. Even then he says: *Get up now and go into the city* (cf. Acts 9:6) and sends him to Ananias. We need to expose the truths that I am giving you to the light of the Eucharist, so that his light may help you to understand and receive the spirit of our Lord.

There is a great obstacle to the kingdom of God within us. We don't approach God by grace, but through reasoning. We are attached to virtues that please us. Some people hurt themselves in good faith, unaware that they are pleasing their own nature, not God. Nature holds on to its pleasure, satisfies itself, seeks itself, not humility. It is not up to you to be pleased with our Lord, he must be the one to say: Courage, good and faithful servant.

With regard to the truths presented earlier, they must be received with simplicity, not with intellectual effort. Listen to the words, and ask the Good Lord to help you to understand them with his grace in a spirit of faith, rather than by using your own reasoning, you will then understand better. Act like the Blessed Virgin, who received the words of God in her heart, keeping them, digesting and meditating upon them, (cf. Lk 2:19, 51), as light came by grace. Do not imagine that the great saints and doctors had their own insights; they were receiving great inspiration in prayer at the foot of the crucifix. God was enlightening them, for God is light [1 Jn 1:5] and all light comes from him.

When you go to adoration, bring along a kernel of truth. In God's presence, break it open, take a word, an inspiration from the *Imitation*. Your mind may already know it, but your heart will now learn it. Enlighten your spiritual being rather than your (human) nature. Ask God what he wants you to learn from this truth, from this mystery just as the apostles requested our Lord to explain the parables. (cf. Mk 4:10) They understood the words, but not the meaning. Insights received from God by grace are very deep and life-giving. An insight that doesn't last is like a passing grace of devotion. A truth is always a truth; we alone make it obscure. In itself it is an insight. When the mind has enough and the heart understands, at that moment you will have a grace of light. Persist, for you will never exhaust God's truth.

My poor Daughters, I do wish you were learned. However, choose for yourselves the wisdom of love. You have no need of human sciences, not even the science of religion, proper to theologians. Yet **you ought to possess the science of love even more than we do, for this is your mission.** Yours is a single mission, while ours is divided. God reveals himself to the extent that a person responds. The light he bestows will increase as his love goes on giving itself. Guard yourselves against feelings of diffidence. It is not important that your education was not highly developed. While you may feel hesitant when hearing scientific and technical words, be sure that God reveals himself to those who are simple and pure. If this is your state of soul, God will give you the science of love. No learned doctor ever wrote as eloquently about the working of the Holy Spirit in souls as did St. Theresa, St. Catherine of Sienna and St. Brigitte. God reveals this interior science to simple souls, for this is their special way of life, just like Mary's life at the feet of Jesus. (cf. Lk 10:39)

¹ Number 275. *La science de l'amour*.

² See the reference: The Life of Love, Bk 1 Section A

God requires the sacrifice of our self-love. In order for him to fill you with his supernatural life, he must be the master of your house. When he gives you something, he will place you where he wants. Although he wanted to be poor on earth, it isn't so for the spiritual life. He puts treasures of God's grace in a soul, which becomes his palace, decorating it with all his treasures and merits, not just for himself, but for the Father and the Holy Spirit. If he does not adorn us as he likes, it is because we refuse.

My Sisters, be sure that every soul striving for an interior life has a special gift of prayer. Yes, every soul has a particular gift. God wants to do on the spiritual level what he does in nature. No two flowers or leaves are alike. All souls have a love life, but with subtle differences. God communicates himself through insight, through the mind, through a mystery known only by him. Don't be timid with God, you can tell him that you are ignorant and can't do anything right, God will give you the light and strength you need. If you say, I'm not gifted to teach. – You will teach yourself. – I'm obedient. – Obedience is not light. It will guide you by the hand to the Lord, who is the light that you need. If you don't have an intimate knowledge of our Lord, how will you adore, love, and persevere in his presence? Surely you have what you need. You don't thank our Lord enough.

When a truth is good for you, you must feed on it, and nourish it by actions. God does not want to do everything. He gives, but it is up to you to bear fruit. If you are truly recollected at his feet, Jesus Christ will tell you beautiful things. He will talk to you as he did to the saints; you will hear his gentle voice, as says the *Imitation*; his conversation is so gentle, so good. He will reveal the mystery of love, not with words, but with feelings and grace. Why do you let your mind wonder around the world, dwell on your temptations and faults? My poor Daughters, you are tiring yourselves. What should you have done? Throw out all that baggage. Our Lord knows that you need spiritual bread; and you would receive much more light.

My Sisters, be careful. Do not dwell on yourself. You will never reach perfection by yourself. Avoid turning in on yourself. **Come to the point of an intimate conversation with our Lord** and you will have discovered paradise, because you will never be alone. Having found the recollection of love, day and night, you will be always with him. If we think about him only when in church, that's not enough. Preserve the taste of the good liqueur you received until you return to him for more. We live off our memories, after enjoying a visit, we keep talking about it. We rejoice over what was said, remembering what did us some good. That's what the Blessed Virgin and all the saints did. They lived in the grace of the moment, or in gratitude for the graces of the past.

Moreover, you have to tell me about your insights, you have to share them, something that impressed you. Our Lord gives you some small thing that later can become something great. The role of the spiritual director would be very sad and heavy, if he hears only about sins. This would be like a doctor doing an autopsy on a cadaver. Some don't even dare share their sins. Our ears are always bleeding from what we hear, we have the knowledge of evil.

If you say I can do nothing right, you are ungrateful. Do you have insight at all? Don't imagine that if you tell your graces you will be taken for a saint. Poor Sister, if you had forty times as much, I would have to tell you that you must be very poor for the Good Lord to enrich you this much! Even if you had millions of graces, others have different ones that are not like yours. If you refuse to mention a grace, don't imagine that this is out of humility. You may well become proud of your poverty. When a poor man is praised for a good-looking suit, he will reply that this was a gift of a certain gentleman or lady. One who has a lovely painting will say that it was a gift, with which he adorned his humble dwelling, and the poor man holds on to his rags and poverty.

Since you have received very great graces, put them into practice. If you don't speak about them, today's insight will not be the same as tomorrow's. In the spiritual life one cannot abide in the same grace, for our Lord does not repeat himself. If you don't mention a particular light or grace, you may not have it again. Had you spoken, your director might have advised you as to what to do. It will be unfortunate for you not to speak out. Be faithful, then, and precise, because graces to which one is unfaithful will be lost.

❖ cf. **Contemplative Love**³, November 30, 1860: Book 4 section B

Point for reflection:

Reread this instruction and make a list of its main points. What advice seems the most useful to enrich your life of prayer?

³ Number 283. *L'amour contemplatif*. Cf. book no 4, section B.