

## The Three Degrees of Love (continued)<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament  
Paris, Tuesday, October 26, 1858

Once again, Father chose to talk about the spirit of love.

**My Sisters, it is very important to form the spirit of love in yourselves.** I already explained what it is to have the spirit of a thing and what rules to follow. **An act** of love is an isolated deed with its own reward. An act of holiness, **of virtue**, is more than that, because a **habit is developing in the soul**. When the soul has a dominant virtue, she acts by that virtue and it becomes a habit. A person who is kind on occasion has the virtue of kindness, but virtue implies a battle, a struggle, and a sacrifice. We must not stop at that level; **we must develop the spirit**. This is the reign of love. The soul then takes on the character of love, [it becomes] the life of her life; it becomes her thought, her happiness and her love.

We should not have the spirit<sup>2</sup> of individual virtues, such as humility, obedience, chastity, poverty and charity... Although this has value, we should go further, growing in the spirit, the perfection of our vocation. For the Capuchins, poverty is their spirit, the virtue of their vocation. For the Carthusians, it's silence; for the Benedictines, penance is their dominant virtue, their spirit. They are God's servants, but a spouse is different than strangers. Since your life is found in the Holy Eucharist, the perfect love of our Lord must therefore have its center in love. This love must be your virtue and your spirit. Charity is the perfection of all virtues, because love runs and flies without effort.

### How do we know if we have the spirit?

**First degree: When love reigns**, not only when it is dominant, but when it reigns and brings joy. We have the spirit of love when love becomes our [constant] thought. It is not hard for a child to think about its mother; it sees her in everything. A soul that has a Eucharistic love thinks about the Eucharist. When she seldom thinks about it, she doesn't yet possess the spirit of that love. I know that we are so weak here on earth that we cannot be constantly united to Jesus Christ. Only the Blessed Virgin never lost sight of our Lord; all her thoughts were in him. The saints did this more or less, according to their degree of love. Our Lord was constantly thinking of his heavenly Father, his thoughts were always coming and going to him. Our thoughts are where our love is.

**Second degree: When love is the affection of our heart, habitually present in our actions**, and finally reigning in our soul. When we love somebody passionately, we become one with that person, so to speak. One who loves our Lord will also live in him, since love is one, the heart is one.

**Third degree: The devotedness of love.** When we love, we prove it through commitment, through actions. We act promptly, making sacrifices without cost. Look into yourself. Isn't it always like this, when we love somebody?

### You should have the Eucharistic spirit, your dominant spirit. But how?

**First. – A soul who has the habitual thought of the Eucharist** will make it the ordinary subject of her meditations. It will enlighten and guide her behavior. Everything is found in the Eucharist, every grace and insight; when a Eucharistic person wants to understand anything, she will find it first in the

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<sup>1</sup> Number 86. *Les trois degrés d'amour. Suite.*

<sup>2</sup> From Ravanat: *the spirit*, instead of Raulin: *the thought*

Eucharist, since it is her light. She is unable to understand other mysteries if she cannot consider them in the Eucharist. She feels blocked because it is not her way.

It often happens that there is something we don't understand, a truth that is being taught, because it is not in the Eucharist. Complete it with the Eucharist, and then you will understand; you will assimilate and understand everything. If I meditate upon the birth of Jesus, but limit myself to that, I feel sad. Why? Because something is missing. Bethlehem is past; that mystery no longer exists. But if I consider the poverty of Eucharist, then I understand. One is living in the other, and I give life to that mystery. The same goes for all the mysteries. My heart becomes attached. A person with that spirit of love will find everything in the Eucharist, because her life is only there. Saint Paul said: *The only knowledge I claimed to have is about Jesus, and Jesus crucified* (cf. 1 Cor 2:2). This soul could also say: I want to know only about Jesus, and Jesus in the Eucharist.

People are happy to possess relics of the crown of thorns of our Lord, wood from the cross; but our Lord is no longer there, no longer speaking, no longer on the cross. If I place all this on the mystical Calvary of the Eucharist, then my soul, my mind and my will are attracted in love. The spirit of love will lead you to refer everything to the Holy Eucharist. All other mysteries are temporary, but the Eucharist is the abiding mystery in which we find all the others. The Eucharist is the summary of all marvels. What will then happen? I will have the Eucharistic spirit; my thoughts and my heart will turn continually toward the Eucharist; the presence of our Eucharistic Lord will never leave me. Truly, God is immense and the whole universe is filled with his presence. But a Eucharistic soul prefers to seek him in the tabernacle, where he is sacramentally.

As the eagles gather where the body is, so a Eucharistic soul always thinks spontaneously about the Eucharist. All her joy is there, the only place where she finds rest. It is there that she finds a supernatural understanding, since our Lord is there either as light or as truth. To become learned one must begin with the alphabet, then words, then the names of things, followed by difficult books. We always go from the known to the unknown. So when I come to know Jesus Christ, my mind is open to every other idea; at least it becomes disposed to it because I have the grace for it. That's why, after Holy Communion we often understand things that we did not understand before. That's why some saints who were quite ignorant were able to speak admirably about God. My Sisters, you must put yourselves in the Holy Eucharist as in a center of light.

**Second. – Love must reside in the heart.** General love is worthless; love must be particular. Then it becomes personal, with a unique character. It is impossible to have two particular loves. It is not enough to love our Lord in general, but to love him in the Eucharist. Put aside all other attractions: the Passion, Nazareth, Bethlehem, etc. Your heart must be where your treasure is (cf. Mt 6:21), in the Eucharist. Enter there, if you want all the other mysteries. Do not place the Eucharist in them, but rather place them in the Eucharist. A heart that loves only the Eucharist will think only of the Eucharist, which becomes its entire pleasure and happiness. Such a one is unable to live far from the Eucharist, as a child far from its mother. Then the Eucharist becomes her center, the life of her life. Our Lord becomes the heart of her heart; she loves for and by the Eucharist.

A crystal in sunlight forms another shining sun. A Eucharistic soul is no different. She takes from it her power, her virtue and her grace. When this love reigns, creatures have no more power over her heart – she might experience moments of weakness, but they don't last, – her only desire is for a church, a tabernacle, and a priest.

**When the Eucharistic spirit is joined to commitment, all that relates to the Eucharist gives joy and becomes easy.** We long for the hour of adoration; the heart rejoices and beats faster as the time approaches. When the hour has come, one runs like an angel in the service of the heavenly king; nothing

gets in the way. This is the sovereign, royal and divine action. The desire for Holy Communion brings even greater happiness; and the soul longs and sighs for that moment with all the strength of the heart. This is always expressed by a certain devotedness, because love always has the upper hand. Therefore, direct all your activities towards the Eucharist – your chores, cooking, cleaning, etc. All form part of the service of our Lord, to be done with dedication.

Anyone who has the joy of living this Eucharistic spirit can say with Saint Paul: ***Who will separate me from the love of Jesus Christ?*** (cf. Rm 8:35) She can no longer enjoy other pleasures, and is no longer attached to earthly things. She seeks to become more spiritual. She may have temptations, even fall, but inner remorse follows immediately, and she will not stay in that state for very long, because her life is Jesus Christ. She lives only for the Eucharist while she may desire heaven, a Eucharistic person has a greater desire to be in union with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist than for the glory of heaven. The Eucharist is paradise begun, this is where she finds her delight and her peace. Become Eucharistic, and ask our Lord for this spirit, he will give it to you.



**Point for reflection:**

This systematic presentation for growth in the spirit of love through our Eucharistic vocation enables us to perceive where we are on the spiritual journey.

*“We want to be one with that same spirit of love  
which impelled Jesus to give himself as food...”*

Rule of Life # 2, par. 2