

Three Kinds of Recollection: Through Conscience, Through Grace, and Through Jesus Christ¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Tuesday, May 8, 1860

My Sisters, there are three kinds of recollection.

The first recollection, if I dare say it, is the most imperfect: it is recollection through conscience. Let me explain. Our conscience is like the mirror of God in us. Conscience discloses to us the law of God, tells us what is right and what is wrong. God inspires us through our conscience, giving us a sense of the holiness and truth of God, such that recollection is needed to know one's duty. Then the law is within. This recollection is the first step. Evidently, most sins are external because we don't consult our conscience and the will of God, because our conscience is the law of our actions. I will not spend much time on this first recollection; I have spoken so often to you about it – and you have it.

There's another one: recollection through the grace of God. This is more perfect than recollection through our conscience. The Blessed Virgin and the saints did this by choosing a thought and feeding on it. You must use passing grace, especially when it's some particular grace of God, like a grace of attraction. This recollection is more perfect and more beneficial: the first regards the law, while the second is in the law. I can say that this is the ordinary recollection of devout persons. God comes to us through a particular grace and motivation. The second recollection presumes the first: to savor it, you must situate yourself within this grace.

A recollected person does not allow graces to slip by without profiting from them. What must you do? My good Sisters, act like the beggar who looks at the hand [of the giver] in order to receive. Receive cordially the messengers sent from heaven, like inspirations. Welcome them when they come; inquire from them any news from heaven – be attentive to the grace of the moment. Once a grace is finished, go to another. Do not try to retain the envoys from heaven for too long a time. At the incarnation, the Blessed Virgin says not a word to delay the messenger from God: anyone else might have said: Stay a while, Archangel. No; the incarnation had been announced, and the mission was ended. It was the same when people tried to retain our Lord, he did not stop, but said: ***I have other towns to evangelize*** (cf. Lk 4:43) – this was a passing grace, and he had to go elsewhere.

There's another still greater recollection. This one places you, not in the rays of the sun, but in the sun itself. You are not in the Blessed Virgin, nor in the saints, but **in Jesus Christ**. This is more perfect than the first two: those were an act of virtue; this one is a center of life. Jesus Christ is a dwelling, as he says: *Whoever eats my flesh remains in me* (cf. Jn 6:56). Our Lord never told us to dwell in humility, in poverty; he told us to practice these, but not to remain in them. We never dwell in a saint, nor in the Blessed Virgin, although a child lives in its mother. Jesus said to his apostles: ***Remain in my love*** (Jn 15:9) – that love is Jesus Christ; when we live with someone, it's forever. You must aim for this recollection of love in our Lord, and be recollected in him. The other two are only introductions to this one: the first indicates the road, the second opens the door. Jesus Christ is the home, the Cenacle of love.

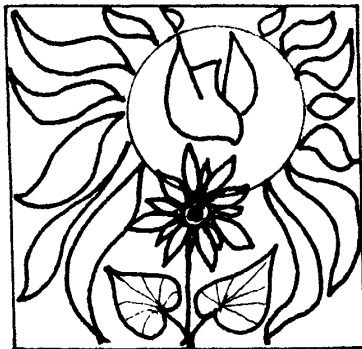
¹ Number 215. *Trois sortes de recueillement: dans la conscience, dans la grâce, dans Jésus Christ.*

My good Sisters, how happy you will be! A servant is with her master, a child is with her mother, a spouse is with her husband. Since Jesus Christ is your spouse, why should you not be with him? You are not there if your spirit is not there; if your heart is not completely there. The mind thinks, the heart loves, and the senses are sanctified there: Remain in me, in my love. How? By recollection. **What is recollection?** To gather yourself and throw yourself into our Lord; gather up the leaves; gather your senses, your faculties. To live with someone means to work there; let each faculty do its work. The mind must think, the heart must love, the body must be sanctified and mortified, and each member must act according to its state.

What is this recollection of love? In a grace, there is a recollection which requires effort – you cannot remain there, since it is not a state. It is a recollection through faith; you cannot remain in a virtue. To be in our Lord is something else: *Remain in my love — Manete in dilectione* (Jn 15:9) – that’s different; it’s a dwelling of love. One does not get tired doing nothing, listening at his feet (cf. Lk 10:39). We receive the heat of the sun, and while resting we still receive, providing we are in contact with it. There’s a price to pay: you must free yourself from the world. If you are too concerned about spider webs, you must free yourselves of those things, my poor Daughters; where are you going? Some always want to hold on to a grace. They had a good thought, and they want to return to it. But I say: Move on quickly, what do you want to do, stay with the doorman? That’s laziness. I had a good feeling, and, later, I may not have one so nice. One angel is finished – go to another; do not stop – you must reach our Lord, and not delay on other things. There are some who give themselves to our Lord only when they are about to die.

Every social invitation receives a quarter of an hour of courtesy to offer greetings to the master of the house. So if we are on our way to heaven but must first there must be a “quarter of an hour” of courtesy to the Blessed Sacrament. Go to our Lord, that’s all he wants: *Come to me, and I will give you rest* (cf. Mt 11:28). Some go as though in passing, afraid. Some people, when they enter an unfamiliar place, are afraid. They look around, take one step forward, another backward. They are afraid to move into the heart of our Lord, to find too much truth and graces. He might ask too much from them; they are afraid to do too much. Alas! Do you know what we do to a child? He puts one foot in, and one foot out; one hand in, and one hand out – what do we do: we push the door and he is locked in; we talk to him, and he ends up enjoying himself. My God, shut the door, and we will have to be virtuous, without doubt.

Some people cannot swim, afraid of the water. When they hesitate, someone pushes them. Sensing the danger, they spring into action. And so, little birds flap their wings, and their mother pushes them; God gives her that instinct. She feeds them, moving away so that they come to her, and they begin to fly. Once they learn to fly, they no longer want to remain in the nest. **We must lose ourselves in God; just shut the door, so as not to step back.**



Points for reflection:

What difference is there between the recollection of conscience, of grace, and of love? Compose a short definition of recollection.