

To Recollect Oneself in the Goodness of Our Lord¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Tuesday, May 29, 1860

[...]

My Sisters, you have asked for the Holy Spirit; I hope you received it. Unfortunately, we lose something every day, like a cracked vase that does not retain the water poured into it, but must be refilled all the time. You must ask for the grace of fidelity to your vocation and perseverance, because perseverance is salvation assured.

Now, my Sisters, be recollected; develop the habit of recollection, of living in our Lord, as I told you, because as long as you have not done this, you will be useless. You will not enter into God, into his love; you will be affected by all the vicissitudes of the times. You will not be at peace, but on a troubled sea agitated by stormy winds. If you remain with our Lord, if you sit at his feet (cf. Lk 10:39), you will understand the depths of his truth, become instructed in his truth and love, and you will have the patience to listen to him.

Many bring a message to our Lord and then go away; many act like Pilate who questioned our Lord without waiting for the answer (cf. Jn 18:38); many question our Lord and then, for fear of hearing his truth too well, go away. You must not act like that: it is very crude, and even worse, it's ugly. You should listen to his answer to the very end: he will repeat it once, twice, and the third time will be more enlightening than the first. You will be better disposed. May your recollection be in our Lord, may it be a dwelling, as he said: *Whoever eats me remains in me, and I in him* (cf. Jn 6:56). That is everything. It is only right that he command, since he is the master. He is the God of the heart, as he will be its reward

What is essential is to nourish this recollection in Jesus Christ. We often stay for a while; but to remain is difficult. You are not doing it, and neither am I. We don't know how to converse with our Lord; we don't know how to listen to him, to contemplate his truth. We are not nourishing ourselves on that truth, and we are not digesting it. We are like the beggar who receives the bread of alms, puts it in his bag, and does not eat it.

How to nourish recollection? There are two ways: maintaining oneself in a grace of attraction. You have an attraction: then feed your recollection with your grace of attraction. That recollection is gentle and not difficult. It is already yours as a gentle attraction; you simply have to put it into practice. That's the main point if you want to remain in our Lord and remain there with delight. What is that attraction? There is an attraction of means, when you remain in a virtue, without understanding anything: take it as nourishment. There is the grace of the moment, or sacrifice, or adoration, or love: use it. Do not entrust your recollection to the attraction of a passing grace, but include this attraction of grace in your recollection. To remain in our Lord, it is important to be in a state of gentleness and peace, which you will experience more easily through a grace that fills you. But, you might say, I have no grace of attraction; my soul has no thoughts, no feelings, nothing – like the prophet says, it is *lifeless, like dried clay* (cf. Ps 62:2).

¹ Number 218. *Se recueillir dans la bonté de notre Seigneur.*

What must we do to nourish our recollection? Even without an attraction of grace, we always have Jesus Christ with his goodness and love which makes him so attractive, and which draws us to him with pleasure. You reflect on his goodness and love; you are happy; your mind is attracted to a beautiful scene, and your imagination finds it very striking, you like to go there. This dwelling is very pleasant because you make it very appealing – but that’s exactly what we fail to do.

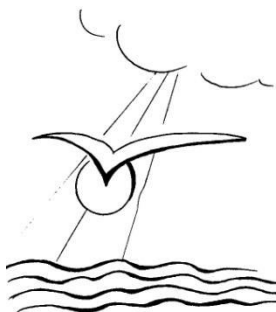
[...] We might ask: How can I be recollected for such a long time? If you chain yourself, it becomes a prison; but if you act with grace, it will be a paradise. May God grant you the grace to enter in!

God is also goodness. The perfection of love is union. Union is the end of love; the motive that unites us is goodness. Holiness is the way; goodness is the last link in the chain, and, if I dare say, it is Jesus Christ himself. As long as a soul does not enter into this goodness, it is poor, it suffers, and is not in its fullness. Place yourselves firmly in this fullness of our Lord – his love leads to his goodness. Jesus loves us; his love is the expression of his goodness; then comes the gift.

Notice what the Scriptures say through the prophet when God calls someone to himself: ***Taste and see how good the Lord is*** (Ps 33:9). When we eat something sweet, we taste its goodness. The prophet does not say: See how great he is, but taste how good he is, since goodness is attractive. Our Lord himself says: ***Come to me, and you will find rest, and I will console you. Do not be afraid of my yoke, it is easy and light – come to me*** (cf. Mt 11:28-30). We don’t merely visit and leave; we come to stay. This is very clear from our Lord’s words to his Apostles: ***Remain in my love*** (Jn 15:9). The Latin word is “dilectio” which is more than love; it is more tender. And he said this after the apostles had received Communion; he was already in them, but they had to place themselves in him. Let us leave the world of sin; let us go beyond means that are not a center, but only a path; let us walk towards our Lord; especially you who have the joy of being his daughters, of being his servants.

My poor Daughters, as long as you are not in our Lord, you will be like sheep without a shepherd (cf. Jdt 11:19). As long as you will not have learned to become recollected, you will not enter into him; he will remain veiled from your sight (cf. 2 Cor 3:16). In order to see, you must focus, or become recollected. The Eucharist is a cloud: if you are not attentive when it opens up, you will not see. Listen to the prophet: ***My voice is soft and light; if you are not listening, you will not hear it*** (cf. Ps 44:11). Happy the one who listens. It is better to listen than to speak, better to look at Jesus and listen to him, to remain in union with him, rather than stay far away. ***Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom*** (cf. Lk 12:32). You were given a place of honor; remain there. Don’t reach out for extravagant things in the Church: set aside all the means that are outside your vocation. All that is worth nothing for you: there is a time for walking, and another time for resting: there is a time to be Martha, and another to be Mary, living in Jesus (cf. Eccl 3:1).

The Holy Spirit is happy when it finds someone on whom to pour out gifts. There are still a few in communities, in the countryside; but that’s all. When the Holy Spirit finds one, since it has nothing to do, it lavishes everything on this one. You must enrich yourselves, or rather, receive this wealth carefully. This is enough to find yourself in an ocean of love, in an ocean of the most precious graces.



Points for reflection:

Take note of the biblical texts in this instruction. Notice the graphic reference to Eucharist, the concept of God that is presented, the concept of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit. What is the main point of this instruction?

