

Works of Zeal¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Tuesday, November 26, 1861

I recommend to your prayers the baptism of a Jewish lady that will take place on Thursday at eight o'clock. She is well prepared. Since we cannot prepare her by means of confession; we prepare her only with the Word of God. She cannot receive absolution, since she is not baptized, and since baptism takes away all sins. It seems that she really loves our Lord Jesus Christ and understands him a little. She has to make many big sacrifices.

To win for our Lord a soul who serves and loves him – that must be the main ambition of a religious sister, especially of a Servant of the Most Blessed Sacrament. When we love someone, we pursue his glory and reason out in this way: If I do not love, there are hearts who do love you; if I do not love you sufficiently, I can have others love you more than I do. That is the consolation of a priest in preparing a pure soul – they say there is no greater consolation than to give to our Lord a pure heart. Do this, my Sisters.

There is another poor woman, the mother of a family, who never made her First Communion. What suffering! When someone has not had the joy of making First Communion, the devil takes advantage of that person! It's one disaster after the other, one misfortune after the other. If only there were more priests! We need great patience and great charity; at that age, it is difficult to study. How many souls we could save, especially here!

In Paris, you have no idea how many people are on the wrong road: it's frightening. We go to China, looking for children to baptize; we go everywhere, and **we have a belt of paganism all around us!** In Paris there are some people who are so unrefined and uneducated that we set them aside, we abandon people like that. The first reason is that there are not enough priests; the second is that we dare not visit them. Why not? There is so much poverty that we cannot go there without extending spiritual and material charity. Can a person who is hungry listen to you? Oftentimes, priests cannot give anything, so they don't want to go. Money limits their zeal. Yet, I think that if we trusted in the Good Lord, giving whatever we can, the Good Lord would do the rest.

I make this judgment based on these poor children that we have: fire attracts fire; a link in a chain is joined to another – these children go where we cannot go. Your heart bleeds to see so many people who never heard of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's frightening: we count them by the thousands and the hundreds of thousands. These people get used to doing wrong, to living in misery. These poor people have so much suffering that they become like animals! I tell myself: When numerous enough, we will already have found our mission. The Blessed Sacrament Congregation is the highest religious order, the highest of all: it must have the most beautiful mission, namely, everything that is most wretched, most vicious, everything. What more do you want: when you talk of rag-pickers you cannot go any lower. We have many rag-pickers at this time. These children put us in contact with their parents.

It is a beautiful mission: it reminds us of the second invitation of our Lord for the Eucharist. The first was for the Pharisees, for the important people, for all who were virtuous: but they were more interested in their business than in the banquet of the king's Son. When they went to a marriage feast,

¹ Number 381. *Les œuvres de zèle.*

they were expected to bring a gift, and they did not want to do it. What does the king say? *All right then! Go into the main streets, into the public squares; bring in the one-eyed, the blind, the lame, and all you can find.* The servants did this, and returned saying: *Master, there is still room. – Bring in the wretched, and make them come in* (cf. Mt 22:1-10). The Eucharist began in that way. The rich will never lack spiritual assistance; it is in the nature of things – the pastoral clergy need them for their works, their alms: that is their mission. There are certain religious orders that have much learning, traditions, and members who are attached to the nobility. These groups are at that level: they have their priests and all that they need. We cannot say that they are not going to the poor, but that is their mission.

From the first day, we had the First Communion of the poor. What happened at the beginning is probably our mission, and therefore we have power over these poor ones. A person with a mission has such an important goal, such a powerful force that no one can stop him. It is like the prophets sent by God. We feel that we have a mission for these people; we should be very proud, and very happy; the rich will come later – they don't need us.

You can see now, my good Sisters, that if we had chosen, we would not have come here; we would have looked elsewhere. Naturally, we would not have chosen this part of the city; we went looking in better-populated areas: in St.-Germain and Roule, in order to have adorers. But nothing came of it – we found absolutely nothing. After looking in vain, the secretariat of the archbishopric offered us this house, telling us we had to decide within twenty-four hours.

There is no area like this Gate of St.-Jacques, and going down to the White Gate – but especially this Gate of St.-Jacques. We are contented here: we are radiating from here. We don't need to indulge in small talk these people: with a few words our point is made. With the rich, you must proceed gradually – with formulas of politeness. That is our power; how good is the Good Lord! Now, what makes me happy is that the rich are also coming. For example, this Jewish lady, then on Monday I had the baptism of a protestant woman, not in our chapel; but we instructed her. Sunday afternoon, I will marry a poor couple. And there are others; I cannot mention them all, the Good Lord knows.

Personally, do you know what I am asking the Good Lord? **I would like to become popular among the beggars** – my name is beginning to be known among all these very poor. When I meet one of them, **before giving him anything, I have the habit of asking: Are you saying your prayers?** And I give him a sermon. The other day, a poor girl came with two or three of her little brothers: the young girl was about twenty years old, and immediately I gave her a sermon. I tell these people: How long have you been in Paris? How many years since you went to confession? Ten years; twenty years. You must go to confession. – I don't know any priests. – I will hear your confession, for free. One poor woman told me: If you can find a place [in school or work] for my fourteen-year-old daughter, I will be converted right away. The Good Lord gave me the grace to find a refuge for the girl, and I told her: I placed your daughter. I gave her my word, and she came and made a very good confession.

In general, I don't need devout men and women. When they want to come to the Blessed Sacrament, that is fine with me; when they don't want to come, let them go elsewhere. **I don't go to the rich, because it takes too much time.** Unfortunately my crosses² have made me known: people come from north to south, from east to west; I am too well known. The Good Lord has not yet found the secret to make me known among the poor. At every minute, these little ones are coming: they feel very much at home. We must encourage this feeling; I said: These are the poor. As I was telling Monsignor, the one who died³, **I don't want to limit myself to Paris: I want to set fire to the four corners of the world.** When more numerous we will take Paris by its four corners. We will rent a room: we can't expect these children to

² Probably an allusion to a personal authorization for Father to place an indulgence on crosses.

³ Mgr Marie-Dominique Sibour. Cf. note in instruction 102. *Du purgatoire (On purgatory)*.

come from leagues away. This will happen; I hope so – the Good Lord will be more pleased. I hope that pride will not enter into this – it can enter even in rags.

Secondly, there are the retreats for priests. Some are coming already. There is a deacon who will be ordained on Saturday; he is preparing himself well. **I spoke to him as much as I could about the Blessed Sacrament;** I tell him all our little secrets. Why not? He will be on fire; he will burn [with zeal] – he will share everything when he gets home. Others don't speak about the Blessed Sacrament as we do; they don't speak as well as we do – it is our gift; it is our grace. The more we stay before the Good Lord, the better we know him. When others have devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, they will light a fire like us.