

Adoration in Spirit and in Truth¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Tuesday, May 13, 1862

The last time we met, I spoke to you about the three kinds of adoration, but I had no time to finish the last one. I will finish today.

Our Lord said: *The heavenly Father seeks adorers who will worship him in spirit and in truth* (cf. Jn 4:23). Therefore, there are adorers in spirit, spiritual adorers, who adore him in truth. What does that mean? These are the ones who adore him perfectly well, adorers who are no longer attached to the earth, but who adore like the angels in spirit. These are the only adorers that the heavenly Father loves, searches for, and desires.

[...]

But, can we reach that point? **The very purpose of the Eucharist** is to disengage us from perceptible forms. The law of the commandments is different: *You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with your entire mind* (cf. Mt 22:37), and the rest. Our Lord does not speak this way about adoration. One must be totally spiritual to reach him, since our Lord is in a truly spiritual although substantial state. You see nothing, touch nothing, like the soul in the body. In order to be in contact with him, you must become spiritual like him. That is why he did not surround himself with any visible form. The sacred species reveal nothing palpable or tangible; a cloud does not represent the sun: the sacred species are the cloud that surrounds our Lord, his clothing, if you prefer. They are not his picture. Why does our Lord do this? So that we might adore him in spirit and in truth, for himself, not for external forms.

Does that mean that we should not help ourselves with our senses, and with our mind? Yes, we must use them. When God gives us wings we must fly; without wings, we drag ourselves, or allow ourselves to be carried. Grace begins with our weaknesses and tries constantly to spiritualize us, so that we can reach the Lord. Birds seem heavy when they walk on earth; as they rise in the air they become light. The atmosphere close to the earth is less pure; the higher we go, the purer the air. When the soul frees itself from the earth, it rises spiritually. As I told you: it is the nature of adoration to go always in that direction. For example, iron is black, not flexible. The longer it stays in the furnace, the more flexible and red it becomes. It seems to be on fire. As the soul gets closer to our Lord, it will see him more clearly. It is totally permeated by this sun.

My good Daughters, develop the habit of freeing yourselves from your senses, begin with the principle of faith, pure faith – if the imagination comes in, do not start with that and you will reach our Lord. Every time you experienced recollection, it was the Good Lord who came to find you. All your thoughts focused on him; your heart had so much to say, and the time passed so quickly. Why? Because you were within the grace of our Lord. Your thoughts were completely holy; you were not thinking about yourself. If you had done so, you would have extinguished the flame that was rising to God, by folding it back on yourself, and choking it. One of the characteristics of grace is to lead us towards our Lord. As we leave that grace, we may be tempted, or find that God has closed off the secret of that grace and of his love. [...]

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The Blessed Virgin approached our Lord, through this spirit of love and truth. External forms and figures meant nothing to her. She did not need to pass through them, since she was so united to our Lord by all her thoughts and affections. She needed only to breathe, so to speak, in order to go towards our Lord. She poured herself into him, because God attracts, like a magnet that strongly and gently draws a magnetized needle.

We don't know how to maintain this act of recollection. The imagination cries out, and the heart loses courage. We don't know how to adore the Lord for himself, how to persevere, that's a great problem. If we knew how to remain in our Lord, his light would have time to enlighten us and we would experience his love. As soon as we enter this state, we come out, thinking that we are very rich. We are like a child who is given an apple or a flower; he thinks that he is very rich with his apple, his flower, and he goes and plays. We do the same thing: at the least experience of tenderness, or the least word, we become so happy that we lose sight of his heart; we want to enjoy it. This is unfortunate. The Blessed Virgin's soul was always open towards our Lord; not herself. True love forgets itself, in order to be in the beloved.

While we are giving our attention to our Lord, an exchange occurs. He knows better than we what we need. We have no desire to focus on ourselves. We say: Do angels ask anything for themselves? Do great souls ask something for themselves? The Lord knows what we need. I don't say that we must never ask; but in recollection when the soul is attracted, let's not become selfish, or this grace might leave us. We don't know how to remain with God. As soon as our imagination and our mind are troubled, there's nothing we can do; the heart enters in and makes noise. If we pay attention to what is in us, we leave paradise; in an instant we dry up the spring of living water.

Notice what our Lord says: *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him* (cf. Jn 6:56). You can see that we are working in him. The glory belongs to him. A master is everything in his house: the servants work for him. Children work for the Good Lord. Our Lord abides in us – he does not go away. Someone has to abide in us, to take command – otherwise what would happen? We should remain in him. If our imagination starts working, drawing us away, then we don't remain in him. But if we remain, an exchange takes place. Our Lord says: I will sanctify that bothersome imagination, that old Adam – just give me your heart, and I will replace it. This is the meaning of the words: *Whoever eats me remains in me, and I in him* – the indwelling is done out of love and not out of force. We must really ask our Lord to remain in him.

If you examine our Society for its exterior means, there are not many. Our regular life is the same as all communities. We may even have fewer rules, perhaps less silence and solitude. If you examine it for its virtues, the same is true. This is not a garden of virtues – so, you cannot become perfect with us by means of a virtue.

If someone said that a Servant of the Blessed Sacrament was humble, this is like stealing a crown from the Lord. How gentle, how obedient she is! Such words about a Servant of the Blessed Sacrament would be humiliating and degrading. Why? This is giving too much attention to the person rather than to the Lord. Such a one should be sent away, as a stranger. Virtues are means; but not for self-glory. Is it right to exalt an individual, saying: She is very humble, very loveable, and very gentle; see how perfect she is! In the presence of our Lord, how can you pay attention even to the most perfect virtue?

[...]

The source of beauty is the light of the sun. Therefore, it is impossible to have the beauty of virtues in self-love. We need virtues, like we need to eat, to dress up when we go outside. We need virtues, but our wealth comes from the spirit of the Blessed Sacrament. Here no one is richer than we are.

We are entirely adorers of the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament is the end and the means; all our virtues and our means are in the Blessed Sacrament. Our end and our means are in the Blessed Sacrament. A religious is good only insofar as she is in the Blessed Sacrament. If she is not, she is a stumbling block along the way. All your merit and value flow from the most Blessed Sacrament. Gold has value only in the furnace. If the life of the Blessed Sacrament is great within you, you are a good religious. If it is small, you are a frail religious. That's the point. The work of the soul is known to God who sees and weighs it.

Try to become spiritual. Go to the Good Lord in the spirit of his love. This is easier said than done. If this could be learned, I would teach you, but I don't know how. If someone asked me: Tell us what we must do to go to God spiritually, I admit that I would be hard pressed to answer. However, I would give you a simple comparison: Find me a way to go from the earth to live in a star, to the moon, or to the sun. You would tell me: We need wings.

I will give you a means to go to our Lord: **take the wings of love**, like the dove in the desert (cf. Ps 54:7), which flies, never remaining on earth. Climb; the Good Lord has given you wings. Love does not move without wings. Fly with a single leap, going from the earth towards our Lord. Take note that St. John is represented as an eagle in rapid flight (cf. Ez 1:10; Rv 4:7). The swiftness of a spiritual soul is compared to that of an eagle that flies swiftly through the clouds and is not afraid of lightning, or to that of a dove that cannot land on anything impure. Have the simplicity of the dove, or the power of the eagle – that is the way. If you proceed with merely small steps you will not succeed.



Points for reflection:

This instruction completes the preceding one on the kinds of adoration. Take note of the biblical texts. What link does he make between the Eucharist and the spiritual journey? Notice his definitions of faith, love, and truth. Notice his practical explanations on prayer to help us extend the experience of “abiding in God”. Jot down your own reflections in writing after reading this text. Notice the references to the activity of the heart, of the imagination, the mind, and the will in relation to the virtues.

What means does he offer to go to our Lord?