

Death For Life¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Sunday, September 19, 1858²

[...]

How blessed you are, my Sisters, to have been called to this Eucharistic vocation! In order to arrive at the perfection of your vocation, you must become convinced and motivated by three major points.

The first is suffering. [...] Every Christian must suffer to gain salvation. Since it is an obligation for all Christians, all the more reason for you who came, not for your salvation, but to adore and follow our Lord in the Eucharist. [...] The devil will tempt you in a thousand ways; your soul will seem abandoned by God, but don't get discouraged. Our Lord is near at hand to help you. Suffer with peace and joy; suffering is the proof of your love. Whoever loves is not afraid of suffering.

My Sisters, that is not enough. Suffering is the condition for anyone who wants to be saved; but as you seek the perfection of love, you must go further. You must immolate yourself to the glory of Jesus Hostia, immolate your mind, your will, your heart, and your health, in fact, the whole of yourself unconditionally, and every day. To immolate yourself is to offer yourself in sacrifice to our Lord.

Your heart must be immolated in its affections. Our Lord is jealous of your heart; he wants it entirely, without any sharing. You cannot³ stay in the middle [...]: allow everything that is distorted in you to be cut, trimmed, or taken away. The stones that were used to build this house had to be cut and polished. Gold must pass through the fire for purification. Likewise, my Sisters, you must allow yourselves to be cut, polished, and to pass through fire in order to reach the perfection of your vocation.

You will be tested on all sides by everyone. Never mind. Rejoice that they are helping you to be purified so as to make you worthy of our Lord. Do not reject the hand that is trimming you and removing the stains that are covering you, so that you can be presented pure and white to the heavenly king. Accept the suffering of love and you will reach the love of suffering, as St. Paul said: *I rejoice in my weaknesses* (2 Cor 12:10). But to arrive at the perfection of love, you must pass through all kinds of tests, even through death.

The Eucharist is a sacrament of death. All the other sacraments give life: baptism, confirmation, penance, extreme-unction, and marriage – only the Eucharist is the sacrament of death. When our Lord instituted it, he told his apostles: ***This is my body that is given us for you; my blood that is poured out for you; whenever you do these things, do them in memory of me*** – namely, in memory of my death: words that proclaim his immolation and the actuality of death. St. Paul says: ***As often as you do this, you proclaim***

¹ Number 73. *Fête de Notre-Dame de la Salette et de Notre-Dame des Sept Douleur (Feast of Our Lady of La Salette and of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows).*

² The 10th according to Raulin, but it's the 19th, as we find in Ravanat. Just as Father had come to bless the oratory on the feast of the Precious Blood on a Sunday, he also came to bless the chapel on the feast of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, reported to have taken place on Sunday.

³ From Ravanat: *pouvez. (you cannot be)*

the death of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 11:26). You must then immolate yourselves and suffer, so as to enter into the spirit of your Eucharistic vocation.

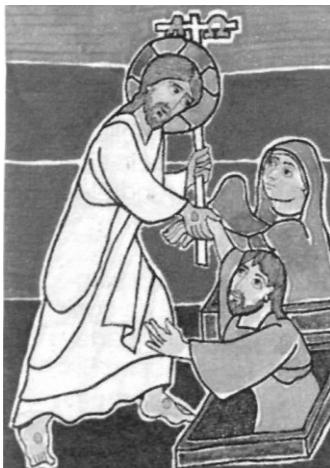
Dying is not sufficient; Jesus Christ needs to live in us, or rather we must live in Jesus Christ; according to these words of St. Paul: *You have died, and your life is hidden in Jesus Christ* (cf. Col 3:3). Ah! My Sisters! Live truly from the hidden life of our Lord in the Eucharist. You must clothe yourselves with the sacramental species, be without fame, imperfect externally, in order to live the hidden life of our Lord. You are better off than we men are, because we are obliged to spread this divine fire to the outer world, while [...] your hidden life leads you to greater recollection.

Rejoice then, my poor Daughters, in the treasure you possess. If you were known, how many would want to share your happiness! If the saints in heaven could still desire something, they would come down to earth, in order to be united with you. In this world, you cannot hope for a greater, more sublime, and more perfect state. Not only should you be angels, but even seraphs of love.

My good Daughters, be courageous. I believe and hope that you are the ones chosen by our Lord to be the first in this newly born foundation – therefore, you are called to suffer much. All of you are founders, to be likened to mothers of many spiritual children. Live carefully according to the rule, realizing that each of your actions will be repeated till the end of the world by your sisters who will imitate you. Be vigilant; if you happen to commit some mistake that could have consequences on the community, repair this failure immediately by humility, penance, and contrition, so that it will not take root in the house.

You will harvest what you sow: if you make an act of virtue, if you are faithful to the rule, if you communicate to your sisters this spirit of love and sacrifice that should animate you for the Holy Eucharist, then everything that you do will be repeated until the end of the world. [...]

You still have much to do, as I tell everyone: you have done nothing yet. Your crown is not ready yet. If you happen to die you will have one regret – that you did not take advantage of so many graces that our Lord showers on you, and that you did not want to make your purgatory so easily (on earth) – all the while living hidden and unknown in the world. **You must be the clothing of our Lord, and our Lord must live in you**, so that at your death you may enter heaven, since our Lord will enter with you. The first foundresses are usually saints. Have courage; you will become saints if you are faithful to your vocation. You must lower yourself, so as to exalt our Lord. The more you die, the more you will live in our Lord. [...]



Points for reflection:

The Paschal Mystery of Jesus becomes the means and model of the journey of an authentic spiritual life. Death for Life is a fundamental theme of every day. What fears does this evoke in you? Notice the biblical texts, the references to the Eucharist, and make them the subject of your adoration for a while.