

Direction and Vocation¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Thursday, August 2, 1860

[...].

My Sisters, in the service of God we need a grace of consolation, in order to find strength in times of trial. Some people always want to proceed through the cross. That's presumption and they will fail. Others want to force themselves: that's fine providing the Good Lord is the one carrying them. When they refuse consolations, that's self-love. **There should always be a mixture of consolations and desolations.** In any event, we must remain at peace, because the Good Lord knows what is best for us.

Along with many others, I noticed that we cannot force our way to God – we need to be gentle. Jesus Christ did not attract us through sacrifice, but through love: *Come to me, my yoke is easy and my burden light. Take it, and you will find rest for yourselves* (cf. Mt 11:28-29). *Peter, do you love me?* (Jn 21:15) Jesus Christ calls everyone by means of his kindness; that's the way he catches us. Anyone who tries to grasp God through strength will be met with violence. God responds only to gentleness. Only with gentleness can we go to God. And so, my Sisters, since the Good Lord attracts us only through love, we must approach him in the same way. The Good Lord loves us.

The devil is shrewd in leading us astray. He wants us to lose confidence in the goodness and mercy of God. We must live in God as a child lives in its mother, seeing only his goodness. The devil wants us to embrace sacrifice, in a violent way. This is why so few persons remain faithful. They try hard at the beginning, but make no progress. They want to get rid of their sufferings right away, so that the Good Lord will place them in a center of happiness. But, that's not the way.

I would like to show you how much the Good Lord has shown his love for you by putting you at his service out of love. You love the Good Lord, no doubt about that; and he loves you – his very nature is goodness. If I said his love is perpetual, you might not believe me. Do you want to see how much he loves you? He loved you by calling you, and he loved you very much. As a proof of this, look at how your vocation came to you. To form the spouse of a king, many things are needed, much preparation, many qualities, an entire life. That's what happened in the long search for a spouse for Ahasuerus. Many months were needed, before the choice fell on Esther (Est 2:1-18).

To fulfill your vocation, you need a perfect grace; there is no intermediary between Jesus Christ and you. Many preparations were needed to bring you here! The devil, seeing something great, was watching from the sidelines. He has a lot of experience. When he sees God endowing someone with so many graces, he knows that the Good Lord has special plans for her. Concerning the Blessed Virgin, the devil could not know her destiny, but he saw something very great and knew that God was preparing her for great glory.

The love of God has forgiven your faults with so much kindness. Recall your sins and see how he has forgiven you, as a man would his child or his spouse – without bitterness or blame, but wholeheartedly lifting you up and crowning you once again in his mercy. The life of many Christians leads to conversion in preparation for death. At that time conversion occurs and God saves them. But you were pardoned with a pardon that was as quick as it was loving. Notice also that you were never humiliated; you

¹ Number 237. *Amour de Dieu dans notre vocation. Direction et vocation. [The love of God in our vocation. Direction and vocation]*

remained at the feet of our Lord. So many others fell into the abyss. Didn't God love them? He did, as much as you; but they were negligent and fell to the bottom of the pit. It is not your own strength that makes you loyal. God used all the power of his love.

How did his love preserve you? God's goodness shines forth especially here. To reach this point, many things were needed. [...] It was no small thing that you should come there when we began. Many people were not free to come but you were free. God worked a long time. There is freedom in this state of life. As soon as a situation becomes a state, it becomes a chain. There was the freedom of condition, the freedom of virtue – everything opened the way for you: and the proof of that is that you are here. I will explain myself more clearly.

[...].

There is a slavish piety that does not allow for any growth; we might say it is the piety of a child, of practices, the piety of a slave. There are some priests and directors who say: You cannot go any further. Those who belong to certain Third-Orders are good and I respect them. - Truly some souls are followers, not independent enough to stand up by themselves. I see some Tertiaries whose Third Order becomes their prison, their network, beyond which they dare not go. They will work out their salvation in this little system like beggars. Such souls don't enjoy the freedom of the love of God. I will never accept in the Society of the Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament a slavish tertiary of the Third-Orders of St. Francis, St. Dominic, or Mt. Carmel. Never. I need royal persons, not mercenaries. I don't want to dishonor our Lord, by making him rank after a saint. Shall I put the Blessed Sacrament last, and a Third-Order first! I will set aside the saint and the servant for (to focus on) the king.

My Sisters, when the Good Lord called you, he set you free. You realize that everything else was only a preparation. The children who were in the furnace had been in formation for a long time with the governor to learn the language and customs of the country to prepare them to come before the king (Dn 1). You don't see the implications of these things, but I can see them. Many Tertiaries don't have this sense of freedom, it's not predominant in their lives. Really, some people are born to be slaves, to serve: they don't have the qualities needed to climb higher. Do not accept them.

Notice, my Sisters, what our Lord said: *Where the body is, there also the eagles will gather* (cf. Lk 17:37). You know that this body represents the Blessed Sacrament, and the eagles are souls. Our Lord does not speak of people walking, or of certain birds that fly close to the earth, but of eagles that fly above the polluted atmosphere, near the sun. These are souls that want only one thing: Jesus Christ. We must be eagles.

Some are not virtuous enough to rise to Jesus Christ; they stop at some saint. When God speaks, they don't hear him. He has to speak through this saint: *Let God not speak to us; let him speak through Moses!* (cf. Ex 20:19) Some say: Let the Blessed Virgin, the saints, or your ministers speak to me, Lord, but not you. I'm afraid.

My Sisters, there are so many people whose spirits seems to be slavish. We don't need anyone like that. A king does not depend on anyone for his authority. **I hesitate to say everything in my mind, but here it is:** There are some timid souls who cannot move without the help of a director, who deny God the right to ask them anything: they won't allow him. They have only one virtue, that of dependence, like a child who does not know how to walk. They might say: Am I allowed to go against my confessor? -- In what way? – When God speaks: Yes. Isn't that being imprudent? – Yes, for someone who does not sense God's ways, but for one who senses it, that is wisdom. In other words, in a vocation that is evidently from God, no advice or light is needed. One feels it; God is calling me. – That's presumption. – No, it's immolation. – Suppose I'm mistaken? – When God speaks, there's no mistake – I know that God calls me; if you fear an illusion, then you are not called; **God calls with conviction and evidence; there's no**

way of doubting. The one who is called in this way is convinced: it is a rock battered by the waves – all the storms and trials merely confirm her conviction. That is a vocation that we can say is really divine.

Doesn't our Lord have the right to call someone to the Eucharistic vocation without being obliged to pass through someone else? Come, this is your place. Who can take this right from him? No one. For example, if a confessor says: You are in a doubtful state, I am not certain of God's will; let's wait. Bad advice! Did St. Paul consult anyone to know whether Jesus Christ had spoken to him on the road to Damascus! Did the apostles consult the Jewish Rabbis, after Jesus Christ had drawn them with such gentleness and they had listened to his doctrine!

When God calls someone, it is so compelling that there is no room for doubt. In a state of doubt, consult. Are all Eucharistic vocations like that? No, but those that are, will fly; and all should come to that point. In final analysis, what does the director do? He tests the grace: sometimes the Good Lord speaks in diverse ways, and the soul is not pure enough to hear – a third party sees more clearly. But he does not create the vocation; he simply asserts it. To sum up: we must not let our vocation depend on a human person.

Many people burden the confessor with things that are meant only for God. Some have sacrificed their vocation because of their confessor! The proof is they did not consult God when they were called. I know several who missed their vocation because they were not called in a natural way! As soon as you consult your director, if he does not have the skill to guide you internally, he will guide you naturally, and you will end up outside your calling. Besides, there are some who think that those they are directing are meant only to help them with works they themselves want to do.

The Good Lord has set you free, so that you might consult only him first of all, his grace, and his love. And how did you come here? Surely someone advised you, but there were few who told you: Go ahead. Especially, my good Sisters, when all is beginning and there is so much to be done, very few would have the courage to say: Yes. Why? Because of human prudence. Besides, most people enter a religious vocation where everything is already set, where there are traditions, and where everything runs like an army ready for battle. We can tell them: You are making sacrifices, yes, that's true; but you are getting the glory here – you are sanctifying yourselves, but you are doing works that everyone admires: what a beautiful thing! Few have enough virtue to sacrifice honor and life. Happy are the eagles who fly directly to their prey, with no prior preparation.

Our Lord prepared you and preserved you to come here. If you could imagine how many obstacles were in your way! A spider's web, a tiny thing is enough to stop a little bird. You could not walk, and he carried you to a place inaccessible to human misery (cf. Ps 30:21); he carried you to the bosom of God. Notice how easily you made the sacrifice. Our Lord prevailed over all the difficulties, temptations, and sacrifices, and you triumphed. If you were wounded, he applied balm. Then, our Lord filled you with something so good and loveable, that you desired nothing else. God attracted you to his love by the bonds of Adam, the bonds of love (cf. Hos 11:4). Everything that might frighten you – that storm on the sea (cf. Mt 8:23-27) – became nothing when you had Jesus Christ.

How did you enter? Personally, I don't know – you must know. You were welcomed like children in their own home. Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin welcomed you warmly. Besides, you probably did not experience what happens in other communities. Their first days are often frightening; everything seems to speak of death. Here, it was like a resurrection – if you had a few moments of trial, a few clouds, you soon saw the sun. One adoration is enough to put the soul at peace.

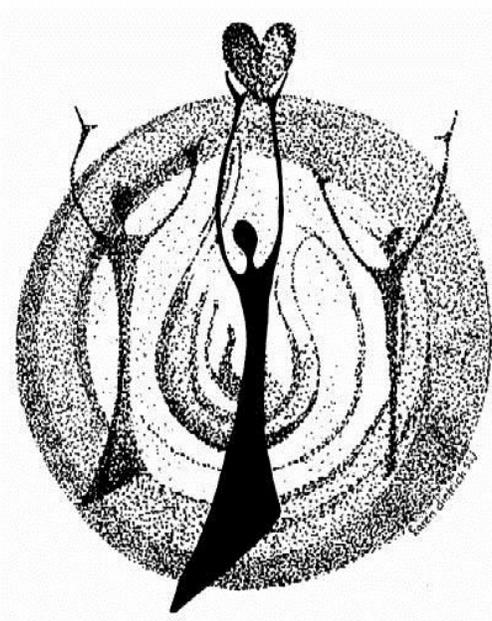
Now, what is our Lord going to do? If out of love he went to get you, how much more now that he possesses you! He will act like the bridegroom with his bride. He is entirely yours, and you are his, at

the service of his love. His love has only this motive: to keep you in his presence. He does not want you to work for others, but only for him – you will not share your time like many others, since you belong only to him. He sends other servants to work, but you are to remain with him, in the company of the angels and saints. You become like two friends who are talking, like a father with his child, like a friend with a friend, like a husband with his spouse. This is love. If you do not understand this love, make it the center of your life. What else could motivate you?

Enter, then, with confidence: If God loved me so much, although I was worth so little, I want to love him. I cannot love him very much, but I want to do so. When trials come, you will say: he loves me and wants to sanctify me – therefore, he will give me the needed grace. When the sun vanishes, it is not night, simply a cloud, that's all. You will not be frightened – you have Jesus Christ.

The apostles were in his company. When he slept during a storm they woke him. He told them: **Why are you terrified, O you of little faith? I was with you** (cf. Mt 8:26). You will find in our Lord's love for you the motivation for your virtue and perpetual gratitude. Try to see that love before making any acts of virtue and to appreciate your vocation. God had to use all his wisdom, power, and goodness to bring you here – you must all thank him: he has loved me so much, and he still loves me! I would be very ungrateful if I did not love him – that's very sure.

When a fruit is not quite ripe, you must place it in sugar to remove its bitterness. Then it will taste good. You are worth little, like a bitter fruit that is not yet ripe, not yet soft – why not begin by allowing the sweetness of love to saturate you. **Have confidence in the goodness of God**, then you will no longer have a nervous fear of the devil and of your nature. Agitation wears us out, and makes us lose time. It weakens virtue. Fear is only a consequence of self-love. Suffering goes very well with love: we can immolate ourselves until we die. **Persist, therefore, in these two goals: gratitude and confidence.**



Points for reflection:

The story of a vocation is also the story of grace in the life of a person. Awareness of the action of God in our life will lead us to gratitude. It will also give us strong confidence in our right relationship with God. The Founder warns us against an undue dependence on the confessor or other guides. Jesus must always be the point of reference. What strikes you in this instruction?