

Holy Communion. Continued ¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Tuesday, [June 29], 1858

The Eucharist, my Sisters, is not given only to strengthen us against temptations and passions, **it is the remedy, and only true remedy, to all evils.** It is the salutary balm which heals the wounds of our soul made by mortal sin which, even though pardoned, leaves a deep scar on the soul that takes long to heal. The sacrament of penance, it is true, pardons us, purifies us, remits the pain of sin; but this wound remains always in our soul, and we must apply a balm which heals it completely. This balm is Holy Communion. Receive Communion, my Sisters; it is the only remedy. Nothing can replace Holy Communion, while Holy Communion replaces everything.

A conversion without Communion is doubtful, not for its effect, but regarding its perseverance. A converted sinner can confess often, can practice mortification, and do considerable penances. Without a doubt these means are a great aid for helping him to break with sin. They even break the chains which bound and held him captive, but I say and assure you that if he is content with that, if he does not receive Communion, he will not persevere. He will be discouraged by the violence of the struggles which he will need to endure against his former passions whose wounds he still carries and which constantly draw him towards falling again. Finally, despairing of victory, he will abandon everything, fall again into an abyss, to wallow in the mud of his shameful passions.

A newly converted person needs Holy Communion to resist his evil tendencies and to heal his wounds. But, he will say, I pray. That's good but not enough. Even prayer is not enough; I know this by experience. In my different missions, converted sinners, almost in desperation, told me: Since my conversion, I confess often, I pray, I do penance, I fast, I give alms, and I'm always the same, I always fall. I cannot correct myself, there is, therefore, no salvation for me. God's mercy is closed to me. Did you receive Communion? – Oh! No. I stopped short of that. Well, receive Communion and you will find the strength to resist, and the balm which will heal your wounds.

I know that a soul bathed with the tears of penance becomes pure and beautiful. It is like a second baptism by which it is purified, except that it bears the lesion, the wound of pardoned sin. It must begin by closing it completely. The holy Fathers said that a soul purified by penance has more merit than a virginal soul, because it has more struggles to sustain. It is not enough to be converted, to give oneself completely to God in order to be free from the fire of the passions. Certainly not! Sometimes, on the contrary, our temptations increase as soon as we have renounced them [...]. Pride rebels at the least thing, the senses will crave ceaselessly, and the heart which is so attached to creatures will still seek them out. What must this troubled soul then do? It must continue to receive communion until these passions are conquered.

At the beginning of a conversion, it is necessary to receive Communion every day, then diminish later. Persons whose conversion is based only on sacrifice and penance will suffer

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too much; they will not be at peace. I have heard it said: Before my conversion, I was not so unhappy. That's because they were not receiving Communion. The more passions you have, the more you must receive Communion. – But I'm so weak. – All the more reason. Because you are too weak to sustain the combat, go to take the king with his army and you will triumph.

Our Lord said: *Whoever eats my flesh will have life in him*, and again: *If you do not eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will not have life in you* (cf. Jn 6:49-58). A dead body cannot defend itself. **It is in Communion that you will have life.** People, passions and worldly pleasures cannot give what they do not have. They can give you a moment of pleasure, but they cannot give you life. It is in Holy Communion only that you will find life. How strong we are, *leaning on the arm of the beloved* (cf. Sg. 8:5), as it is said in the Song of Songs. When we have the divine spouse, we desire nothing more.

People are carried away by pleasure which they think will satisfy their passions. It is pleasure which is sought in creatures. This seeking for pleasure is a tie which holds us captive. There is pleasure even in pride. Without a doubt this costs, but the pleasure of honors, of a high position, surpasses the distress. Our Lord, knowing our hearts, also draws by pleasure; yes, there is pleasure and sweetness in the service of God. It is painful to be humiliated, but when we think that in this way we are more in conformity with the adorable heart of Jesus Christ, then it is a pleasure for the soul whose entire happiness is to be like the beloved.

Our Lord said: *Take my yoke upon you... for my yoke is easy and my burden light* (cf. Mt 11:29-30). Who has not sometimes felt the consolations and happiness of Jesus' presence in Holy Communion? It is unforgettable. It is possible to be led astray for a time, but the memory of this happiness is never eliminated. You will perhaps say: I have never felt this; without a doubt the tepidity of my Communions is the cause. But I say to you: You have felt this, but you do not know it. Do you not feel peace of soul in possessing Jesus? It is not necessary to shed tears of tenderness. A humble Communion is always well made; it always bears fruit.

We do not change our Lord into ourselves; our Lord changes us into himself. Ordinary food changes into us; but for our sanctification this food changes us into the Lord. If you are proud, receive Communion; you will soon become humble. How can it be otherwise when you are breathing the humility of our Lord? If you are angry, receive Communion. By daily breathing the mildness of Jesus, you will become gentle. If your senses hold you captive, receive Communion, and soon you will dominate them because you will possess the sanctity of Jesus. Holy Communion will produce virgins and preserve them.

But why does Holy Communion give us so much strength? It is a fact. Just as a mother giving her milk to her child communicates to it her sentiments, her tastes, her virtues, so Jesus Christ, in feeding us with himself, giving us his body, his blood, his soul and his divinity communicates to us his holiness and his divinity. By Holy Communion, we become humble without being aware of it, without effort, without combat, it happens naturally. Our Lord said: *Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart.* (Mt 11:29)

What can we conclude from these words? That we must receive Communion and do so often, in order to reform our evil inclinations and to heal the wounds left by sin. Without Communion we cannot advance in the spiritual life. Then you ask, how many times must I communicate? Two or three times a week, even every day if you need to. The sicker one is, the more one needs a doctor and medicines; the feebler one is, the more one needs

nourishment. Let us receive Communion so that Jesus Christ may be our strength in this land of combat and our glory in heaven. Amen.

Points for reflection:

These last three instructions lead us to reflect on our relation with the Eucharist, permanent mystery of the love and the presence of Christ among us, and Holy Communion as the response to our weaknesses and the antidote to our passions. According to you, are these reflections important for Christians today? How? Have you other aspects of the Eucharist to propose as answers to the evils of our time?

