

Interior Recollection¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Wednesday, August 17, 1859

My Sisters, at another time I will explain the rule so that you will understand it better. **First, I'm very glad to finish the subject on the interior life, since it's basic.** There's not enough time; we'll only touch on things briefly, as in our last session. Yet, this is a principal and fundamental topic. For recollection, we must gather ourselves within, and not look for something outside of ourselves. Christians in the world, guided by the commandments, recollect themselves in a truth, in a mystery, and in what they see. They have good external inspirations and God can very well inspire them interiorly, but this is not their grace and virtue. They don't know how to enter into this interior way.

Anyone who does not live an interior life, who does not yet have a feeling for this interior life is not yet perfect. Such a one may be on the way, but has not yet reached perfection. That's the main point. That's how we can judge the perfection of a person in her interior life. If one is interior and recollected before God, that's the essence. Other things are signs of strength, but the interior life is the criterion. **A soul that does not pray is elusive.** Such a one is impossible to judge and to direct. All we can do is to help her avoid sins, and show her the way by saying: Take the way of the spiritual life. But this soul cannot be reached; she is a mystery. We can evaluate these people only by their external practices.

The same applies to a group². The more external its activity, the less will be its interior life; the more its reasons for imperfections, the more its members are exposed. The world can only judge by reason of good works! If a tree has insufficient sap and grows too many branches, it will dry up. When a community has more external works than it should, its internal spirit will die. Likewise, a community is worth only as much as the interior nourishment that it gives to souls; nothing else has value. As for you, you have nothing to fear, later... But when the interior is well fed, the exterior can do no harm. Clearly, it is the interior that makes perfection. There is no perfection when there is no interior life.

Recollection has two elements, grace and science. Grace: as soon as the soul appreciates the perfect life, God gives it the grace of recollection. If she does not appreciate it, leave her at the door. Martha does not have a higher place than [Mary], but this is something delicate. Everyone can receive this grace. All of you have the grace of recollection. Without it you could not be Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, for you would not have enough exterior activity. Persons in the world can adore for a while, with a few *Pater* and *Ave*, the rosary, some vocal prayers. They can last an hour, but this is your life. It is a science which we will teach you. We cannot teach virtue; we only show the way, and you must enter.

Recollection is the presence of God within us. The prophet says beautifully in I-can't-remember-what psalm: *I will listen within me to what the Lord God tells me* (cf. Ps 84:9). God gives interior science, perfect recollection: *I will listen to what the Lord God tells me.* The Lord God is present in David; his interior is the oracle of God where he reveals his will; it is the Holy of Holies. God inspires the soul and lets her know the truth; he attracts her to his love. The life of Jesus Christ must slowly be formed in us, because, as St. Paul says: *In him we live and move and have our being* (cf. Acts 17:28).

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² A group: a religious community.