

# It Is Necessary for Us to Love Our Lord<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament  
Nemours, Thursday, November 8, 1866

Let us place ourselves in the presence of our Lord by an act of faith, etc.

[...].

My Daughters, we are in the middle of the retreat. In the first part, we spent much time on what God has done for us. He showed us his graces – we had time to see what he has given us: he created us out of love; he placed us in the best situation for our salvation. God could not have done more to show us his love.

**Now what shall we do for him?** That is the question. We must love him – that's why we come to consecrate ourselves, to commit ourselves to his love. Why? Because our Lord has loved us so much. Therefore, we must love him – this is our state of life.

Now that we have entered religious life, we must enter into love, because this is a state of love. And, by vocation, **you make the vow to love because you make the vow of virginity which is nothing else than the vow of love.** The other vows are merely a profession of evangelical virtues. By this vow of love we say: My God, I vow to love only you forever; consequently, no one else will have my heart. It's final; I made the vow of virginity. Formerly, this was the only vow, and by this vow of virginity one became a religious in the Church. In the ritual books we find the consecration of a virgin, followed by return to the family. Later, there arose monasteries where the virgins could withdraw from the world.

Since you made this vow, you must love our Lord completely with a virginal love. This is the greatest of all the vows. It takes precedence over the others because it consecrates you, while the others do not. You wanted to gain merit and enter into the way of the Gospel. Obedience is the way of merit, but it is not the way of excellence. Virginity or chastity consecrates you by vow; you immediately rise in dignity, and your body becomes sacred.

**In the Church you are called consecrated.** However, you are not consecrated as bishops and priests whose head and hands are consecrated. Why, then, are you consecrated? Because by vow you are consecrated to our Lord Jesus Christ who called you to be his brides by a divine covenant. That is why this vow is so beautiful – because its seat is in the heart. That's why our Lord is so jealous (cf. Dt 4:24). What a beautiful state of life! Therefore, you must love our Lord, because he has chosen you, and because you have chosen him.

Were you to mix the love of God with the love of others, it would be offensive. The Church has a horrible word for a woman who is not faithful to her husband: it is called adultery – if she commits sins she becomes an adulterous woman. In the same way, if a Christian virgin sadly violates her vow of virginity, she will be known not merely as adulterous but as sacrilegious. That is the name for the sin committed when someone profanes the sacred Host, a church, a ciborium, a chalice – we call that a sacrilege, a profanation. And a virgin who violates her chastity becomes sacrilegious. Why? Because she no longer wants to love our Lord – she no longer wants to belong to our Lord. A wife belongs to her

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<sup>1</sup> Number 612. *C'est une nécessité pour nous d'aimer notre Seigneur.*

husband. A husband like our Lord must possess her entire heart, all her rights. If a virgin attaches herself naturally to others, this is a sacrilege.

**You must therefore love our Lord as faithful spouses.** You are joined to him and to no one else. You will be crowned with this title or condemned by it. Since you are vowed and consecrated, you must now surrender yourself to our Lord. That's clear! But what does it mean? You must surrender yourself to the love of your spouse. Love is fully satisfied only in heaven. In your lifetime you are on the way, and our Lord sends his angels once in a while to console you – he himself comes occasionally to visit you. He wants you to be wise and prudent virgins, not foolish ones (Mt 25:1-13). To love him is your glorious privilege. How can you not love him, you who have the privilege of being always with your divine spouse? You are his betrothed while on earth. The contract is made, but the wedding, the heavenly marriage, will take place only in heaven. And so now you are with your divine spouse – you live with him, he receives your service as you give it to him. You are a member of his Eucharistic family. How could you not love him? And he condescends not only to visit you, but to live with you.  
[...]

Our Lord wants you in his home: he himself wants to adorn you with virtues, so that on the wedding day, he may lead you to his Father and tell him: This is the spouse that I raised, that I nourished; I bring her to you; accept her, Holy Father. That is your state. Others don't live in our Lord's home as you do. You remain there. Our Lord himself instructs you: he is the law, the center of your life. You are not religious in order to be religious, but rather to be adorers. Without that, you would have done better to go elsewhere.

Besides, you are not here for any (human) person. No. **You are not here for your neighbor** except in the zeal of your prayer and penance. Therefore, you are not here to serve your neighbor, but exclusively for our Lord. **You are not here for your superiors.** They are your fathers and your mothers who are meant to guide you and train you in the service of the master. They are obliged to nourish and cloth you, so that will not be concerned about that. Everything here is for you; you are for no one other than for our Lord. And so I say: Take care to serve your master at all times, because if you don't serve him, you will be doubly guilty: against our Lord and against the Society that nourishes you. Everything is contained in that.

And were it true that other religious loved our Lord more than you, you should be driven away. Since our Lord has flooded you with insights and graces, if you serve him badly, you would be guiltier than others. It would be better to send you away. Beware! You must excel in serving our Lord, not from virtue, but from the fact that it is your state of life, your work – you are obliged as servants. That would be the limit if, having a very small heart that God expands by his grace – this heart would turn inwards to love itself. Oh God...! This would be like throwing a ciborium into the mud...! If you make others the central object of your love – O God...! That would be to steal from our Lord – to tear yourselves away from him in order to give yourselves to another. God forbid...!

**In the religious life you should love each other equally. Be attentive to this** – you should not love one more than another. Why? Because you form a circle around God, you should love each other in our Lord. May God watch over you! I really think that your hearts are free from [the bond of] all human affection, from all personal attachments. If not, you would be displeasing our Lord, and you would be very unhappy. To love our superiors as a means is fine. God uses them to help us in our weakness, but here you don't need all that. Love your superiors with a filial love. But if we could use a piece of wood to become a superior who maintains the rule, that would be wonderful, because it would be the grace of authority. Therefore, love our Lord very well; [I repeat] love him very well.

While St. Paul was preaching about the apostolate, he said: *It is a necessity for me, it is my ministry; Jesus Christ has given me this grace.* And he goes further by saying: *Woe to me if I do not evangelize, -- yes, this was his state of life! -- Woe to me if I do not evangelize* (cf. 1 Cor 9:16). Well! Woe to you, my Sisters, if you don't love, and if your love is not singlehearted! The purpose of your cloister is that the world will not come to distract you from your love.

**Now, how must you love our Lord?** Here's the answer: you must love him as he loves you. That's the answer. Friendship establishes equality in relationships, in sentiments, because that is what love is – union between two persons. Our Lord loves you with a love of benevolence; you also must love him in this way. And how does our Lord love you? You know it already: He has always loved you; he loves you as he loves his Father. And how does he love his Father? He loves himself in his Father, through his Father, and for his Father. The Word loves his Father by means of a constant relationship of what he is by love – he returns his glory to his Father, and his Father sends it back to him (cf. Jn 12:28; 13:31-32; 17:1). This movement takes place by the relationship that he has with his Word, and in this relationship consists their happiness.

**Our Lord gives you everything he has:** his body, his mind, his merits, and his heart – all that belongs to you. **You must give him the same thing:** your mind that he may form it, your will that you may be happy in serving him, your body that you may continue therein his divine and human virtues. Is that clear? Then there will be a constant relationship of his heart with your heart, of his faculties with your faculties, of his body with your body – in a word, of his entire person with yours. And that is why you must love him as you are loved: our Lord loves you by his entire person – therefore, you must love him by your entire person. Our Lord tells you: I am constantly thinking of you; can you not constantly think of me? Our Lord gives us everything he is; can we not give him our affection, our gratitude? That is the least we can do in return.

Our Lord tells you: here is my body – I give it to you to eat; I give it to you as nourishment, so that it may make its way into your body. Why do you not enter into that relationship? Our Lord suffers if you don't respond to his love. Our Lord loves you with such ardor, such power; he loves us with an infinite love as he loves his Father – and how does he love him? As he [the Father] loves him, nothing else. And in seeing his little creature, he says: I love you with a passionate love – I love you, I am in love with you. And our Lord is despised by an earth-worm that prefers a man or an animal to himself. And our Lord is humiliated. See how our Lord loves us – and he will always love us.

**When we love someone we look at him.** So, our Lord is always looking at you with eyes of love. This glance is not concerned with your features, but with your heart. Our Lord looks at you with eyes of goodness, with the tenderness of a father. And now, why will you not look at him also – your loving eyes should see only our Lord. You might say: But there is a wall that prevents me from seeing him. – Get away! Isn't the body of our Lord transparent for those who love him? **Do you know what life is?** Life is an acquaintance, life is love; and love is always a painter. Our Lord's eyes follow you everywhere; his heart follows you everywhere (cf. Ps 138:1-18). He sends you an outpouring flood of his love, but his body remains in the sacred Host.

**There you are! Besides, our Lord always wishes us well.** He always wants to help us, to shower us with gifts. Our Lord's presence is gracious. Why not consider him as doing everything out of love for you; why not do for him whatever you are doing in your rooms, in your work – so that everything becomes homage for him. Is that clear? **What is love?** It is a flame that mounts from the hearth to the sky. You should be nothing else than a flame – doing everything out of love. If you fail to do this, you are only a puff of smoke. What! You will not love the Good Lord! He loves you constantly, and he will always love you with an ever-growing love as in heaven: love always goes on increasing – it is always a

new grace as in paradise. Our Lord is always the same in his nature, yet always varying his gifts of grace and contemplation.

**The love of today is always stronger than yesterday's love.** This means that our Lord loves you in an ever new way (cf. Lm 3:23). His friendship is always fresh, and he will love you always anew until the end of your life. It is like a flower opening to the sun. You must love him always anew. You must be able to tell him: Today, I love you more than yesterday. Why? Because I have one more day, more graces, more debts of love (cf. Ps 144:2). You must pay your debts, you must live out of love, out of gratitude, out of homage in all that you do, not attributing to yourself anything whatever (cf. Is 26:12) – that would be stealing from your master. The person, the ego are always there. But, little by little, we must burn the straw that accumulates every day and say: I love our Lord. And doing this you are not doing anything extraordinary. Nevertheless, you are saying a lot: it means that you are paying your debts.

My poor Daughters, **your love will always be less than that of our Lord.** Many saints weep that they don't love our Lord as he should be loved. The saints are never satisfied. Why? They are never satisfied with their love – they say: Why am I not infinite, so that I could love you as you yourself love me? St. Paul often wept because he sensed the great love of our Lord for him, and how little was his own love for our Lord – his tears were very, very pleasing to our Lord. We are a little creature who comes to the shore and extends its hands towards its creator to hear God tell us: I love you, pitiful little earthworm... (cf. Is 41:14) In the world, we are not allowed to tell a person of higher rank: I love you – this would be an insult. But we dare to tell God: My God, I love you. We have the courage to speak like this to him. Why? Because he himself gave us this courage. He is not angry: he gave it to us by making us his brothers and sisters. And so we say to Jesus Christ: I love you – and he answers: I love you with an infinite love. Do you understand this love? Without doubt, I'm sure you don't understand!

My poor Daughters, let's move on. To summarize: do you want to love our Lord? **Give yourselves completely to him: live for him, as he lives for you. Search your heart for everything that might give him the greatest pleasure, as he does for you. Love him with your whole heart.** Is that perfection? No! That's only the beginning. So, what's next? Can you be proud when you look at our Lord? As for him, he was not proud. Go and look at our Lord: it will be impossible for you not to love him. And then, you will renew your vow of chastity, of virginity: that is the vow of love, it is the flower of your life. The other vows are the tree, but this one is the flower. Renew it often by saying: My God, I consecrate myself to you in order to love you with a virginal love – how shall I say it – in order to love you with a love of blood, with an eternal love.



#### **Points for reflection:**

Here Peter Julian presents the vow of virginity as the basic expression of the complete love that we owe to our Lord. He describes the love of our Lord for us at the present moment. What Scripture passages come to your mind after hearing this instruction? Finite love responds to an infinite love. The vow of virginity is the vow of love. What are the main points in this instruction?