

Let Us Live of the Love and Mercy of Our Lord¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Nemours, Wednesday, November 7, 1866

Let's put ourselves in God's presence: etc.

The prophet composed a song, the most beautiful of all the songs inspired by his heart, the song of God's mercy. More than fifty times in the psalm *Benedictus* he says: *Sing the mercy of God.* (cf. Ps 135)². The prophet repeats God's titles, his grace, ending every verse with the words: **his love is everlasting.** My Sisters, the prophet David was right to bless that mercy, that ocean of mercy, and to praise him, because he had sinned against the Good Lord. Yet, in spite of his penance, he would never forget God's mercy. It is when we have offended God that we have great need of his mercy! The heart never forgives itself for having offended God, for having hurt him, and feels the need to say: How could I have offended you, since you are so good, so lovable. Then the heart experiences relief by returning thousands of times to repentance.

My Sisters, I don't want to scandalize you. Some saints became holy only by the **homage of mercy.** They became greater saints by diving into mercy than by purity, the perfect love of God, in a word, rather than by virginity. Why? Certainly there are saints in heaven who became purer and more saintly by appealing to God's mercy, than through other states. Is that state better? No, truly it is worth less, but they became less self-important, more humble and their love became greater at the sight of so much mercy. It is even possible to say that God allows certain chosen souls to fall, even if he could stop them. He lets them fall into great sins so that they may have a better understanding of his love and mercy. He sees that they will become greater saints after their sin.

For example, Saint Peter became a greater apostle after his sin than he was when still faithful. He was always crying, not because of contrition, but out of love. The more a soul exalts the power and mercy of God, the greater glory it gives to God. That's what St. Peter did. And St. Magdalene, good God! How she cried, but how she loved. Saint Paul, the great persecutor of the Church, was more humble after his conversion. He had a better understanding of mercy and a greater love. What is love's food? If you are an angel, feed on God's majesty. If you are human and a sinner, feed on the love, the goodness, and the mercy of God towards us. Therefore, foster a love of homage and gratitude. Our spiritual condition determines our love.

Poor sinners returning to God never forget their sins. What makes them cry is not the grace of contrition, but clearly their love. As Saint Paul said: *I was a wretch and Jesus Christ forgave me, he saved me, loved me and came to me.* (cf. 1 Cor 15:8) We are all in this condition. Who is the person who owes nothing to God's mercy? If you owe nothing you should enter right away into paradise. But all of us owe a great deal. What then should we do? Exalt our Lord in his mercy. Tell him, You were so good to me, such a great sinner! This idea doesn't make one unhappy; it centers not on sin, but on God's goodness. Then we become attached to him; if we cry, the heart expands in sweet tears of repentance and love. These are tears of joy.

Each one needs to know how much is owed to God's mercy. We can all say that God prevented us from falling into hell. Is your life free from mortal sins? Yes. Is there any doubt? No. Ah! You are very happy because even for one mortal sin we are indebted to our Lord who preserved us from eternal

¹ Number 610. *Il faut vivre de l'amour et de la miséricorde de notre Seigneur.*

² According to the Latin version: *quoniam in aeternum misericordia ejus (for his love endures forever).*

damnation. How many graces our Lord gave us, preserving us from hell, and how many graces he prepares for us. If God would say to the damned: I decided to deliver one damned person every hundred years and that person is you. Oh! Such a one would be overwhelmed with gratitude. In heaven he would exalt in God's love more than all the others, aware of God's special grace to him. Since God has withdrawn us from sin, we owe him an eternal gratefulness. If we committed as many mortal sins as years, then each year should be lived in gratitude. The more we have sinned, the more grateful must we be.

Now, how about venial sin? The mercy of God regarding venial sin is, I dare say, greater than for mortal sin. God's mercy is greater in forgiving venial sins than mortal sins. How is that? We sin more often venially than mortally. God is always forgiving our venial sins, while mortal sins are rare. When in a state of grace we offend God by venial sins, his heart is afflicted in the tenderness of his love. In his divine mercy he forgave us so many venial sins, forgiving us billions of times. We cannot count the sins he has forgiven us. Let us then thank him infinitely. Look again at what he does: our Lord **forgives us, without looking back, without conditions, never any reproach on the sins forgiven. Once forgiven, our sins are no more.**

[...]

My poor Daughters, our Lord has forgiven you so many sins. Should one doubt God's forgiveness? Listen. Did you ask him to forgive you, did you come to him trusting in his forgiveness? Then God forgave you, since he himself has assured you of this. If God had not forgiven you, he would not have called you to himself. Besides, tell me, since your conversion, did our Lord let you experience good moments of peace, after Communion, sometimes at night, like a dose of honey, a surprise. In the Good Lord's presence, the body is forgotten. There is much joy. Why? We are in a divine atmosphere forgetting the earth; feeling almost as if we were eating the Good Lord. This is proof that our Lord has forgiven your sins. The Good Lord caresses and embraces you, holding you close to his heart. He would never do this, if he did not love you. – But he does this to draw me to himself. – Not at all. It is because he loves you. – But I often experience that feeling. – Thank the Good Lord; these are proofs of his love for you!

How do I know that the Good Lord has forgiven me? Are you ever happy after confession? – Yes. – Well, that's proof that our Lord forgave you, proof of his friendship. God wants us to feel his forgiveness through friendship. This is very consoling. The Good Lord asks from us faith in the sacrament of penance, and then he gives us signs of his friendship. Tell me, how do you explain the tears of the saints? Their tears were proof of God's forgiveness; they were full of compunction and of love. [The sinful woman] was crying and her sins were forgiven, because love had taken their place. (cf. Lk 7:36-50)

Here is something greater. Our Lord is so wonderful in his mercy that he gave us a kind of temptation. He tells us, I forgave you; sin no more; but if you sin again, always come back to your Lord who is your Father and loving savior, always ready to forgive. He always holds absolution in his hands and signs of love in his heart. Return to him all the time. We may be tempted to say, I can sin then, because God will always forgive me. Worldly people abuse these words from St. John (cf. 1 Jn 2:1-2). As Saint Paul says: *They sin because the Lord is so good.* (cf. Rm 6:1) Our Lord still tells us that he will always forgive us. Is it possible? Yes, he said so. **God's patience should attract us to his mercy.** Consequently, when we offend the good Lord, we know that God forgives our offenses even in this life and so the sooner I return to him, the sooner will I be forgiven. Yes indeed, our Lord tells us, Sin no more. However, even though you sin against my Father, return quickly to me and I will forgive you. Come as soon as possible, and I will forgive your sin. Can mercy go any farther than saying, When you have sinned against my Father, come to me so that his justice will not send you to purgatory. Come to me and I will purify you. What a love!

Now what should we do? Notice the great mercy of our Lord and never be discouraged. Never say, I sinned too much; the Good Lord will not forgive me. And notice how his mercy is greater than sin; we can count our sins, but not his mercy. That is why when we sin we should always go back to him without waiting too long. No. Return quickly; our Lord is waiting for you; come quickly. – Will he forgive me? – He has already forgiven you in his heart; but come quickly to his feet, so that he will let you drink of his purifying blood. A soul that loves the Good Lord cannot live in sin; it cannot remain in that state of death. Those who love little or not at all have the courage to remain in sin one day, two days, even a week. We could tell them: How can you stay with dirty hands; don't you love our Lord? – Of course I love him, because I feel angry for having offended him. – How can this be; he is there to forgive you and you continue like that! Ah! If you loved him you would not continue like that, how wicked you are! How ugly! Can it be?

When this happens, Communion is set aside. How did you come to that point? Our Lord says: Poor soul, poor servant; she let herself be fooled. How unfortunate. Then, he calls you and you don't listen. [...] **If you loved our Lord, you would hasten to be purified.** Take, for example, a true friend who knows he has offended his friend. He will not sleep until the matter is cleared up. He cannot live with it. He has to reach out to his friend and hear him say, Be at peace, it was nothing. Without that, he is inconsolable. How can we not love our Lord as much as friends love each other? Even a child who loves its mother and has offended her would pursue her and cry until she says, I forgive you. Children have been known to die because they were refused forgiveness. One day, I found a child crying and said, My child, what's wrong? [...] – Ah! My mother doesn't want to forgive me; I lied to her and she doesn't want to forgive me anymore, and he kept crying. I went to his mother and obtained this favor for him. They had wanted to teach this poor child a lesson. Well, this is what we should do: My God, I sinned against you; I hurt your heart, forgive me. If he lets you wait, it is nothing; you should not rise before being forgiven.

Our Lord is very good, and we don't have to go to confession every time to be purified. No, the Good Lord has given us another way to return to him after our venial sins, **the sacramentals**, especially in view of the Holy Eucharist. Do you know that it is better to receive absolution from our Lord than from a priest? Yes, it's true! Sometimes at our Lord's feet, we become aware of a sin that would prevent Communion and confession is not available. Ah! Poor Daughter, our Lord forgives you. I believe this contrition is a hundred times better than the other. That's why our Lord likes to forgive us himself. When we will be in paradise, and see God's mercy, we could die of joy, if it were possible to die in paradise.

My poor Daughters, believe me; live of God's mercy. Even if you had never sinned, does this mean you will never do so? [...] Now, since you can commit sin, what is the difference between you and one who has already sinned? **Who preserved you, is it you? It is you yourself?** – Oh no! God preserves me, giving me his grace. – Then, poor Sister, thank God a hundred times more than I who sinned, because he preserved you. Do you know that the mercy preserving you is greater than the one that forgives? Not only were you preserved, but you were at the point of offending God, with one foot already on the brink of hell, if you didn't sin it was because he wanted to show you that his mercy is greater than your weakness. Two miracles happened instead of one. If the Good Lord were not infinitely good and powerful, would he have burdened himself with the task of leading us to heaven? The Good Lord never gets discouraged, never abandons us. He stays with us until our last breath, but his grace constantly torments us, obliging us to do good.

My good Sisters, **you are religious; is this something you deserve?** Although I admire you, I'm sure that you never merited such a vocation. To deserve it, you should have been as pure as the angels, and you were not. You should have all the virtues of the saints, and you don't have them. However, you are here, professed Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. You are here, but you cannot say that you merited

this, that it was your right. Besides, who called you? Not I. Of course, you wanted to come, but you could not pay your dowry. What is that dowry? It is the holiness and fervor that you did not have.

Are you here because of your good deeds? No. Why are you here then? God's mercy said, I love that daughter, that child, that poor creature. And the angels objected: You are forgetting that there are so many others who are purer in the world. Our Lord answered: I love her. – But there are so many greater saints who have already served you. – Yes, but I love her; later I will give her what she lacks. – But she has dishonored you. – Yes, but I love her more than all the others. Shouldn't you be filled with gratitude? That is the whole truth. So admit how good God has been for you, that He has shown you such prodigious love. Would you dare not love him in return?

So, my good Daughters, live of the love and mercy of God, and you will begin to be saints.

Point for reflection:

This instruction is a praise of the merciful love of our Lord, and of the loving patience of God. What qualities should (color) manifest our relationship with God?