

Recollection of Contemplation, Recollection of Union, Eucharistic Recollection¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday, May 23, 1862

[...]

Let us continue the subject of our last meeting. **I spoke only about going out of self; now I will speak about the rest.** To go out of yourself is both difficult and easy. Why? Because we know ourselves, we feel ourselves, and we can grasp ourselves. It is difficult because we must divest ourselves of the self, even though we still hold on to something. There is a satisfaction there, even in suffering, in spiritual death. What is difficult is to go towards our Lord. We see nothing, feel nothing, touch nothing. Entering into our Lord – that is the meaning of spiritual life.

There are three ways of remaining in our Lord.

The first is to remain in his sacred humanity. I'm not speaking about remaining in his grace; no, my poor Daughters, that's not a dwelling place, it is a task, because the grace of God changes and varies at every moment, like the sun that is never the same, because its rays go out with extreme speed. It is like a flame coming from a hearth – as it rises, another follows. We are never in the same grace; grace is a sunbeam from God. You must not remain only in grace, as you would be always changing. You must not remain in the virtues, as you would be entering into yourselves. Virtue is an exercise, a sacrifice, not an end. Place yourselves in our Lord. Our Lord said: *Remain in me*, because our Lord is love. He cannot separate himself from his adorable person.

Heat and light cannot be separated from the sun; they are the sun itself. Our Lord never said that we should abide in one of his virtues, in his graces; these are effects; but he said: ***Remain in me, as I remain in my Father; keep my commandments. Whoever remains in me, I will remain in him, and he will do great works. If you remain in me, I will remain in you, and I will do whatever you ask*** (cf. Jn 15:10; 14:12-13). He does not say: My Father will do all that you ask; but I will grant what you ask. Since our Lord is making this prayer, he is doing it as man, and he answers the prayer as God. **The point is to remain in him.** Our Lord is a dwelling. The essential thing is to enter in our Lord.

Many go to the doorstep and stay there. They are satisfied with begging for alms, with all the confidence of humility and charity, as you wish. Our Lord says: Enter. They refuse. They want to hear a good word, and receive a gift. When the door opens, they run away. That's what happens to most Christians, who go up to the doorstep, but do not enter. They are day-laborers who encourage everyone to serve our Lord; they are messengers who announce him, heralds and town criers, not family members. They are paid at the end of the day. How appalling the number of Christians who go up to the door of our Lord, but don't enter because they are afraid. Our Lord says: Enter. – And they reply: No, I want to devote myself to you, and that's all. Some soldiers cannot endure remaining in the barracks and forts – they must be in the field. Some Christians cannot remain at the feet of our Lord. They are servants, foreigners, and Gibeonites (cf. Jos 9:27), serving in the Temple.

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My poor Daughters, are we not like that sometimes? Our Lord begins to speak to us, and we are afraid to listen too much. We go away without waiting for his answer. In order to speak to our heart, how often our Lord invited us to enter into his storeroom of charity (cf. Sg 2:4), but we were deaf in that ear, afraid that he might ask too much, wanting to remain free. What happens? We remain beggars, with a beggar's bag on our back.

What are the signs of that state? I don't want to offend you; what I say does not come from something you told me. Everyone passes through this difficulty. How do you recognize it? When occupied with the things that concern the service of our Lord but not with him, you are manual laborers. When occupied with yourselves, you are beggars. When occupied with your neighbor, agitated, needing always to run here and there, unable to concentrate. Some say: I'm not recollected. You are not in love, in a center of divine recollection. Nothing holds you; you are not in any center. That's one of the main characteristics of a soul that is external –no recollection in the depth of the soul. Enter into our Lord.

There are three ways to enter into the state of recollection. First, there is the recollection of children, and, I may add, of some adults. Some need to remain in the sacred humanity of our Lord. This may well be good for minds that are tired. When the mind has no thoughts, when it is scattered like leaves blown by the wind, the soul cannot recollect itself into the soul of our Lord or into his divinity. It needs something palpable. The eyes of the soul can see the adorable face of the Lord, as well as his body. Everyone knows what a body is. One with spiritual insight will be able to see.

Grace draws us to the light. I don't know about your grace, but I can describe mine. When I feel that my mind is going to wander, I find nothing better than **to enter into our Lord**. Since he is too big, I take one member, his feet. I love those feet. When I am too weak, I kneel; when I cannot stay there, I throw myself on the floor, close to the feet of our Lord. I love to kiss them. I don't speak of love and glory, but of his virtues, of the blessed humility of our Lord represented by these feet – they used to walk in mud and thorns. Then, his charity: these feet came searching for me (cf. Mt 18:12), they came out to meet me.

Then, I go further: love made these two gaping wounds. This is a dwelling place; I place myself in these openings. This is not like Jacob's well (cf. Jn 4:6-30), light comes forth to be grasped. These feet are alive, marvelous and adorned – these are the feet of our Lord. From there, we can rise. When our Lord wants us at his feet, honoring his sacred humanity that was so humiliated, we listen to him. When at the feet of someone, we don't speak, we listen and we watch. That was how St. Paul stayed at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3); that is how a child stays at the feet of its mother, and, if I dare say it, how a little puppy stays at the feet of its master, looking up to see if he is happy or needs something.

Others will concentrate on the hands. I prefer the feet. Hands represent the charity of giving. I give many benedictions, and since I must always give, the hands are less meaningful for me, but I'm drawn to the feet. When our Lord opens his heart, and says: Enter – that is even better; but I have not yet reached that point. I must follow the order. From the feet I don't go to the hands, which are higher than the heart, even higher than the head on the cross. I must pass first through the heart.

Reflect on the feet as long as you can. Recollection at the feet of our Lord with the few thoughts that I gave you is delightful. One can be happy and peaceful, breathing in an atmosphere of love. The Blessed Virgin remained there at the foot of the cross; St. Magdalene remained always there, and the angels are always there. The feet on the cross are closer to our heart than his hands and head. If you look at the wounds of the head and the hands, you will not stay. This calls for too much virtue. The crown of thorns is too high, too glorious. The hands speak of charity. Each one has a preferred area. This is mine.

Begin with the feet when you want to be recollected, if you don't feel a grace that draws you upwards. Begin by throwing yourself at the feet of our Lord. By listening, you do more than whatever you could

say. You honor the sacred humanity. Our Lord will do whatever he wants; you will be in the best place. He will say of you what he said of [Mary]: *She has chosen the better part* (Lk 10:42), *she has shown great love* (Lk 7:47). Begin in that way and you will draw much benefit. You can proceed from the natural feet to the glorious feet, to the feet of love. The heart will follow. From there, you will go all the way to the soul and to the divinity. As I told you, if you go immediately to the spiritual order, you may run dry in the first moment, and not be able to continue. It's better to begin at the lowest level.

The sacred humanity contains a special grace. If our Lord had not wanted to make such use of it, he would not have become visible. He would not have taken a body to the cross. Through it, one can go higher. If he wants to place you immediately in his heart, in his soul, go ahead. There is no need then to continue; climb, if he is calling you directly to the top.

The second type of recollection is more perfect, and completely spiritual. It consists in **placing ourselves in our Lord without any forms, avoiding all images.** This supposes that you have been drawn to go to God through a spirit of faith; to be explicit, a more generous state. Now all forms are sacrificed. If the imagination intervenes, let it be quick as lightning. All distractions must be set aside, the soul as if imprisoned, not yet able to take flight. Placing oneself entirely in our Lord himself, in his goodness and his love changes everything. Recollection immediately becomes union. In the first kind, there is no union. There is veneration and adoration. The soul is at the feet of the Master, but the union is not substantial, spirit to spirit. While the first type gathers everything at the Lord's feet as an offering, this recollection of union implies the love of the soul and of the heart. Here union is attained, and a union in love.

Even a few moments of this kind of recollection will produce much growth. Without noticing it, you may well spend a good adoration. The hour will seem like a quarter-hour or a half-hour. You will say: Is it already over? You seemed fully occupied.- I feel like I fell asleep.- That was a blessed sleep, with eyes wide open. Such a soul becomes absorbed in unclouded truth, in pure goodness. It experiences a sense of well-being and lightness of spirit. It is well compensated for any effort. The body is forgotten and the mind is free of arguments. The soul goes directly to its goal. What a happy state this is! It is truly a recollection of friendship. Is it within reach?

Sometimes God gives it as a pure grace, so that we may persevere. Since we cannot attain recollection by ourselves, he places us in it. Make it a recollection of virtues through your efforts, assisted by his grace. This recollection of union requires greater cooperation, so that one may enter into our Lord himself. His sacred humanity remains, like a cloud passing near the sun. This is like someone who is so very absorbed that he hears nothing when spoken to, does not see the things along his way, so absorbed is he in what he is doing. This is how it is in heaven. The angels and the elect are completely absorbed with God; they are in him and he lives in them.

There is a third kind of recollection which we mentioned the other day; we did not develop it enough. This third recollection is even greater than the other one. How shall I explain it? Call it the Eucharistic recollection. The other recollection you can do anywhere. To explain this Eucharistic recollection well, I will have to go into some details.

In the springtime, when a snake sheds its old skin for a new one, it passes among rocks and scrapes itself, in order to remove its skin so as to become, so to speak, a new being. Our Lord has wrapped himself in a strange form, a cloud. The appearance of bread is like an obstacle to go to him. The sacred species are inseparably attached to his person, but they are not him; my clothes are not me. Our Lord took this form to force us to pass through the species, leaving behind our poor senses, our faculties, our whole being, taking only our heart, setting everything else aside. **With our heart, we must go all the way to our Lord himself.** If we don't become discouraged, once we will have succeeded in setting our poor

humanity outside, we can enter with our heart. That is the recollection I was talking about earlier. With the sacred humanity of our Lord, there is a recollection of devotion, like that of Magdalene – this one leads directly to our Lord, in all of his reality.

What do you want to do? When you want this kind of recollection in our Lord, you cannot reach it in your room. You may enter in his spirit, but not in his person. **In the Eucharist, you enter in his real person.** This is the highest form of recollection, for the Lord is here, really present. This has an advantage over all the other states, because it leads immediately to our center, to our Lord himself. We must leave ourselves outside, like the sacred species. You cannot enter into our Lord with your humanity. I'm speaking of adoration, of union. You see clearly that you cannot enter with your body, because it is tangible. You cannot touch our Lord. It is the same with the spiritual senses. Consequently, your faculties, your senses must be left outside. They will only burden you. Leave your reasoning outside too; go with the heart. Then you will reach union with our Lord really, substantially, as he is in the Eucharist.

What will happen? **You will be recollected in your entire material and intellectual nature.** All you need to do is remain in that state. You must have experienced this sometimes in your Communions or in adoration, forgetting that you have a soul and body. Did you believe that you could do this²? Through adoration alone, you cannot enter into our Lord. For example, Moses climbed Mt. Sinai; at the top a cloud that hid the earth and the Israelite camp; he entered this cloud and stayed forty days (cf. Ex 24:15-18). Light appeared and he stayed there as in paradise. This was necessary to separate him totally from the world. My poor Daughters, that is what our Lord wants for you. Do you have this recollection? Do all you can to enter into our Lord – begin with his feet; you will enter. Have you not noticed that paying attention to something other than our Lord becomes an exercise, but not your goal. When you are at peace and at rest, you find happiness.

My poor Daughters, what is the conclusion of all this? Be recollected, learn to enter into our Lord, to hear him and listen to him, to be attentive to his gentle words. Know how to listen well, so as to know how to speak to him. You probably understand well, but as we get tired of drawing water from the well, of plowing poor soil, we need to come closer to God; we need to work on it. Beware of the illusions of people in the world who believe they are doing nothing because they are not working and not talking. They want to draw water from the well – yet it is much better when rain falls from the sky. When our Lord attracts you – and you should be attracted, otherwise you would not be adorers, that is your grace – learn to remain silent and recollected. Remember that the best adoration is the one in which you listened and in which you said nothing. That is the best of all, because you remain in our Lord.



Points for reflection:

In this teaching, our Founder presents 3 ways of abiding in our Lord.

Write a summary of each one in your own words:

- 1) To remain in his sacred humanity: Recollection of devotion
- 2) To remain in our Lord through faith, in union
- 3) Eucharistic recollection. To remain in the person of our Lord as in one's center.

Take note of the biblical texts.

² Possible meaning, if we adjust the first verb : *Croyiez-vous que vous feriez cela ?* (Instead of *croyez-vous*) (*Would you believe that you would do this?*) That is : *Auriez-vous pu imaginer que vous pourriez vivre une telle union ?* (*Would you ever have imagined that you could live that kind of union?*)