

Recollection of Silence, Thanksgiving in the Presence of God¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Wednesday, August 3, 1859

My Sisters, you are on your way. I think that you must be like someone who had a good meal, or someone who has just enjoyed herself; the impression remains for a while. When we spray perfume in the house, we remark: What happened here? Now, the beautiful aroma of Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor 2:15) rests upon you. Our Lord has been here, and given you a witness of his love. You are still drawing from it. After a retreat, after a special grace, the first virtue to practice is recollection. Keep your mind fully attentive to the grace received.

Recollection is absolutely necessary. The devil will try to preoccupy us with external things – even good and excellent ones – in order to draw us away when our soul is taken up with God. Satan does not want to lose us. Like a kidnapper who draws a person out of her house, away from the presence of her mother, to the countryside to make her his slave, the devil tries to take us out of ourselves, away from the presence of our Lord, in order to daze us and remove us from our center. Then our heart will dry up, and he will be able to tempt us. To avoid this disaster, we must remain recollected, in the presence of God. After a retreat, this is the only thing to do. Stay in the presence of God, by recalling the good feelings, and all that was said. Remain in thanksgiving, in a good direction, in humility or in some other grace.

Very often God gives a grace that mobilizes the graces of the entire day, by becoming an idea, a **dominant grace always with us**, before us like the presence of God. If you don't have this dominant [mother] grace, turn to thanksgiving to nourish your soul. This is the easiest way to remember all that God did for us. Remain in this attitude. It is better to remain with thoughts of God, than with the thoughts about ourselves, even good thoughts. Ponder his goodness, his mercy, and his love, constantly changing his graces. In this way love always has something new, beautiful, and good to nourish the soul.

If instead you remain in negative thoughts, whose center is misery and sin, you cannot remain there very long. No one stays long² in a tomb. If God gives you these thoughts, seek his grace to remove what is irritating in them, avoid being troubled by such negative thoughts and³ stay recollected in God. Suppress this movement by deep recollection. Avoid distracting efforts, acts of penance or other practices. Don't let your mind roam. What is needed is total dependence on God, and an interior recollection of silence. You have enough riches, truths, and good feelings. Our Lord gives himself, his grace has been given. There is nothing more to do except to eat and to rest at his feet.

You must be at rest in silence with the Good Lord. You may look at him and expect a word from him. But you must do so in a **silence of love**, that waits for the Lord to add to the conversation⁴ what he has to say. By simply remaining attentive, the soul is very active. Observe what happens in nature. When someone breaks an arm, it is bandaged tightly and the patient is told to keep still and not move. Healing will take place through rest. In our relationship with God healing also takes place in a moment of rest, in the interior silence of a soul at rest in God. God then enters in. We need not look for some new truth; we can merely relax. This is like the sun shining through crystal. Since there are no more obstacles, the soul

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² Ravanat and Copy A, variant: on ne reste pas dans un tombeau (no one stays long in a tomb)

³ Ravanat and Copy A, variant: *mais (but)*

⁴ Ravanat and Copy A, variant: *comme pour entremêler* (that *waits for* the Lord to add)

nourishes itself with peace. The combat is over, and the soul feels comfortable, delighted in God. All your prayers, your Communion are intended to strengthen you, so that this recollection can grow deeper. Briefly, this means enjoying God.

Even if you have spent a good part of your life searching for God through senses, mind, heart, and by all possible means, now he has been found. You found him in the retreat. He lives within you, and with him you have all truth, all strength, all grace, and all love. There is no longer a need to keep searching for that treasure – it has been found. Good food is to be eaten. The only thing to do now is to keep God carefully within us. When someone visits, we don't leave him to chat with a neighbor. The visitor would soon leave. A fire in the hearth must be fed, or it will go out. We have only a small measure of love to give; if we give it to others, there will be nothing left for God. Our attention span is limited; we must focus on our Lord. Since we have so little to give, we must not become divided.

How does one remain in God? By recollection, by internalizing, by frequently making acts of love, by remaining in the presence of God, adoring him, offering ourselves to him, and thanking him like the angels and saints in heaven, as we do after Holy Communion, and seeing God always within us. God delights to be with us. My Sisters, the life of faith is the same as the life of glory, we possess him as perfectly as the angels and saints.

Faith makes us know God, giving him to us as completely as in heaven. There is a difference; we possess God through faith, wrapped in a cloud. We know that it's our Lord, but he's veiled; we don't see him. The saints see him openly. We can love as much as they. In heaven is the triumph, while here there's a struggle. This struggle tends to make us lose possession of God, or, at least, to make it less durable.



Points for reflection:

This conference is an introduction to the interior life. Did you ever develop the habit of having a “mother-grace for an entire day”? What means can you take to develop this habit?