

Simplicity¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament,
Paris, Tuesday, [August 17] 1858

My Daughters, I've come to make an important recommendation, namely, that you avoid anything extraordinary in your piety. I insist on this. Follow the common and ordinary way of life. Something that has been approved by an entire group is better than what comes from only a few. A common law, a common rule is better than a personal rule. Therefore, love the simple and common life; the name community says clearly that your life should be such.

Do not strive after virtues that are externally unusual. Keep anything extraordinary to yourself. Externals must be simple and common. In our day, people are fond of anything extraordinary. Religious novels, that do so much harm, tend to push them into extraordinary phenomena. I will always object to someone going out of the common way. Self-love too easily sets in. One who feels that she has extraordinary experiences will easily be urged by the devil to imagine that she is already a saint. Then pride will lead such a one astray. Even some outstanding pious souls have been greatly deluded in this way. I'm not referring to states of ecstasy and rapture, rare nowadays, but to certain states of prayer and recollection. Sainly persons who received these extraordinary graces also experienced terrible suffering. They felt humiliated and begged the Lord not to allow others to see them in these states. Great saints understood the danger of extraordinary things. I will never allow anyone to prefer her personal attraction over the common rule; for example, to pray during time for work, to be silent during time for Divine Office.

In your prayer, don't go looking for feelings and emotions. In the Order (sic) of the Most Blessed Sacrament, where life is contemplative, one might be tempted towards these extraordinary states. It would even seem that this life prepares souls to this. But no, be satisfied with the prayer of the poor; keep yourselves humble. The prayer of poverty, annihilation, sacrifice, faith and love is appropriate for us. While opposing any attraction to extraordinary states, I don't condemn them; they must be respected as coming from God. There are orders that totally oppose such events, and others where it is impossible to follow them because of responsibilities such as the care of the sick and teaching. You, on the other hand, are free; in fact, no order favors special graces as much as we do. Where else do you find three hours in adoration or prayer? It may happen that many who suffer from not being in their grace of attraction will eventually come to us.

The angels that surround the throne of Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament and who adore him with such respect and love are invisible to us. We too should love and adore our Lord with internal sentiments of the most burning love, but nothing must be externally visible. We must be simple like Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharistic mystery contains the summary of all the other mysteries. Jesus Christ is present as glorious as he is in heaven, yet he shows himself to us under the simplest and most common appearance, in order to give an example of a simple and hidden life.

When you read the extraordinary lives of the saints, admire them, but don't seek to be in these same states. That is very nice, but it's not for me; it's not my vocation. To you, Lord, be honor and glory; to me poverty and rejection. These great saints had to pay dearly for these extraordinary graces. Our Lord often left them in their poverty, in their human weaknesses. He held them in humiliation so that

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they would not become proud and recognize that these gifts were not due to their merits, but to the pure effect of the goodness and mercy of God.

Where the body is, there the eagles will gather (cf. Lk 17:37). And what is this body, if not that of Jesus Christ. Are not the eagles the great saints who gather around our Lord? Just as today the Carthusians are considered to be the most perfect community, so much so that one can easily leave all the other communities to join them, so the day will come when the Order of the Most Blessed Sacrament will be the greatest and the most perfect into which all dedicated persons will want to come. Yes, this order (community) must produce great saints. St. Bridget predicted that at the end of time, a great Order of the Most Blessed Sacrament will be founded to spread love for the Eucharist and to prepare men to fight the enticements of the devil. My hope is that this order predicted by St. Bridget is ours. We will fight the extraordinary actions of the devil by our simple and common virtues. These will be great in themselves, since our Lord will be their end. As I often told you, the greatest virtues must be for us only a proper cloak in which to approach our Lord Jesus Christ, our king; our only end, however, is his Eucharistic service.



Point of reflection:

The Founder discourages what is extraordinary in our piety, and recommends simplicity. What are his reasons for this?