

Supernatural Charity of the Heart, of Respect, Affection, and Action ¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament,
Paris, Wednesday, November 3, 1858

We must build our perfection on charity, for this is the Lord's commandment. He based all holiness on the love of God, and charity towards our neighbor as its expression. *This is the greatest and first commandment: You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself (for the love of God)* (cf. Mt 22:37-39). Our Lord also told his apostles: *Keep my precept, my new commandment* – notice, he calls it his new commandment – *Love one another, as I have loved you* (cf. Jn 13:34). This is the characteristic of charity. He does not say: You will be known as my disciples by your acts of penance, or by your poverty; only, if you love.

St. John says: *One who has no love for the brother he has seen cannot love the God he has not seen* (1 Jn 4:20). St. John kept repeating this famous expression to his disciples: Love one another. Tired of always hearing these words, they told him: Master, you're always repeating yourself. St. John replied: *If you do this, you will fulfill the law [God's love will be brought to perfection in us.]* (cf. 1 Jn 4:12) **Therefore, base your perfection on charity for your neighbor, which is the proof of your love for God.** Our Lord gives charity the first place, as he himself says: *If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift* (cf. Mt 5:23-24). Notice that he does not say: After your sacrifice, go and be reconciled; rather, leave your sacrifice at the altar.

Charity is a necessity. God does not forgive hatred for others, since such a one remains in death and in sin. Our Lord again says in the Gospel: *Whoever uses abusive language – will be condemned* (cf. Mt 5:22). The same measure that you use against others will be used against you (cf. Mt 7:2). If we want mercy for ourselves, we must show mercy (cf. Mt 5:7).

Our Lord told his apostles, Be patient with one another. He gives them two guidelines: *When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, 'We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty.'* (Lk 17:10) Practice charity and fight against pride. See what our Lord says about himself: *Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart* (Mt 11:29). Understand that these are the two principal virtues that he wants us to practice. The Blessed Virgin also gives us the example in her song of thanksgiving when she says: *My spirit finds joy in God my savior. The Lord has done great things for me, because he has looked upon his servant in her lowliness* (cf. Lk 1:47-49). She does not say, because he has looked at my virginity, but my lowliness, as though this quality were more important. The proof of humility is charity, which motivates all the virtues. We can always practice love of God and love of neighbor.

Build on charity but even more, live in charity which is the strongest foundation. Your vocation rests entirely on your charity for God, overflowing onto creatures. Since the Holy Eucharist is the sun of the love of God, you must be daughters of charity. Each plant produces its own flower and fruit. The flowers and fruits of the Eucharist are charity. The sap is the love of God. If you don't live in charity, you are strangers.

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What kind of charity must we have for our neighbor? The same as the charity that we must have for God. Our Lord said: *As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me, and I will reward you for that* (cf. Mt 25:40).

1° **You must have a supernatural charity.** Natural charity will have no reward in heaven because, since its purpose is to please men and not God, it receives its reward on earth with nothing more to expect in heaven. You are then acting like pagans who enjoy the present and deprive themselves of infinite benefits (cf. Mt 6:1-6; 16-18). One who stops at natural love insults the Lord. This is like saying, My God, I don't want to go all the way to you, since it's too much; I want to limit myself to this creature. What a great injury for the heart of our Lord! Recall the words of our Lord at the Last Supper: *Love one another as I have loved you* (Jn 13:34). Your love must be supernatural.

Love your neighbor with all your mind, centering not on the person, but on the gifts of God, graces, dignity as a Christian, a child of God, an heir to heaven, and a member of Jesus Christ. A superior whether man or woman represents the image and authority of God. Our esteem should then be greater. It should be even greater for a priest who is the representative of our Lord Jesus Christ. We should have deep respect for him. Respect is our way of showing our esteem. We should not look only at the creature, but what God does in that creature. We should, then, not allow ourselves to make rash judgments, to bear suspicions against our neighbor. We should not notice defects, but virtues and graces, and see every person as of greater value than oneself. We all tend to judge too quickly. Fight this temptation, since it leads to sin. May God protect you!

2° You must love one another with **affection of heart**, not with all your heart as you would God, but with real affection, not coldness. This is the love of benevolence. You must be able to say, I love her as much as myself. Then you will desire her greater good, rejoice over her spiritual growth, and pray to obtain the graces she needs. You will then love your sisters in God, for God, and not for your own satisfaction. A mother loves her child more for itself, than for herself. Everything our Lord did was for our happiness. My Sisters, charity must be gracious, friendly, and affable. Your love must be cordial and full of benevolence. Our Lord was courteous in his relationships. It is helpful to come close to a saint, who possesses the charity of Jesus Christ. Do not practice politeness and respect as in the world. Rather love each other as sisters.

3° **Love with all your will and all your strength.** It is not sufficient to love in word alone. You must love through actions, and through your prayers. Ask for the reign of God in your sisters. Share in their sorrows and sufferings. If obedience requests that you serve a neighbor who is antipathetic, do so graciously. Go even further. Since God wants to be served publicly, your charity towards your neighbor must also be external.

Therefore, your charity must have these three characteristics:

Esteem, manifested by respect, honor, and politeness. Since you are children of our Lord, you are worth as much as the angels. Show politeness among yourselves, not an exaggerated politeness, but one that is truly from the heart. Never allow any frivolous and vulgar words and conversations, and do not touch one another.

Affection, without emotional declarations. Let your affection be as noble as the one who receives it, so that you can say: *How pleasant it is where brethren dwell at one!* (Ps 132:1)

Give proof of your love **in actions**, by serving others graciously, but without looking for expressions of thanks, or immediate rewards. Oh no! Having begun in the spirit, you must not end in the flesh. What's the point of working well all day, making sacrifices, if you are going to spoil everything with an attitude

of self-love? There must not be any mud on a white garment. Be careful to keep yourself free from any stain. Do not undo your work and sacrifices by some natural motive. You are here to polish the gold of charity. If you notice yourself drawn to human motivations, tell yourself: Is it possible for me to be so wasteful of my treasures? The Blessed Virgin is called Mother of Beautiful Love; ask her to give you her love for her divine Son.

Point for reflection:

In your experience, do you know of anyone who had the supernatural charity described in this conference? Be concrete in your description. Meditate the biblical texts quoted here.