

The Health of the Soul¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday, July 6, 1860

My Sisters, I want to speak about a topic that must be common and habitual among you. When we want to compliment someone, we wish her good health; if she is feeling fine, we congratulate her; if she is sick we are sorry and we grieve. Therefore, I wish you good health: the health of the body – I'm not too concerned about that, since the Good Lord will take care of it. I desire that for you, but the body, as the saints called it, is the ass (donkey) of the soul. I wish you sufficient health to accomplish your duties of state, or rather, to do the will of God. Evidently, if I told you to carry a mountain, you would say: I cannot; to work like four persons, you would still say: I cannot. Health is related to your work: a sick person does what she can – we are very well when we do the will of God.

What I desire is the health of your soul. When do we know that we have it? When we are faithful to his grace. The body is healthy when it has strength in its organs; the soul that is faithful to grace has interior health: it has strength and the love of God. When we are sick, work will exhaust us: everything is tiring; food is not digested by the stomach. When a soul is sick, nothing will be beneficial to her, or will benefit only slightly – she has not the strength to carry out her work: everything wears her out – she is lukewarm. God forgive!

When the moon wanes, you know that its brilliance comes from the sun. When it faces the sun fully, you can see its complete brightness – it is full. When it faces only partly, it begins to wane. **Here is a soul looking at Jesus Christ: she is full of life;** but when she looks at him only partly, she has only a small light, a tiny ray. Therefore, look squarely at our Lord: when the soul is always facing him, she is well enlightened.

I have not told you my complete thought; here it is: **Natural life is when we focus on the body – while the Christian life is our life in God.** We should live in God, in Jesus Christ. The more we live in him, the more we will live from him, evidently. Only there will we find the fullness of truth, and of strength. In the ocean, a fish is in the fullness of its being and its life, as it plays in the water. The soul has God as its center of life: *I am your life* (cf. Jn 14:6), says our Lord. Therefore, we must live fully in Jesus Christ who is our life. He said: *Whoever remains in me will bear much fruit* (cf. Jn 15:5). We must begin by remaining in him. He came to us through the incarnation; he is in the Blessed Sacrament; we must go and work, in order to have the merit of his love and of his grace. Therefore, we must go out of our home, leave our family, our house, and our friends, like Abraham (cf. Gn 12:1). He does not divide himself – you must do the same.

Every day, the little world that we carry around within us is hanging on to us, and every day, our Lord says: Come to me. Notice what St. John says: ***Whoever remains in love remains in God*** (1 Jn 4:16). Of course, when we live in God, he lives in us. He returns to us fully and divinely whatever we give him; he imitates our generosity and our love. Reciprocity is the character of love. In this way, my Sisters, we must constantly work at leaving the [social] world, in order to live in God. What will happen? We will live in him. When we live with someone, we share his food; we remain at his table – if we live of our Lord, what a life! It is the spiritual life of love, of immolation – we will do what he does. A person follows the customs of the person with whom she lives: if it is a princess, she imitates her and tries to please her. Love imitates: we will take on the customs and way of life of our Lord. Love is an imitator.

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[...]

Be sure to live in our Lord, from our Lord, and for him forever. Then you will be healthy, you will be in life, strength, and love. If you live in him only in passing, you will be unhappy. How many people live with only a few pieces of bread in passing! They are beggars; poor persons who are not seated at table. We must beware not to take on this spirit of begging – especially for you; that would be very unbecoming.

You have left everything; you must leave yourselves. You are in community through virginity, through your state, in obedience: you can be forced to obey under pain of being sent away. But in the heart, love is free. We can say that it is a hearth, a citadel whose center is in the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. Your life is driven by your love, and your love will be in the measure of your gift; the greater the gift, the more you will live. Ah! My Sisters! Your heart will live according to your giving; that is why you must give.

Whoever has the habit of meditating can focus on the same thought for hours on end. The heart, however, wears itself out: it cannot think – after every emotion, it's finished. All traces of it are gone. It is like a gas fire, or a powder that is ignited – afterwards, nothing remains. The heart is a fire: as it gives itself, it exhausts itself – it needs to be nourished with a new light and heat. Our heart is like a hearth: to stay alive it must always give of itself, or else there is no longer any light, the gas goes out, there is no more fire. That is why we say: **Try to make your love an actual habit.**

We cannot have this actual presence of God on earth, but the greater the holiness of a person, the more perfect is this actuality. The less a person is holy, the less it thinks of our Lord – that is the measure. We can estimate where we are in love, according to the frequency that the heart sends its flowers and homage. **The heart is the altar of sacrifice:** it takes everything in life: the mind, the body, everything you want. We can ask: Does this altar always have an offering? You love a little. Do you think very often about our Lord? – Yes. – You are beginning to love. Do you think of him naturally, without getting tired? – Yes. – Then, you are loving well. Why? Because the spirit is queen in the heart. In other places, it is only a servant, and often even less.

The health of the spirit is in the heart. Strengthen yourselves; gather wood, some sacrifices. Love feeds especially on crosses. Gather them carefully: the blood of our Lord has stained them red. The health of your spirit is God reigning in you – you must think only about that. When this thought has become habitual, the will becomes entirely at the disposition of God. Any extraordinary pain or pleasure will find us in our Lord. We live out of love, as our habitual way of life. When this habit is weak, we are not yet with the Good Lord – we are still on the way. – I don't do anything wrong. – You are a traveler, but is your heart in our Lord? How will you know? When your heart is always in our Lord, then you are in perfect health. Why are the saints so happy in heaven? Because they are living in charity.

What are we doing in this world? Wasting time, working for oneself, having a little self-love, a little love for God – how ridiculous this is! What are the souls in purgatory expiating? The fire is there merely to avenge love. Love is God and the world; love is heaven and hell.



Points for reflection:

The health of the spirit is life in God. Notice the texts on the Eucharist in this instruction. Meditate on this conference and write down your personal reflections.