

The Humility of Love¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Monday, September 3, 1860

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You will make your meditation on the humility of love. A king wanted to get married. He was a perfect king, with all the qualities that make great kings. He had a large kingdom and he was honored by his subjects. He wanted to espouse someone worthy of him. All who were part of a princely family were hoping to catch his eye and please him, but everyone was surprised when his choice landed on the least girl in his kingdom. Everyone was saying: How could the king have taken someone whose parents are without honor, a person who has nothing, and doesn't even deserve him! He wanted her to recognize that all her honor and glory came from him. – But, Sir, she has nothing. – I have plenty for her: I am rich enough. – She is not educated. – I will teach her. – She has many defects. – I will correct them. – But she is so unworthy of your choice. – The more she is unworthy of my choice, the greater is my love.

[I'm sure]You understand this allegory. The king of heaven and earth is rich; he possesses all qualities and his perfections are infinite; he is God and man; he is perfection itself. In heaven he is adored by the angels and saints, and on earth all who are great and noble adore him as their Lord. He wanted to have a spouse. He could have made her himself, as he did when he wanted to have a mother. The Father adorned her with all his possible treasures and graces, and the Holy Spirit adorned her with all his gifts, and the Son, with all his love. In this way Mary became his most noble creature and would give birth to the Son of God made man. Considering the greatness of Jesus Christ, of His Father and of his mother, why wouldn't he choose a spouse worthy of himself, and why does he choose her in a way so contrary to heavenly wisdom? He chooses you who are nothing.

My Sisters, where do you come from? From nothingness. The angels said: But, Lord! Why are you raising up this nothing? – She will owe her life to me. – Not only does she have nothing, but she was a sinner, she sold herself to the devil, she stained her body and soul – she is unworthy of you. Our Lord answers: I forgave all her sins, and her gratitude will be proportioned to the depths from which I drew her. The more I have loved her, the more she will understand my gifts. – The distance between myself and sin is greater than the distance between myself and nothingness. You may have offended God, and given yourselves to others – for, to give yourselves to others is sin, it is to dishonor God – yet, he has chosen you for his spouses, with honor and respect. You will not merely live with him, but live from him in the Blessed Sacrament. The angels again complain: She is mere nothingness and sin – pay attention to what you are doing: don't put her in danger of offending you. The Lord replies: I know very well that she has been unfaithful, but I will conquer her ingratitude by my love, by my gifts. Finally, she will love me.

My poor Daughters, isn't that the truth? Didn't Jesus Christ choose our sinful soul in order that our love would be humble? And if we are not humble, we are worse than the devil. Our love must be humble. Why? Comparing our state with what we are and what God has forgiven us, if we have been brought so high, who has done this to us? Jesus Christ. If we are around him, if we are members of his court that is above the angels, because it is Eucharistic, who has placed us here? Jesus Christ. He tells his angels: Make room; here are my spouses – I do not want them at my feet, but on my heart.

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We have two duties to fulfill. **We must know that we owe everything to Jesus Christ** – this must be very clear. The devil will tell us, and the world will also tell us, that we have everything from ourselves and through ourselves, in order to make us forget that all good things come to us from Jesus Christ. We have a great need to remind ourselves, lest we might start believing that we are something, if we don't look at Jesus Christ. Some angels in heaven said: I am beautiful, and I am great and powerful, without reference to God. Be careful! If pride was the downfall of the angels in a heaven [filled with] love, it will be the same [for us]. Pride comes quickly if we don't look at Jesus Christ, his gifts and graces; we might start believing that we have some power, and start working in empty space, since, by ourselves, we are only emptiness and nothingness.

[...]

The Good Lord did not act this way. He could have kept our sins, our scars, our nothingness [before our eyes], in order to show us the “beautiful” state in which we were. He did not do this for fear of humiliating us too much. He kept in mind, however, the memory of what he had done. Our Lord never reproached the sinful woman that she had sinned much; he told her that *she had loved much* (cf. Lk 7:47). We should do what he did not. We gave ourselves to him with our faults, our chains, our cobwebs – a frightening state. At the sight of our riches, we should remember that we were prodigal children, so that when self-love steps in, we can say: How can I believe that I am something on my own? My dear Sisters, that's the first lesson: we are only capable of sin – that's all we can do on our own.

Secondly, since our Lord has raised us to the Eucharistic vocation, which is the greatest because it is his own family, it is easy to say: This is not mine, it belongs to my master. He wants this, he is very pleased that we admit our original condition: we should not hesitate to clothe ourselves before him of our past state – to preserve his virtue rather than the faults which our Lord has removed from us: My God, how did you manage to pull me out of there? **The first act is one of homage; the second is a thanksgiving from our heart.** That's clear. If a beggar receives much, he has tears in his eyes; if we take him out of his poverty, he gets sick, and sometimes dies of joy. What must we do? Look at our benefactor, and have constant gratitude on our lips and in our heart.

The third duty is for a spouse not to go begging when her husband is rich. She does not go looking for other affections than his; she does not want to please others, she is faithful. You must not go begging from creatures what is being offered to you from your spouse; seek to please no one except your spouse, live only for him. The faithful spouse is compared to a temple adorned for a feast day. **Your humility must be a humility of worship and thanksgiving**, and even more, since all you have to offer is the generosity of your heart and life. God has given us something that we can return to him, namely, generosity, purity of heart and life, and love. When we give something to a beggar he says: If only I can repay you, if only I can be of service somehow... and when he has the chance, he does it.

If you want to acquire the humility of love, you must surprise God in your work, and be pleased to witness to his action. What is this work? Your religious life, your ordinary daily tasks. Just as the king's spouse hastens to show her gratitude for the favors received from the king, **so the humility of love must be your virtue of every day.** Live from alms received, not from the world, but from the goodness of God, expressing your regret to give so little in return, since what we give him is not worth much. Jesus Christ said: *Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart* (Mt 11:29). The poor are meek – that is the model for humility of heart, of affections, and of love.

We really have to work on humility, since this is our weakness. **It is easy to be generous, to give ourselves completely to God, but it is difficult to be humble of heart and life!** Self-love is the last thing to survive in us – it is our very self: we cannot kill ourselves. It continues to grow if we don't cut off its head, and pull out its roots. Therefore work at removing this self-love – it would be unbecoming for you to have self-love in the presence of a humble spouse. It would be wrong to see Jesus Christ

covered with ignominy, and you, with glory – what a clash! You understand that a husband offers his arm to his spouse and goes walking with her – they must be equal. Jesus Christ loves solitude, while his spouse loves the world; he loves silence, and his spouse is always talking; he is humble of heart, and she is proud. That cannot continue – work on it.

Points for reflection:

What images does our founder use to describe humility of love? Define in your own words what does humility of love consist in. What is its positive definition? What danger should be avoided?