

## The Interior Attraction of Recollection, of Vocation, of Perfection, and of Direction<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament  
Paris, Friday, October 14, 1859

My Sisters, we said that you must **serve God through your attraction of grace**. We gave some preliminaries; now let's continue. It is clear that we must serve God as he wants to be served – the will of God becomes the norm for good works. We will experience great consolation and encouragement, once we have established this principle! Who knows whether the Good Lord is pleased when I practice this specific virtue, when I enter this vocation? Who knows if God is happy? As soon as I start doubting when I practice virtue, there will be suffering, as though the peace of the soul is disturbed. This uncertainty troubles the conscience.

How can I know what God wants? First, by grace. I'm not speaking here of the attraction of grace manifested through obedience. We'll talk about that later – but, I want to talk about the attraction in the grace of direction, when it is mixed with dryness of grace. I would say even more, with the cross of love, we are not sure what God really wants. There are ordinary graces, but God has other graces, as clear as the sun, that manifest his will – these are his extraordinary graces.

**When someone receives a grace of attraction, doubt is impossible**, just as it is impossible to doubt the existence of the sun when feeling its rays. Similarly, when God manifests his will by a grace of attraction, that grace, like the sun, brings two things along with it, namely, light and heat, or if you prefer, light and the fire of love. God comes to the soul with gentle charm, like a father or mother, or even better, like a spouse – the soul finds itself full of joy, full of the sweetness and joy of the Holy Spirit. This soul is then more in God than in herself, not through virtue, but instantaneously. God does his work alone; he attracts the soul – it is the gift of his love.

Is a real attraction always like that? Yes, the soul sees without reasoning, without difficulty. She sees what God wants; he enlightens and she understands. She did not place herself in this state; God himself came into her, like the rays of the sun coming through a crystal. That soul knows so clearly what God is asking that you might say that she sees him. She knows that God does not want to deceive her; she is in a state that involves all her faculties. The greatest proof is in the peace that she enjoys – I'm not talking about the peace of conscience that feels guilty about nothing, or the peace that comes after a victorious battle – it is the peace of recollection: the soul is totally recollected in God: she is at the disposition of God. In this recollection, the attraction works with the power and gentleness of love.

Every time an apparent attraction does not lead to recollection, it is no real attraction. Look closely: its infallible characteristic is a peace of union. In this way call to mind some circumstances of your own life, because you did receive this kind of grace from God. Although the attraction may have many aspects, since it is your vocation, surely you have felt this grace of attraction. When God called you to the Blessed Sacrament, you must have felt this grace, this peace, and felt disturbed when you did something contrary to this attraction. You must have felt its gentleness and its strength, and especially its joy. It is not like the joy of a soul that has been forgiven, but it is the joy of union, the joy of being in the will of God. You must have felt this.

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Besides that, this grace of attraction of perfection is a principle, the other (grace) is a call, and that was good. Then the God of love gave his grace: he is the way, the truth and the life (cf. Jn 14:6). All truth must pass through this prism, this light, before it reaches you; and everything that does not pass that way has no energy, and is foreign, because it does not come through this channel. God gives us many graces: there are even some that are not suitable for us. Wisdom and prudence dictate that, when a soul has an attraction to perfection, she must choose. But if she is not sufficiently recollected, she will not understand; she will be a bit confused. She must learn to distinguish what God wants, from what our human nature wants. As soon as you receive an attraction to perfection, you must sanctify your life by means of this attraction. If you back away from it, you place yourself in a state of poverty. As soon as God gives you an attraction, you will always be suffering and sickly if you don't work in line with this attraction.

**A few examples will help you understand.** When God wanted to convert St. Paul, he began by throwing him down – then he presented him his attraction: *Why are you persecuting me?* Immediately, he talks to him about suffering: *Who are you, Lord (sir)? – I am Jesus whom you are persecuting; it is hard for you to kick against the goad. – What shall I do, Lord (sir)?* You'll see – the attraction will come. God tells Ananias, the holy man in the town, his faithful servant and minister: *Go to this street; you will baptize Saul.* Ananias replies: *Lord, he has come to put us to death. – Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name to the ends of the earth, and I will show him what he will have to suffer* (cf. Acts 9:1-19; [22:3-16; 26:2-18]). Our Lord shows the way.

St. Paul was destined to suffer more than the other apostles – God gave him this attraction. In several passages, St. Paul speaks of the cross. He said that he *always had Jesus crucified before his eyes* (cf. 1 Cor 2:2). He said: *he loved me, I who am only one born abnormally, a blasphemer* (cf. 1 Cor 15:8; 1 Tm 1:12-14). To suffer was his grace, and with this grace of attraction he did suffer. He offered himself in sacrifice, and he persevered in his grace – it was his strength. He said: *I am filled with encouragement; I am overflowing with joy* (cf. 2 Cor 7:4). Because he was in his grace of attraction, he had its sweetness and its strength – if he had left it, he would have lost strength. He remained with it, and he was victorious.

**Do you want another attraction?** Consider St. Francis of Assisi. He was converted without knowing what God wanted. One day he entered a church and he heard these words from the gospel: *Go, sell what you have and give it to the poor; then come, follow me* (cf. Mt 19:21). And he strips himself of everything. He gives his father everything, even his clothes. He makes himself poor and wretched; he has no other ambition than to be poor – God shows him poverty as being so sweet, so loveable, and so divine, that he yearns for it like something beautiful. He calls it his spouse, his mother, he even invents words. For love of poverty, he made all imaginable sacrifices, because love desires sacrifice. If he had gone beyond this attraction, he would have gone out of his grace of perfection.

**Let's take another attraction. There's no true attraction in souls unless that attraction is interior.** St. Catherine of Siena had a devotion to the Blessed Sacrament that was rarely found even among the saints, in the midst of her trials and in her prayer. When we read her *Life* and her *Dialogues*, we see that all her insights came from there. She is the one compared to the sun; this was her grace, her virtue. It was with this grace that she converted the whole of Italy and part of Europe, that she brought the Pope back to Rome from Avignon, thus returning to Italy its glory. The Pope used her as an ambassador before kings. Where did she get her graces? In the Blessed Sacrament – it was her grace of attraction, and it gave her strength and success. But, what is my attraction? An attraction is never contrary to one's vocation; God does not contradict himself.

**Finally, the attraction is interior** – that's what recollects us best, and draws us closest to God. By ourselves, we cannot recollect ourselves. When we have experienced it, it was as if God had stripped us of body and soul. Sometimes we say: I made a good meditation; but no, it was God who was working: try

to notice. But must I always be searching? No, God gives like a flood of light, a torrential rain, and then the attraction becomes a virtue, which then becomes a habit; and we acquire the spirit of this virtue. Then direction becomes very easy – the soul is directed by its attraction.