

The Life of Our Lord in Us¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Friday, September 19, 1862

In general, I don't know how you're feeling, but I presume that your soul is nourishing itself with the food that is being offered you – not everything, because there's too much. We don't eat everything served at table – we choose. Notice that very little is needed for a soul that is well prepared. Take what helps you. When God speaks, he says very little: a single word says everything. That word touches the soul and places it in the wealth of God. **If you understood clearly this morning's meditation, you would understand many things: God is your center – he is our real center – the center of our life is in God.** I ask you to promise to make this morning's meditation your first choice: that is what we call the kingdom of God, or, if you prefer, of you in God. This morning, I said something in passing – I'm not sure if I can express it properly, since I did not have time to think about it before God, to ask God's help.

Recollection means pouring ourselves into God – that's the first part. The second part is making room for God to live in us – our Lord in us.

At first, we are the ones going into God. We go there by choice and out of love, renouncing everything along the way. That's fine! Once a soul resides in God, the reverse occurs, as I told you frequently in the past. These truths are not easy to grasp. Our Lord says: *Whoever eats me remains in me* (cf. Jn 6:56). First we go, then there is the return. Our Lord says: *Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and we will make our home in him* (Jn 14:23). Whoever loves: that's the first degree of love – recollection. Then, God will come because God is love (1 Jn 4:8): the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the holy Trinity abides in us, because we love him in our charity.

Further on our Lord says: *Whoever loves me, I myself will manifest myself to him* (cf. Jn 14:21). Note that he reveals himself. In what way? In the way of love. This is what we must dwell on, to catch the meaning; what is this return? It seems unnecessary. Our Lord should have said, "Whoever loves me abides in me." What more do we need, since he becomes our very essence? When our Lord lives in us, he gives us what he is in himself, our Lord lives in us and we in him. That is the return gift. What then? This reciprocity is not easy to explain, since the soul already abides in him. Here is what I think: the soul gives itself and our Lord accepts, this part is clear. Our Lord does not take away our freedom but only our self-mastery. Controlling everything, our Lord accepted the gift of our freedom, so that we may have merit, and that we may offer him new acts of worship. Our Lord is now in charge; he has become the master.

There are three ideas that explain this abiding of our Lord in our soul. These three ideas are on the obelisque of St. Peter's in Rome, erected by (Pope) Sixtus V: Jesus Christ lives, he reigns, he commands – **and there is a fourth thing...** here are the operative words.

Jesus Christ lives in us, but how? By his death our Lord has given up his natural life by which he offered sacrifices of suffering and of virtue. All his sacrifices flowed freely and meritoriously from his human life. Since he has entered into glory, our Lord no longer persists in his human life. He wants to take it back, in order to continue this life in a loving way, for the glory of the Father and the sanctification of his people. For this purpose, he created a sacrament of union by which the soul becomes one with him.

¹ Number 449. *La vie de notre Seigneur en nous.*

When the soul abandons its self-mastery, our Lord becomes its superior and master. One can say, “You are my soul, you are my body. I do this by free choice, out of love, and by way of consecration.”

This is our Lord’s response: *You give yourself to me, and I give myself to you. That is only just: you let me live in you, one with you as your Savior. I am your holiness, your perfection – some day I shall be your reward. I will give you all my eternal wealth, since you give me everything you have: we will make an exchange of life. I will take your place: I will be in your house – I will be the head (cf. Col 1:18), you will be the members (cf. 1 Cor 12:27). I will command, and you will obey. Then all your sufferings will be mine, since I have become one with you. When you make some act of virtue, the glory will not be yours, but mine: like a soldier, your reward will be the victory.*

The soul says: You will be my head, I will give you mine along with my members. You can no longer use your own body to suffer, since it is glorious; I will give you mine, in order to give you a new life. Our Lord accepts. My good Daughters, that is why we call **the Eucharist the renewal, the extension of the incarnation.** Our Lord is now our life: why? It is not for him, since he is already crowned in his sacred humanity; he has glory and power, he is crowned on the throne of his Father – that suffices for him. Since we are his juniors, and since he loves us in the redemption, this good and genuine Joseph (cf. Gn 45:4-11), who is Jesus, does not want his brothers to live in misery, he wants to share with us: the Father honors his Son in his chosen ones, in such a way that the Son comes to us so that his Father can honor us in him as his chosen ones.

Do you see now what this union of our Lord in himself is? He is the one who lives anew, just as he is the power, the grace, and the light. We are like free instruments, his co-workers. This association is very real – it’s no exaggeration. St. John talks about it constantly: we form a society of love and of life. Ah! What a joy! These two flames come together and form one hearth. Heaven is not a society of life; heaven is a crown of justice that we have won; it is not a free gift as it is in the case of children who die after baptism. It is a crown that we must earn, that we can earn only through the one who gives it, our Lord himself (cf. 2 Tm 4:7-8).

Our Lord is in us to the same degree that we are in him, by the union that gives us this power. Therefore, enter into him; it is just and necessary that it be that way – that your life, united with our Lord, be a divine life. To effect this union, **something like the incarnation occurs.** There was an infinite merit through the union of the divine person; likewise, in us, through union with our Lord. We are not God, but our works are infinite and divine through our Lord. You understand; that is how it works. In that way, when I suffer, what a joy! I give him anew his ability to suffer for his Father. Our Lord is happy to see that what he can no longer do, the soul does, when it exercises his virtues. The soul restores to him the virtues that he can no longer practice. Our Lord once again becomes humble, mild, and mortified – the Father crowns him a second time in me. What a joy!

My good Sisters, when you work, let this thought encourage you; it is true. Notice what our Lord said to St. Paul, who was then still called Saul: *Why are you persecuting me? – Who are you, Lord? -- I am Jesus of Nazareth that you are persecuting* (Acts 22:7-8). He could have said: You are persecuting my children, my servants. He takes himself as he is: the members belong to the head, and the head to the body. It is true: *Whatever you do to these little ones, you are doing it to me* (cf. Mt 25:40). How great this is! The soul really becomes great! You understand that there no question of coming to embellish yourself, to honor yourself with your own merits. These are insignificant – you do it through union with our Lord. If he enters into you, enter into him. You know what a spout of water is: the water goes up to a certain level, in such a way that its ascending motion is equal to its descent². When you go to our Lord, you give him the power to come back to you in return.

² The copy gives the opposite: *its descending motion is equal to its ascent.*

Our Lord is not satisfied with living in us: he is not only holiness and power – he is love. Our Lord did not live a single moment without loving his Father, and with a meritorious love, ever glorifying him in a new way. We will give him the ability to repeat this. Then what does our Lord do? We give him the same conditions; with this difference that it is no longer the body that he took in the womb of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, but our own body that he takes to incorporate it through love. It is not through us that he loves his Father; no, he does that through himself. You understand that the less perfect must go through the more perfect, that the finite must pass into the infinite. And so he takes our free heart, places it into his, and through our heart his becomes what it was in the womb of Mary and in his passion. That is why, according to one of the Fathers of the Church, a Christian is another living Jesus Christ.

May he come into you, so that the Father may say: *This is my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Mt 3:17). My poor Daughters, this must happen. But what kind of love will you have so that the Trinity should come into you? Let's be reasonable. You know, or perhaps you don't know this principle: love can prevail only between equals. Two souls must be on the same level: if one friend is higher than the other, he must descend – that's understood. Here we have the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit – the holy Trinity – who loves you with a tender and personal love. And the Good Lord wants us to love him. **The blessed Trinity wants to be united with us**, not as equals – impossible – but by a union of life. Is that clear?

How shall we, poor creatures, rise to that level? Through graces... but you understand clearly that these are alms given to a beggar: a subject cannot approach the king as an equal, since he lives from almsgivings. Love is not enough to reach the heights of divine love. How shall we arrive there, if not by uniting ourselves to the divine love of our Lord? Since he is human, I can give him my hand: he is my brother – there is equality of nature, of human condition. Since he is God, since the Word took our human nature – I find myself lifted up to him. It is through Jesus my Savior and brother that my love for the Trinity becomes, I dare not say divine, but great, because of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine how pleased the Father must be, as he says: *This is my son, my daughter, that finds happiness in coming to us?* The Son is pleased to come and incarnate himself in his spouse; and the Holy Spirit is pleased to come into his temple.

You must give yourselves to our Lord to the extent that your heart will become his heart, and your life, his life. My poor Daughters, what must we do? Just as we do with fire. We ignite it with a match. In any case, you cannot start a fire without fire. *God is love* (1 Jn 4:8), and we are love – these two loves come together in Jesus Christ. Everything is there. What happens then? When I love, it is now Jesus Christ who loves in me; otherwise how can you explain that love continues in heaven: God is greater than the angels – how can we love, if not through our Lord?

Our Lord does not reign in us only through love; there is something else besides the life of love. What is it? The life of sacrifice is our Lord completing his sacramental life in us. Here is a wonderful thought: since every Christian gives a new life to Jesus Christ, everything in the life of Our Savior is therefore present: Jesus dying on the cross, his evangelical life, the child Jesus – whatever you wish. He relives his entire life in us.

As St. Paul says: *I cannot die unless Jesus is complete* (cf. Col 1:24). **If I must reach the holiness of his perfection, what must I do?** Listen, my poor Daughters, that is not your concern – God does it. To live in you, to establish union with you, our Lord gives you all his states, all the phases of his life³. Our Lord makes you pass through his entire life in one day: there you will find his birth, his hidden life, his passion and death. He does this inside of you: he varies your states and your graces, sacrifices even more so out

³ This teaching on states of soul is typical of the French School of Spirituality.

of love. The result is that his thirty-three years flash before you. Do you not realize that your inner states change? It is our Lord who matures in you, and lets you experience a certain time of his life, a particular suffering, so that he can tell his Father: I renew my birth, my passion in this soul. Great souls pass through the entire life of our Lord in one day; small souls take a lifetime – are you small souls? We never return to the past, since our Lord never went back on his steps – we don't return to the years past: graces are ahead, waiting for you.

I said that Jesus Christ renews in you various events of his life. Are you tempted? Remember how Jesus was tempted: the devil went to tempt him in the desert; our Lord rejected him. You experience humiliations and persecutions, but our Lord can no longer experience these. Then comes the great sacrifice of Calvary: death. Our Lord chooses your states: therefore, follow our Lord; don't try to change your states. In that case there would be two masters, and our Lord will go away if you want to resume being your own master, but there's no way. Since sacrifice and suffering give the greatest glory to his Father, he hopes for just one thing: to convince us to renew his sacrifices, his sufferings, in order to offer them to his Father. He wants to do this with you, through you. A Christian is another Jesus Christ: understand well what a Christian is. Since our Lord has taken flesh in us, the devil tempts Jesus Christ in us, to hand him over, like Judas. When you meditate, therefore, meditate on the life of Jesus Christ in you. How beautiful it is. [...]

What must we do in this state? Try to enter deeply into our Lord: remain in our Lord and don't leave, because he will remain. Therefore, be recollected. Then, something will happen that I cannot explain: our Lord enjoyed the beatific vision – except in his passion when it became terrible – his human soul always saw the beauty of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. This contemplation made him happy for the soul cannot see God without being happy, in spite of sacrifice. In his passion, this changed, since he lived it out of justice and our Lord was frightened. My good Daughters, you will have the beatific vision of our Lord, yes, but not in the same way. You will have the beatific vision of our Lord: you will experience him within you; you will experience him by a tender love.

My poor Daughters, when we love someone with a very delicate love, do we not feel his presence, his breath, through a gentle awareness? Our Lord is there more than a father or a mother; he gives himself. That is my point. **The soul experiences a joy, a peace – a feeling of peace that I cannot define**, this is real. Of course, the beatific vision must have its sacrifices, because it occurs in the midst of the greatest temptations, even despair. But, the sky remains calm: that is where the Good Lord dwells. When the storm has passed, our Lord will reappear.

The *Imitation* goes further when it says that, **if we had the purity of love, we would always be contemplatives**. It adds more: that we would enjoy the delights of God, that we would share the joy of the saints in heaven – not that of glory, but that of love. Surely, love must bring happiness: when love goes beyond people and feelings, happiness necessarily follows. Consider the saints; their lives were happy, they delighted in God. This does not mean that there will be no suffering on the human level. In our higher faculties we find joy, but a strong and powerful joy – only the saints know this. You might say: I am not a saint. How unfortunate! If we love imperfectly, the Good Lord will not give us this joy; he gives it only to those who belong completely to him. If he wanted to give it to us, we should tell him: But, Lord, you will be mistaken; you will hurt yourself to make me believe that I love you as much as you love me. If you feel nothing, it is a blessing: he is acting, he is at home – this happiness is not something we praise, because it is the glory of Jesus Christ in us⁴.

⁴ Possible interpretation: « Si vous ne sentez pas, c'est un bonheur, il le fait, car il est en lui-même ce bonheur, on ne l'exalte pas, parce que c'est la gloire de Jésus Christ en nous ». That is: "We should not glorify ourselves if we experience this joy, since it is Jesus Christ himself who does it, who is our joy in us."



Point for reflection:

“The pouring of God into us” is an expression drawn from the spiritual masters of the Flemish School. Here, Peter Julian makes it the consequence of the complete gift of self. This pouring into God becomes a life. Even the human emotions form part of this union with Jesus Christ and of his life in us. What points strike you in this teaching?