

The Loving Sacrifice of Our Lord in the Eucharist¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Wednesday, September 17, 1862

What is the soul of love? It is sacrifice. There is no love without sacrifice. If you want to love our Lord, you should love him by sacrifice. Otherwise your love will not be true, a mere body without a soul.

What is a sacrifice? Renunciation. There are two kinds: suffering of the body and renunciation of the soul. The greater the sacrifices are, greater is the love; the less perfect they are, the more love decreases. This is the rule: there is no love without sacrifice. While the love of God is perfect, when he wants to show it to us, he shows it by sacrifice.

Referring to the love of the heavenly Father for us, St. John says that this love was so great that *he gave his only Son for our salvation*. (cf. 1 Jn 4:10) How did our Lord prove his love? He loved us through the sufferings and humility of his life. Given by the Father, he went even to Calvary, God the Father gave him to us because he loved us. Our Lord says: *Love me as I have loved you*. [Jn 13:34] The mere sight of him reveals his love for us: I took on human flesh; see the humility of my incarnation, the poverty of my life, all the different sacrifices I accepted out of love for you. Nobody can have greater love. I want to give my life for you. Calvary, Nazareth, Bethlehem are all sacrifices. When St. Paul wants to give a proof of our Lord's love, he says: *he died for me, therefore he loved me*. (cf. Ga 2:20) That was the proof. My good Daughters, we cannot consider the incarnation without saying: God was so good, how he loved me!

That sacrificial love didn't last only for the thirty-three years of his life, but until the end of the world. He was the propitiation for those who would come. He paid our ransom, since all of us were present on Calvary; we had to be present by name. Did he make these sacrifices, then, for you, for those who were present as well as for those who were absent? Certainly. Love embraces everything, if his actions had been limited only to a period of time, they would not have been for the whole world. Our Lord said: *I came to set fire in the world*. (cf. Lk 12:49) and the whole world was set ablaze with that fire.

Surely, the love of our Lord is a love of self-giving and sacrifice. Therefore it should be the basis of our love for God. To eliminate any doubt that he established love by sacrifice, he survived and by surviving in the power of his love, he perpetuated all the sacrifices of his mortal life. If he cannot now suffer as in his states of humiliation, if he cannot be poor as in his mortal life, he puts into practice all these states in his life of glory. He practices all these sacrifices in the same spirit of giving, to be able to say: I am there in my Eucharist renewing all my sacrifices. Therefore, Eucharist is the continuation of all his sacrifices.

Let us look at the details. Consider how our Lord was united to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to her most holy body and soul. In the Eucharist, our Lord is continually united to all who receive Communion. This is the extension of this mystery, but what a difference! Our Lord was incarnated in the womb of the Virgin Mary, in a woman who knew him well, who loved him. He must have gone there with joy. Now among communicants, so many are lukewarm and unworthy, even ungrateful! Once he finds a good soul, he rejoices! Notice how this incarnation is greater than in the Blessed Virgin. This is true because there is a much greater difference.

What our Lord started at the Cenacle, he will continue until the end of the world, giving himself to everyone. Yet people don't care. He no longer sends an angel, even the Archangel Gabriel as to the

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Blessed Virgin Mary. Yet human beings don't care. Why does our Lord continue to remain in his sacrament? For even one good person, he accepts the affronts from so many in order to give himself to this one person. Can't you see the poverty of our churches? Many churches are poorer than the stable, the altar less clean than the straw in the crib! So many churches have only what is needed for baptisms and funerals. That's all! However, our Lord remains in the moldy tabernacle, in a rotten temple. No one pays attention. Humidity often destroys the sacred species, forcing our Lord to leave without having accomplished anything. In some almost abandoned churches, only one person remains! Alas! Alas!

If you only knew what is going on in the whole world, seeing it with your own eyes! No doubt, all the priests should be like the ones you see. But some are negligent, not reflecting, abandoning the master for trifles that amount to nothing. Don't have any illusions, all of this really exists. In many places, especially in some parts of South America, the clergy are so poor in virtue and zeal, how is our Lord treated? There's no need to go so far away! So many churches in France...! What does our Lord do? He stays. When the sacred species deteriorate and become moldy so that he can no longer remain, he will leave because there will no longer be any integrity in the sacred species which is the condition for his sacramental existence. Is it possible for him to be so inseparably united to the sacred species? It has to be. If he had put conditions, we would always be in doubt about his presence. He preferred to be united without any conditions, accepting the awful ingratitude from unhappy individuals. There's no more doubt; he would accept to be consumed by misery, rather than not to stay to save our faith. Our Lord knew all this. He counts all the sacred hosts, he knows their number, since it is he.

The heavenly Father is obliged to look at his Son abandoned and at the mercy of so many negligent people, profaners and mercenaries willing to sell him! Consenting to the Eucharist, he knew all this. He knew it beforehand, but why did he do it? So that his love would go to the extreme. There are very few Eucharistic souls. He gives himself not only to priests, but also to good and bad people. Not only that! He is given to the devil, he is used for magic. I'm not saying anything new; [...] We don't see these things, but we know about them. Our Lord does not want to defend himself; if he was a lamb until death, he wants to be a lamb until sacramental death. His love leaves him without even a cry of defense. What caused this? His love.

When our Lord instituted the Eucharist, he **was fully aware of all the offences and sacrileges that would occur**. He could foresee how this gift would be abused by horrible sacrileges. This scene was worse than hell itself. On the other hand, he also foresaw the small number of persons who would come to adore with reverential faith. Their number would be inconsequential when compared to the millions who would refuse to give any honor at all.

Divine justice could cry out that this sacrament would become the occasion of greater crimes than those preceding the incarnation. Would it not be enough to give the people the cross and the gospel, along with redemption? Even then, Christians would be richer than the Jews. This was not enough, however, to satisfy the love of our Lord. After giving Communion to the twelve, could our Lord refuse to give Communion to the rest of the faithful? In his words, "I promised to remain with them till the end of the world. Were there but one loving soul in all that time, I would still institute my Sacrament for this one good person." Although this may seem like an exaggeration, be sure that it was so. There was no agony like that of the Garden of Olives, our Lord was fully aware of all the crimes to be committed against his person, still he went beyond all that. No one can say that those who existed before the incarnation were loved more than those who came after. All were loved equally. Perhaps the latter received even greater love. Ultimately the last one to receive Communion will inherit the fruits of all of our Lord's sacrifices that occurred before his lifetime.

Remember what I am about to tell you, because it is absolutely true. When our Lord instituted the Eucharist, he transubstantiated bread and wine into his body, blood, soul and his divinity. [...]

Our Lord saw us, too, at the Last Supper, and he said, **“I will love you more than the others. Not only will you be a special guard for me, but I will give you this grace as your vocation.** You will become my court and my family. You will come on scene at the hour and time chosen by my love.” [...] The priest does not consecrate as did our Lord for the priest vanishes and Jesus Christ takes his place. This is the teaching of the Council of Trent. This is a most striking thought. [...]

What follows from this? When you receive Communion, when the priest gives you the sacred Host, do you know that the Host given to you has “traveled” all the way from the Cenacle? Yes, it was consecrated there, designated and delegated in love. [...] You might say: Is this possible! The love of God is not bound by time, but flows from the beginning.

Since our Lord comes to you by sacrifice, what sacrifice should you want to make. **The sacrifice you should offer is the sacrifice of your body, your soul and your life.** This is needed to be in the same condition as our Lord who comes to you. Therefore you should examine what is most difficult for your body, your heart, your obedience, your will, the household tasks, and all your actions. When something is asked from you: My God, I am very happy to offer this, happy to be able to give a little proof of my love. If this requires only some effort, our Lord will be pleased a little. If it is very difficult, he will be very pleased because it is a greater proof of our love. If people knew how much our Lord loves us, wouldn't the churches be always full? Wouldn't there be only one immense Communion in the whole world? But this love is unknown, no one thinks about it. Such great love is frightening, and people turn away and flee for the sake of a few lesser gifts.

Make this meditation well, because it is the foundation of everything, a martyr suffers, sacrificing himself. In order to have strength, you must love the cause, which is suffering. Love it. I never spoke to you about that idea because it is too hard, but during a retreat we can say everything. How our Lord loved me! The believer who will be the last to receive Communion will be able to say, our Lord loved me enough to come all the way down to me. What a journey, what love! And would I not dare to take a few steps to go meet that Good Master? Of course I would!



Point for reflection:

A lucid reflection about the love of God and of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist makes us aware of our lack of love in return. Here St. Peter Julian insists on that point, even on the sacrileges, sins, and indifference that still surround this sacrament. What concrete proofs of our love can we give?