

# The Mercy of Love<sup>1</sup>

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

**My dear Sisters, we spoke about the love that our Lord gives us; now let us see how he forgives us.** We need his forgiveness more than his gifts; we have more guilt than virtue; we do more harm than good. My poor Daughters, we miss out on many graces! We render so many graces barely effective, if not sterile, by our own fault! What touches me more deeply about the love of God for us is his mercy; it touches me more than his gifts. When he gives, he is so good that he cannot help but give; and when he gives himself in Communion, I understand that our Lord, being so good, goes to the point of giving himself. What I cannot understand is his loving mercy.

**Let me explain what I mean by the mercy of love.** There is mercy of salvation, allowing us to pass from sin to the state of grace. I understand that very well. God is great when our Lord takes a sinner and converts him. But there is another mercy, the mercy that springs from love that I don't really understand. I don't understand that, serving our Lord – in the way we do, with so much stinginess, laziness, spiritual cowardice, selfishness – excuse me for saying so - that our Lord still has the same love for us, as if our love had continued to be fervent in his service. That's what I don't understand. This is contrary to all other loves.

When a citizen is the friend of a king, evidently, he does not become the king's equal. This is a one-sided love. Since our Lord always treats us with the same love, he seems to be in connivance with our weaknesses when my poor Daughters, we, like you do not accept responsibility for serving him so poorly. Willingly we go to the chapel, but once there our imagination immediately brings us back into the world. A thousand times our imagination makes us leave the chapel, amusing ourselves all over the world. This proves that we have very poor self-control. Part of our adoration is a wandering distraction. Sometimes evil thoughts come. Of course, we push them away because we don't want to sin. This is a major difficulty, a great weakness of mind. Let's grant that it is not a sin, but if we had been recollected ahead of time, if we had kept our mind in recollection, we would not have been so distracted. Therefore, we are guilty by our habitual intention. Usually, we excuse ourselves when we make a mistake. We don't even see this fault!

[...] **Take note that our Lord always welcomes us as if we were not flighty, like the first time we adored. He waits for us, offering his gifts, as if we were always devoted to his service.** You might say, Truly, our Lord does not seem to value his service. You can add, Does he need to be so good because we are so miserable? See how good and merciful he is. If not, we would not be allowed to enter the church and remain at his feet. He never bears a grudge, never even thinks of it. He is like a mother with her troublesome child telling her thousands of foolish things. This mother allows all this, in order to put in a good word.

Our Lord does not want to bemoan the past. He places us at his feet, saying, **Start again.** If he were not so merciful, he would not do this. The Good Lord does not grow weary as we do. In fact, he wearies us with so much kindness and love. What happens in the world? Many no longer go to church. They get bored, not with themselves, not at all, but with God's goodness. What must the saints be thinking in heaven! The souls in purgatory, who see all this, know they acted in the same way, not understanding such goodness.

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<sup>1</sup> Number 443. *La miséricorde d'amour.*

**My Sisters, here is another proof of the love of our Lord, who is always a good father toward us. We receive Communion every day.** Our Lord cannot give us a greater proof of his love than by coming with his heart, his riches, all that he is, to enrich us, if only we accept all that he wants to give us to make us grow. My good Sisters, since when have we been receiving Communion? One Communion alone could make us a saint. No doubt we receive Communion with good will; we would not go otherwise. But we are so lukewarm and negligent! That never changes.

One who is crippled by illness does not attend a royal banquet, but rather stays in bed. Here we are crippled by the worst illness of all, as we don't sense his love growing within us. Yet our Lord invites us every day, he wants to give himself to us. Shouldn't we cry out, "Lord, you are God! You know that I am weak and lazy, unable to thank you properly. I am lukewarm and ever so distracted." When I declare that I am lukewarm and unworthy, likely to abuse God's love, wanting only to be left at his feet, this changes nothing. The Lord replies that it is precisely because you are crippled, ailing, and lukewarm that I come to you. What else can you say!<sup>2</sup> Saint Augustine used to say, "Lord, your love for us is foolish." *Insanes Domine!* In his love our Lord loses his own self-respect. Surely paradise is nothing more!

As soon as we can walk, we go to sit at the family table. He does not prevent us, and so we go; this is our place. He does not reprimand us, but says: **Come, I am your father and your good savior, come and learn how to love.** If this were not so, who would dare receive Communion, unless we knew him to be the Good Samaritan? He gives us Communion; he loves us, although he does not love our sins. He loves you as creatures, as Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament. If he could give you Communion ten times a day, he would do it. Why? It is your daily bread, your place (at the table).

Beyond all this, my Sisters, we cannot even be aware of all the faults we commit on a daily basis. Merely to recognize them would require a degree of perfection we have not yet attained. We would need to see them as our Lord sees them. Since we are in partial darkness, we see things only vaguely. You don't yet have enough spiritual light to see all your faults. If four or a hundred rays of sunlight were to penetrate this room, we would notice even the tiniest specks of dust. Surely we commit sins against love, not necessarily against God's commandments. My poor Daughters, we often sin against charity in thoughts that offend the delicacy of a love that would take nothing away from the Lord, for we tend to take glory in our works, human sentiments and sensuality in his service. Are we humble in spirit, pure in will, well-meaning in our desires and intentions? Why do we commit so many faults in our thoughts, through self-seeking and spiritual pride, without even being aware of it? I can't explain it.

The Good Lord sees all these specks of dust in our human nature. We are not pure enough for him to let us see all this. We lack the degree of love that would let us see the delicacy of our relationship with him. Our Lord reaches down to our weakness, treating us as humble children even when we are not humble. In the depths of our hearts we remain sensual in his service, for our hearts are mired in sensuality. We make use of his gifts for created things and whatever we hold dear. Does our Lord scold us? He does not even frown, for we would become discouraged if we saw all our faults and imperfections. A child must not be told all about its frailty, or it will never take a step forward. A child who cannot yet read does not need to be told how much he does not know.

**This is what the Good Lord does. Instead of scolding and punishing us in his kindness, he makes us grow in his love.** How many times we willingly offend him, how many times we are lazy and cowardly in times of sacrifice. What does the Good Lord do? He compels us to give him our will so that he can give us his. He loves us, always warning us, Do not look at your faults, for you may be discouraged, and get sick with regret and despair. See your sins and imperfections in his mercy. See how he serves you,

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<sup>2</sup> Meaning: What do you want to answer to such a word? Augustine was saying: Lord, you are insane!

when you serve him so badly. See how he reaches out to you when you go away from him. Is he not always with you, surrounding you with an atmosphere of mercy and love?

If you happen to recall what you were like in the world, your past sins, your unfaithfulness, understand this: our Lord closed his eyes so as not to see your sins, but to see you only in his tenderness and love. She pleases me; I want her. What does he want? Be his spouse, a queen in the paradise of his mercy and love.

I have said that **you should be happier than us men, since God gave you a more sensitive heart.** We are more impressed by reason than by the heart and love. I know very well that every person is before God, and that grace perfects our dispositions. Still it seems to me that you should be totally permeated with the mercy of God, in tears before the mercy of God. I am cold, a sister might say. How strange, don't you have a heart? How do you react? If you consider our Lord on his throne, you will feel nothing, since his glory is so great. If you consider him on his throne, in his glory, he will be too lofty, confronting you. What then should you consider? See his mercy, his great kindness, having exhausted all his tenderness of the past. If you want to maintain a sensitive and deeply responsive heart, you must place yourself in that mercy of love at the present moment. How could you not feel something? Often, it's our own fault. We don't live in the present, and so we don't empathize. But if we place ourselves in the present, everything is different. Put yourself in the fire, and you will certainly feel it... unless you are already dead.

**When our Lord fills you with a flood of grace and love, what should you do?** My poor Daughters, once in heaven we will certainly bless him, but the more merciful he has been, the more we should be grateful. Our Lord loved us, lavished his mercy and love on us, when we did not even merit a glance from him, and not even a place in purgatory. We can understand him then and say, without any exaggeration, that our kindness will never compare with his. We can never, never give back as much as we have received. You can plunge into that ocean of mercy and compassionate love! Without expressing it in words, I understand why that mercy might begin reproaching us for being so insensitive, as he shows us his gifts, our miseries and hell, like on Calvary. But now, out of fear of hurting me, his mercy does not even mention anything to me, but encourages me. I can say that he loves me as much as the most privileged of souls. On the other hand, I can say, Lord, are you knocking at the wrong door? – No, my good Daughter. So what should we do? Like the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles, say: *My soul melted when I heard the voice of my Beloved.* What for? For love.



**Points for reflection:**

Guilty feelings can lead to discouragement, and to a loss of enthusiasm for doing well. Here, our holy Founder transforms this awareness of our weaknesses into a hymn of praise to the kindness and mercy of God. How can we open our hearts to this love?