

The Spirit of Love and Sacrifice¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Tuesday, August 20, 1861

Your rule says that you should have the spirit of love and sacrifice. Why do we always speak about sacrifice, come back to it? Isn't there any true love without sacrifice? No, my dear Sisters, there is no true love without sacrifice, I mean for us who are journeying as exiles on earth. Heaven is the reward of the sacrifices of love on earth. In heaven, love will be rewarded according to our sacrifices. There is a greater glory for those who bore many sacrifices, little glory for little sacrifices. Surely all will be kings, but God will reward only the sacrifices. Therefore, if there is no sacrifice, there is no true love.

Our Lord said: *If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me.* (cf. Lk 9:23) Whoever wants me to be his master, king and God must renounce himself. Self-denial is the greatest of all sacrifices. *To take up his cross and follow me* is the sacrifice of our body, of penance and mortification. Clearly our Lord immediately defines his service as renouncing oneself and taking up one's cross. This shows us that our Lord, wanting to glorify our body and soul, wants both of them to work for the glory of God.

Peter do you love me? Yes Lord, you know how I love you. Our Lord does not take this for granted. However, St. Peter had answered correctly. *If you love me, feed my lambs and my sheep.* (cf. Jn 21:15-17) What Jesus asks is, prove it by your sacrifice, through the difficulties of your apostolic ministry, all the sacrifices that accompany the apostolate. It is written that *all those who would like to serve God would have to suffer persecution.* (cf. Sir 2:1) If you love me, work and dedicate yourself for me. As if our Lord had not explained himself clearly, he adds: *When you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and (they will crucify you like me) take you where you would rather not go.* (cf. Jn 21:18-19) This was the proof that Saint Peter loved our Lord, and that he would always love him. The apostolate is the gathering of all sacrifices. A great apostle must expect to be crucified even by those he saves. Saint Peter, as head of the Church, founded the Church of Antioch, his first apostolic chair. At Rome, he embraced the whole world through this ruling nation. His whole life had been suffering; he had to give birth through the pains of the apostolate.

Since a priest is another Jesus Christ, he must have his Calvary, his cross, and his death. **One who does not love sacrifices will accomplish nothing.** The apostles asked our Lord: *What are you going to give us?* We love you, sacrificed, and *left everything to follow you.* [Mt 19:27] This is true. – We left our boats, our trade, our nets and our families to follow you in poverty. Our Lord answered: *Truly I tell you: everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, [spouse] children or land for the sake of my name will be repaid a hundred times over, [and also inherit eternal life].* (cf. Mt 19:29) In detail, he mentions father, mother, spouse, etc. Only those who left everything will be repaid a hundred times over. The Good Lord acts like humans do: he doesn't ask interest for something he didn't deposit; he does not harvest what he has not sown.

[...] **True love works but speaks little.** Why is religious life more perfect than the priesthood, or an acquired holiness? Let's be clear: it is true that a priest is in a holier state of life, but he is not in as holy a condition. He keeps his freedom, his goods; he is his own master. A religious sacrifices possessions, body and soul; consequently, this condition of life is holier and a hundred times more meritorious, following the principle that sacrifice produces love and so perfection. You might say: To receive is more

¹ Number 362. *Esprit d'amour et de sacrifice. Explication de la règle.* (*The Spirit of love and sacrifice. Explanation of the rule.*)

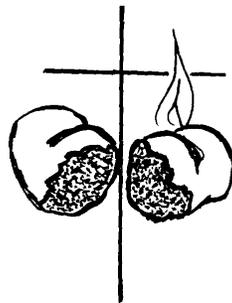
perfect than to give. But our Lord says: *There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.* (cf. Ac 20:35) Notice that he mentions that the heart is happier, finding its happiness in giving; but he did not say “holier”. Not at all.

[...] That one who gives is great, while the one who receives is lesser. It is more perfect still to have nothing to give. Some claim, If I were free, I would give alms. You want to feel the joy of giving, but there is a greater reward for shedding tears and suffering.

I remember one day, we were two religious who had nothing but good words to share with a beggar. One said, Let’s pray for that poor man, so that somebody will give him something. Wasn’t that better than finding our satisfaction? One day, a rather well dressed man came to me, but he was desperate, fearing to be arrested by the police, since he had nothing to pay for his room. I gave him forty cents and he began to cry, You saved my life; tomorrow I will settle my accounts. I didn’t have any merit, since I felt very happy. I tell you this, because I heard some religious say, We feel sad when we have no money to give. You are doing much more by the gift of yourselves.

I was saying that sacrifice is the condition and perfection of love. The greater the sacrifices, the greater the love. The hotter the fire, the higher the flames rise. Love is the flame, and the fire needs to be fed by sacrifices. Don’t be surprised that grace comes to you only through sacrifices, that life is full of sacrifice. Religious life is only a Calvary of love, where the soul crucifies itself and surrenders itself to God’s instruments to be crucified. The mind has its own sacrifices, as free as it is. Doesn’t the heart have its own sacrifices? Isn’t the will constantly breaking itself? Doesn’t the body also have sacrifices to offer? How is this done? Through love. What is happening? One day in religious life is worth an entire life. Life is assessed on the basis of sacrifice. If there are many in one day, this one day is worth an entire life. Religious life enhances the value of an entire life by multiplying its merits. That’s why religious life is so greatly rewarded in heaven. [...] One day lived in religious life is greater than a whole lifetime. God doesn’t pay attention to spoken words, but to the flame in the heart. (cf. Is 29:13)

Since we live close to our Lord, let us love him more than all others. [...] Since no one can love him more than we do, no one should make more sacrifices than we do. **A great fire needs to be fed with a lot of wood.**² Eucharist is fire. Let us feed the hearth with all the sacrifices of our Christian and religious life. We need to be industrious, by finding wood when we have nothing. We need to ask the Good Lord as well as the angels and saints to give us something. The saints are not satisfied with mortifications. They seek more penances longing to satisfy their love, not only to perfect it but also to give it. Evidently, our Lord is the only one who lights the fire, but he wants us to feed it! When I offer the Good Lord my sacrifices, my heart, my body, and my will, this is a bouquet of love. In religious life there is always more to give, ever more and more perfectly. Let’s do this well.



Point for reflection:

² S7 bis: *a lot of wood is needed, instead of Raulin: wood is needed.*

Father Eymard never spoke so strongly and clearly as he does here about the link between love and sacrifice. Look for some concrete examples, and share them, from your own life, or from the life of Mother Marguerite or from a saint of your choice.