

We Must Die to Everything with Our Lord¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Thursday, September 18, 1862

My Sisters, you must live from the Eucharistic life of our Lord. What is that Eucharistic life? You must understand it well, because it must be the rule and end of your life.

The Eucharistic life of our Lord is the form that his love chose to remain in our midst. Since that form is a form of annihilation, it is also what he wanted to teach us, so that we could always say: *Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart* (Mt 11:29). This annihilation of our Lord out of love required that he sacrifice his glory, his majesty, and even his freedom of movement – he is there without movement: he is not even visible. Like St. Paul, we can say that he *emptied himself* (Phil 2:7) – he is in a state of annihilation, so that we can say that our senses and our reason cannot be used to see him.

Now, my Sisters, we must meditate often on this annihilation of our Lord out of love, in order to understand why he does this. There are three major reasons.

The first is to glorify his Father, by his state of annihilation. The glory he gives to his Father is unique. Until then, our Lord had glorified his Father very well by a visible humility, through perceptible sufferings; in a word, he honored his Father by his state of human weakness; in his glorious state, on the other hand, he honors his Father by his glorious state. This is what he now voluntarily sacrifices. Our Lord does not want glory, power, and freedom on earth; he does not want them because, since in heaven he cannot humble himself – just as the saints in heaven cannot do that – our Lord wanted to unite these two things: his Father would be glorified in his divinity and in his humanity at the same time – it is the greatest homage that his Father could receive. [...]

If our Lord could humble himself to the point of being nothing, he would do it, since the species are only a form of being that has no being, in order to show us how we ourselves should honor him by humbling ourselves, and by annihilating ourselves. Remember the words of St. John the Baptist: when his disciples were a bit jealous because everyone was following our Lord, he answered: he *must increase: I must decrease – I have come only for him* (cf. Jn 3:30). Our Lord must increase by our decreasing, by our personal annihilation: we will become a sort of ladder at his feet – that’s how we honor him: we cannot honor him in another way. Our Lord glorifies his Father through his annihilation – we should honor him in the same way, since he is our Savior God. We don’t glorify a poor man by spreading out a pompous display before him – that would embarrass him.

How must we approach our Lord? Just as he himself came: he descended. Everyone has his own glory, especially pious souls: we have many treasures, acquired merits of grace with which we can gain heaven. We must give them to our Lord. I’m not speaking of human glory which is worthless – it is only dung, and this dung must be placed at the foot of the tree. Therefore, we must strip ourselves of personal glory that merely seeks its own personal interest. This may not seem important to you, but it is perfection. To want to be nothing in the world, without praise and glory, unrecognized – don’t you realize that it is very difficult to be treated like a dead person? Don’t we treat our Lord like that? Those

¹ Number 444. *Il faut mourir à tout avec notre Seigneur.* A second conference was given on the same day: *How to acquire virtues.*

who don't honor him, those who are absent, does our Lord ask for their natural homage? Does he ask them to share their pleasures? If they offered them to him, he would not want them [...]. It's difficult to be unrecognized in the world, and not receive human and natural [recognition] – even if one should not desire them, it still hurts.

There is another death in the order of piety and religion. Death to what? To everything concerning the honor that comes with piety, and the spiritual world. You must also die there. [...] Virtue that is forgotten is better than persecuted virtue: when we persecute a person, she is seen as something: when we forget her, we don't bother about her.

You must reach that point. In your community, whatever you do well should not be noticed. Your virtues should not draw any attention; your qualities should not be noticed. We should not be telling you, as we tell children: What's wrong? Every time someone shows you personal affection, they tend to place you on a pedestal, they crown you with self-love. – But that is meant to encourage. – No doubt, this encourages ten-year-old children – do we have to treat you like them? We do it because they are weak, but for you, you should be mature in our Lord. If anyone praises you, it is to encourage you, to say: You have done something good; you should do more.

In our Society, we should never glorify anyone – we should glorify only our Lord, and work only for him. What would happen if we sought our own glory? He would say: You are selfish mercenaries; you are not serving me. If I am not serving the master, I am only a mercenary. It is the same for you, my poor Daughters: if we seek our own glory in his service, we would not be servants; we would be mere mercenaries who serve only to get paid.

We must reach that point. [...] If we accomplish anything, let it be for the master. [...] One may say: It is great to give one's being. Doesn't the Good Lord have the power to take away our life? Our souls are immortal, but not our natural life [...]. Our freedom is ours – when we sacrifice all our glorious acts of pure love, that free choice is truly a beautiful sacrifice. It's frightening, but don't you see our Lord in it?

[...]

You must die in the spiritual order. Here again, you understand that the spiritual praises that you receive, coming from a pure heart, from a person known to be holy, are the highest kind of praise. You are praised by a well-known holy person, by an angel – that is the only praise that flatters a Christian. You are praised by persons who are practicing (their faith). Because you are near our Lord, because they believe that you are more virtuous, that you are his servants, they love you because you love our Lord. For this kind, (praise and love), you would sacrifice all the others, because they come from so high.

These are the two things you must sacrifice: spiritual praise and esteem. You do this through all possible efforts to give all that you have, and live a life as Eucharistic as possible. However, to be considered as nothing, that's something great. If you take a ray of the sun and you cut it, it has no life – it will disappear in an instant. Everything that aims to glorify self-love is wrong even sacrilegious, since you are holy and sacred persons – you would be losing much merit by stealing from the master, it would be an infidelity. St. Paul always said that he *wished to be accursed for the salvation of his brothers* (cf. Rom 9:3). [...]

In the Blessed Sacrament, our Lord no longer has a natural life: since he died, he is under a different form. How did that happen? He passed through Calvary and the tomb. Since you must imitate him, you must take the same road he took in order to arrive at his resurrection. The sacrifice is you – you are the victim and the priest. [...] As St. Paul says: *You were buried with our Lord* (cf. Rom 6:4). [...] You understand that our Lord is our life: therefore, we find life in this tomb. [...]

My good Daughters, when we consider Christian mortification in itself, we see only Calvary, the nails, and the thorns – and so much suffering to expiate. If we had to do as much as the saints, we would lack the courage to do so – but that is not appropriate for you. You don't have such a grace: you don't go to our Lord by means of the saints and the virtues. It's too long. You must go directly to the service of our Lord.

What must we do? We must place our mortification in him, in life. Love will make it so that you will enter [into him], and act with love, without knowing it – you will live, while dying out of love for him, that is the major point. As we usually take back in the morning what we have given up the previous night – at every moment we are surprised by our weakness – we would never grow, we would merely be washing ourselves clean, purifying ourselves, crying – that's all. Begin by dying with the Lord; by placing yourself in his Eucharistic tomb you will share his virtues. You will do what seems impossible by telling him: You will be my life. If, like some saints, you follow our Lord through Calvary, that's a different and longer road. [Rather,] you must go and find him in the Blessed Sacrament, where he now resides.

Personally, I often imagine our Lord in the Eucharist under two forms.

On the one hand, there is a large veil. That is the sacred species that cover his face. This veil is very bright and transparent, our Lord sees us. My good Sisters, you know that, when one side has more light than the other, that side is bright. Our Lord sees us, but we cannot see him; our eyes are blinded before this veil. Our Lord is behind it, like (a flame) in a lantern that we see through a glass. Our Lord told us clearly that he is there – he wanted to cover himself with this shroud. Our perfection consists in living as he told us.

On the other hand, we see him without clouds, just as he is. The angels and the saints, who have died and who are in paradise, have gone around to the other side of this sun. From that other side, they see him face to face – they see his glory.

From our side, we must pass through a cloud; if we don't pass through, we don't see his face; if we go, we will see the glory of his goodness and love, we will share in his state. Those who don't love him very much stop short in front of this cloud – those who love him more go into the cloud. There is work to be done: we must set aside our reasoning; our mind must set aside its little thoughts, since the mind cannot enter this cloud. We must go in with two things: our heart and our will – then we can go back to take our body, as our Lord returned to the tomb to take his. Then our bodies are risen in him – we live from his virtues and from his love. When souls have gone into the cloud, they return to assume their body, their mind, and their fool of an imagination. What will they do? They will share life with them – the life that they took from the tomb of our Lord. That's what we must do: go from death to life. To succeed, do not stop on the way – you must not go from life to death. Love is nothing else than death to self, in order to live the life of the beloved.

In this meditation, you will note many things to do. You are not dead; if you wanted to go from life to death, you were concerned only with becoming clean to go towards our Lord, with bandaging your wounds, with taking care of yourself – it was a long journey. It would have been better to throw yourself completely into the blood of our Lord in order to purify the dirt and rust of your soul. Apply yourselves fully: to do this, love life, and love death as its consequence.

Every time we want to pass through the virtues, or by means of the saints, these roads are too long, and they are not the way for us, because our Lord is present (in Eucharist), as the model of our life, and especially our life of annihilation. You cannot hide yourselves, nor annihilate yourselves, to be there in the same way as our Lord – spiritual beings who have their body and hands. For you, this spiritual state

consists in desiring nothing for yourselves: neither glory nor affections – nothing. We spiritualize ourselves; nothing for yourselves. By doing this, you fulfill the words of St. Paul: *You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God* (cf. Col 3:3).

Points for reflection:

Using the well known expression from the French School of spirituality: “annihilation”, St. Peter Julian makes the link between death to self and the Eucharist. It is through the paschal mystery that we arrive at the mystical aspect of transformation. What understanding of the Eucharist do you find here? Notice the references to the Eucharist, and the images drawn from life. How would you describe this today in your own words? What other spiritual writers express the same ideas as these texts. (Catherine of Sienna, John of the Cross, etc.) ? Pick out a sentence or paragraph that is useful to you at this time in your spiritual journey.