

We Must Not Dwell in Ourselves, in Others, or in Means, but in our Lord¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Paris, Tuesday, February 26, 1861

[...]

My poor Daughters, dwell truly in the Good Lord, and don't dwell in yourselves. There is a saying that we should keep to ourselves. In one sense it is good to be quiet in one's own home, that's only natural. But I tell you, **in the order of grace don't dwell in yourselves;** you will not be comfortable. The Good Lord did not make us dwell in our own thoughts, in the affections of our own hearts, in preoccupations over our bodies, in our small possessions. The Good Lord did not create us to limit ourselves in this way; this is very evident. Whatever is less perfect is a limitation. When we make our home in ourselves or in others, we are in prison. The soul is not made for that, it is made for God. We are uneasy, we suffer, we wear ourselves out, and we are sad and discouraged.

Whoever has experienced the Good Lord even a little, loses sight of great men and great saints. When I have seen the sun, how can I admire a star with its little light? After I have seen something (really) beautiful, a smaller object though nice and good, does not even capture my attention. Someone who knows our Lord can no longer be fascinated or enthused except by our Lord. Why? How can I admire the earth once I have seen paradise? When I have seen a masterpiece, how can I admire something defective? [...]

Do not dwell in others, you will only be deceived. Even good and holy persons can only give you what God has given them. If God sees that a person is harming his glory, he will give him only thorns. We must not dwell in ourselves or others. We are always doing this, with a tendency toward dependence that leads us to the earth like slaves living in dens. We catch ourselves attaching ourselves to nothing at all.

In second place, don't dwell in the means. We must dwell in the goal, while the means are to be used. What would you say of someone who likes to stay in a coach saying: I want to stay where I am very comfortable? Or, of someone who attempts to cross the sea like a fly? You will say: My dear friend, your parents and friends are waiting – you'll never get there. If someone admires the road, we tell him: Walk on it, therefore! While admiring these beautiful mountains and valleys, keep moving. Do not remain in external means, in good words, in the good example of people – these are beautiful flowers of God's love; make use of them! We don't remain in a coach, otherwise we will be wasting our time; when someone comes along, we inquire about directions, and we arrive faster because we had stopped to ask.

Understand, my good Daughters, that the saints are meant to give you advice and help; use them, but don't dwell on them. You don't dwell on the food you eat; spiritual nourishment should lead you to God. Let everything that comes to you be used for God, then say "goodbye", "farewell", all is finished. If he sends you a strong grace, treasure it all day long; if he sends you a beautiful inspiration, make an act of virtue; once it's over, don't stay in the past. Avoid the old routine of certain means, like pious persons who have done something once and want to continue doing it. You must be ever new; like in paradise, we will be ever new. God is always good and loving, with a kindness that we have never known; being infinite, he varies his gifts infinitely (cf. Lam 3:22-23). We must be attentive, in the order of grace – we don't notice it – we are always in a new state.

¹ Number 297. *Il ne faut pas rester en nous, dans les créatures, dans les moyens, mais en notre Seigneur.*

Where must we dwell? With our Lord; a servant remains with her master, the angels with God, a spouse with her husband; you are his servant and his spouse – you must remain with God. **How do we remain there?** It is not simply with our body, since the body is attached to the earth, like a slave. You will remain there through your heart, through your desires, through your thoughts. Life is in the heart. You will remain in God through your soul. Our Lord says: *Where your treasure is, there also will your heart be* (Mt 6:21). A treasure is something we love; we dwell where it is. Our Lord also says: *Whoever eats me remains in me* (cf. Jn 6:56). We do this when we receive Communion, we abide in him. It is natural that the less perfect abide in the more perfect, that the servant live with the king. Ah yes! My poor Daughters, remain therefore in our Lord; the angels in paradise live in God. Tell me, what have we done till now? In reality, however, we have merely roamed around this world, building castles in Spain; we have stolen from our Lord, we have stolen time, and we have not served him well.

When do we live in our Lord? A sure sign is when our thoughts are in God, when our thoughts follow our heart. A sure sign that we are in the permanent state of love, is when we do not live in our selves or in others; that is the sure sign that we live in God. Go to heaven and see if you can take the saints away from the presence of God. No one can take them away from his throne. It is the same for one who is in God – no one can remove her from her life in God. The devil bothers us: he gives us evil thoughts by telling us: Look at the abyss where you will fall. We are sick and in trouble. Why? Because the devil wanted to turn our sight from heaven to earth. Or else, we concentrate on other people, living always in empathy or antipathy. Don't deny it. We turn away from the Good Lord like those who have lost their way. If we are not careful, we will fall into the abyss.

Therefore, live in our Lord. It seems to me that a person who lives in our Lord, and from our Lord will never be separated from him. Such a person must be very happy. Who can tear her away from her conversation with the king? Even the devils cannot. How happy will she be! She will live in serenity, in the sun, in divine light, higher than the clouds. Our existence is clouded over by self-love and sensuality, not so for the spiritual person. What is happening? **The soul lives for the beautiful paradise of God's love; it must be free.** I keep speaking to you about freedom and independence because I do believe this is the only proof of love of God: freedom from the means and from people that are not of God. One may suffer, because our old nature is always active; but a truly spiritual person cannot be stopped; that is why the devil is so jealous. Personally I never understood such jealousy against our Lord; I never would have believed that it even existed. It does exist in men who want to love a particular woman and who are angry because she belongs to God. What a horrible sin! It did exist among pagans and exists even now among Christians. How sad!

Some do everything they can to estrange souls from God. See to it that neither promises nor threats may ever separate you from our Lord. It is understandable that one may laugh at this, for what can one do with material treasures? They become just so much mud. Once we have contemplated the humiliation, the poverty of our Lord and all that he suffered in his passion, what will we do with worldly honors? They now appear so miserable. For one that loves God with a royal love, of what value is human love? It seems but a spider web that is easily torn apart. Listen to these words of St. Paul: ***I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me*** (cf. Gal 2:20). This is a divine life. We have its power and its holiness. Only our freedom can hurt it.

Therefore, place yourselves in our Lord. You are his spouses. If that is too much for you, then you are his servants. You do the work of the angels around the Blessed Sacrament; you are doing the same as the queen of angels, the most Blessed Virgin.

Point for reflection:

In what sense are we talking here about freedom? In what sense are we talking about “remaining in our Lord?”