

We Must Serve God According to Our State¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
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My Sisters, let us develop a truth that is at once important and difficult. It is my hope that the Good Lord will enlighten you about it. **We must serve God according to our internal and external state.** This is necessary because it is the certain expression of God's will when we are in a transitional state, and then especially when he places us in a permanent state [of soul]. It is a proof that he wants that state for us and how it affects us at that time. Desiring to serve God outside of one's state, or contrary to that state, is to want something impossible. It means wanting to leave one's natural source of grace.

A few examples will help you to understand. If I am sick, I must serve God as a sick person – if I try to serve him as being full of energy and strength, I will want something that cannot be. If I am full of energy, strength, and ability, I must serve him according to the graces that he gives me. If I am free, I must serve him with my liberty. If I am under the authority of someone, under obedience, I must serve him with the virtues of my state. So much for the external state.

Let's look at the internal state. If I am in a state of joy, I should not go crying and being sad. If I am in dryness and desolation, I will not desire an abundance of affections. If I am poor in mind and heart and in every way, I must not attempt the impossible, since I would be acting beyond my strength, and in a manner unrelated to my situation. To serve God according to one's state means to serve him according to his holy will. What will happen? By serving according to one's state, we serve easily and naturally; we don't need to do violence to ourselves. We need only to supernaturalize what we are doing by offering it to God. If you want to place yourself in another state, you will find it difficult, not to say impossible, to serve God.

When someone is sad, and this sadness leads her to surrender to God, it will also lead to detachment from the world, and become a real means of salvation. She does not need any special efforts. Give her the virtues that enhance this state, console her, strengthen her. She will find the Good Lord where she had found only the cross. Someone in dryness, sterility, and the inability to love needs to know that she can use this state by offering it to God, by glorifying him in her wretchedness and poverty. In this way, serving God according to her state means to make her service easier, because she will have the natural and supernatural grace within her actual state.

God never places us in a state without giving us the grace we need, and it is nearly impossible to act differently. Oftentimes, the sorrow we experience in the service of God comes from our refusal to serve him according to a particular state. If we get sick, and refuse to accept sickness, preferring to be in good health. If we have good health, we want something else; we are not content, because self-will is the source of unhappiness. If we continue in this way, we will become useless. It is easier and more perfect to serve God according to one's state, rather than in another state that in itself is more perfect, because the will of God is the norm of perfection for us. This divine will is worth more than perfection itself. The apostolic life is a wonderful thing; but if God wants you on a bed of pain, although this kind of life seems less perfect for you, it is in fact more perfect. Martyrdom is the most perfect state, but if God does not want it for us, and leaves us with the martyrdom of every day, then we must set aside a perfection to which he does not call us, in order to live the one he gives us.

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It is more perfect to serve God according to one's actual state. The reason for this is that God gives us graces for that state. If we try to get out of that state, we will have fewer graces, no longer the special graces needed as means to accomplish the will of God. To live at the Father's family table, we must be seated there; if we leave, we will have only the beggar's bread. That should be reason enough – the will and grace of God are everything. Why don't we like our state? That often comes from our human inconsistency; we are never content. When we have seen one state, and then others, we want to change – that's a temptation, and it is humiliating. Oftentimes, we force God to leave us in that condition longer. For example, if he placed us in a state of spiritual poverty, and we try to act contrary to that state, instead of remaining there for one day, we will stay there for several weeks. What God wants to bring about must happen, or else we will prolong this state of trial, of preparation, and of purification.

Acceptance of the will of God is the most perfect state. If it is a state of virtue, after a while we move on to another perfection, to a greater gratitude. The grain of wheat is producing fruit. We must beware of the fickleness of our minds and hearts, that do not remain long in the same state: we must allow the Good Lord to work. We never remain in the same internal state. The Good Lord is so good that he always gives us new graces. However, some of these graces are fundamental and others are ornamental or passing. We must pay more attention to the fundamental graces. In all the states, there are passing graces and fundamental graces – the passing graces are graces of consolation and encouragement that have no follow-up. The others are graces of state – and a state is never explored completely. When this is well understood, the person experiences a great dependence on God and his grace.

This will free us from a common illusion in the world that places perfection in acts of perfection. Not at all! Perfection does not consist in acts – perfection is personal, individual, a composite of will, grace, and love of God in us: it is Jesus Christ taking shape in us by his grace with our cooperation. Perfection is an abstract ideal, but something very personal.

The perfection of the Blessed Virgin and the saints is not ours. If we wanted it, we would be some kind of anonymous person: it is not ours. In heaven, there are no two saints alike. We must be what God wants. And so, the states in themselves are not holier or less so. They are holy only insofar as God wants to call someone to them. We serve him well only in our own state – the others are not our concern. If God wants us to suffer, our perfection is not to become envious for some other state, to seek a higher ministry. The highest perfection consists in accomplishing the will of God. This truth sheds great light on life, and cuts short many temptations. Say: *May your will be done, and your name be held holy* (cf. Mt 6:9-10), and may I remain faithful.

God is constantly acting through all the virtues, but always putting love in our heart. If some states were privileged, it would be very sad – but no, my God, you love me, and there are no states that are less honorable: every state has its perfection. In this or that situation, for the state of my body and soul, the Good Lord merely shows me that I must serve him and sanctify myself in that state.



Points for reflection:

Here, the words “to do the will of God” take on a deeper and more internal meaning. How can they make our relationship with God more personal and more authentic?