

Strength and Rest. The Work of Adoration Is Everything¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament,
Paris, Friday, August 10, 1860

We have to pray a lot for the First Communion children. Right after the Assumption, I will send you three little girls² who are already prepared. You should begin your apostolate. The children who make their First Communion need us to pray for them out of charity. We will begin their retreat. In the world there are some rough souls, but the Good Lord gives them his grace. They benefit from it, as he gives them a grace of holiness.

A virtue is recognized by its strength; through practice, it gains strength. Since we humans are limited, we take time to rest. God limited us to show us that we are weak in ourselves. The spiritual life is the same. This life of grace and love gains strength through practice; it also has need of strength and rest.

Spiritual life is Jesus Christ; there is no other life: *I am the life* (Jn 14:6). What life are we talking about? The life of our mind is truth; the life of our heart is love; the life of our will is the rule; the life of our body is virtue; and our external relationships are guided by charity. This life has its conception, its infancy, its maturity, and its perfection. Since we are so deficient, it can be weak and sick due to our sins, due to unruly affections. The proof that it is not sickly in us is its strength. What is bodily strength? When our entire person is working together, body, mind, and everything else. Then we are not sick, and not suffering. Similarly, the spiritual life is a Christian who acts with joy and ease, without sickness. The strength of a Christian is based on virtue. That strength is Jesus Christ manifested in his virtues.

Do you know what a virtue is? It is a mission of Jesus Christ in us, one of his qualities that becomes ours, such as patience, humility, goodness, charity, mercy, and love. This life manifests itself in us. What is a virtue? It is an action or habit from the life of Jesus Christ that is contrary to our natural habit. To exercise it, we must do violence to our self. Humility is not something we like, because we are proud. We cannot possess it unless we do violence to our self. That's why we call it a virtue, for virtue implies struggle. So also patience; we must do battle with our human nature that in itself is full of independence. When we have the joy of imitating the patience of our Lord, we say that we have the virtue of patience. All the virtues are like that.

The life of Jesus Christ cannot be formed in us without a struggle. A soldier who never enters into combat becomes a poor soldier; he no longer has any courage. In the same way, if the body does not work, it becomes weak, like any instrument that is not used and becomes rusty. The life of Jesus Christ cannot remain sterile in us. To keep a fire alive, we stoke it. To have the life of Jesus Christ, exercise is needed. Good thoughts and desires are not virtues. They are barely flowers, with no fruits to nourish anyone. Many people are satisfied with that and stop. To bear fruit is very different.

Why did our Lord place virtue in strength? Because we are drawn to evil through our tendencies. Jesus Christ heals us through his virtues. We are drawn to pride, our affections become unruly, and the Good Lord heals all this turmoil through mortification and pruning. Whoever does nothing will become sick. If the body does not work, it becomes lame. We are like a soil that produces only briars and thorns. Because of sin, it is condemned. Laziness also produces evil. Work on building your virtue with

¹ Number 250. *Force et repos. L'œuvre d'adoration c'est tout.*

² Guillot and S7bis, variant: little girls to instruct

strength, for virtue grows with practice. Great saints were not satisfied with small virtues, which are like little lamps; they aspired to great things. In order to make a fortune, we would need much time if we worked only with pennies; but if we worked with large sums, we'd succeed quickly.

Since the saints rely on the merits of Jesus Christ, they aspire to great things, sacrifices. So much for the saints. Our Lord said: ***Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness (justice)*** (Mt 5:6), - Justice means perfection, - because they desire only Jesus Christ himself. A little virtue gives a little strength; much virtue gives great strength and life. To have strength, the body needs food. Some think that virtue feeds itself. This is not true, only sacrifice feeds virtue. Food nourishes the body; rest in God nourishes the soul. Prayer, especially Communion, feeds on substantial love himself. We cannot however always receive Communion, so there is also the love of union and praise. Love is the nourishment of virtue; we must give it its proper food. Your virtue will be well fed; it will be strong, with strength in proportion to its nourishment³. If you don't eat the proper food, you will not be⁴ strong. Look at the saints.

You also need rest. Jesus Christ told his apostles: ***You have worked hard; come to the mountain and rest a while at my feet*** (cf. Mk 6:31). They rested at the feet of Jesus in prayer. Prayer is the soul's rest. The soul needs to give itself to our Lord like St. John, to offer God's own prayer. Rest is needed. Action, sacrifice, charity, the neighbor, and whatever you want – all that leaves the soul empty. She gives herself, but she needs to recoup her energy. External relationships always drain us; we lose something and become very weak. That is why truly holy persons will be deeply contemplative. I'm not talking about others who have an apostolic life, but you can see that because you have more nourishment than others, you should attain the heights.

A soul must take its rest. If she were always practicing virtues, she would get tired. She needs to contemplate, her love for God needs to see him and listen to him. That's why rest is needed. You don't really understand what you are lacking. Victory in combat and extraordinary sacrifices are good, but strength is in the virtue of love near our Lord, in our resting with him. The poor religious men and women, dedicated souls, and priests who are always giving themselves are very unfortunate; their little zeal and strength are quickly exhausted. With little recollection and feeble union with God, one quickly becomes like a reservoir without water – dried up! (cf. Jer 46:3) We have the good fortune of always nourishing and refilling ourselves; we are very lucky. If we have made a poor adoration, we will be there again at the feet of the Lord during the next adoration to make reparation. Then, we can leave again to fight the battles of the Lord (cf. Sir 46:3).

Many people choose a community foolishly: See the good work there is to be done! That's all very good, but look at the diet. Is there good nourishment, much time for a contemplative life to be united with our Lord. In those communities that constantly give without replenishment, so many become unhappy. If they have little interior life, they live a more imperfect life than in the world. You understand that it's useless to say, try to pray while you work, while serving your neighbor, more is needed. Our Lord gave us an example by going with his apostles to rest on the mountainside, alone. Silence and solitude do a lot of good.

Love your room dearly. Each of you has her own room. When there are no more, we will not accept anyone else. If you were meant to honor the life of Nazareth, you would have a common life, but you are for the Blessed Sacrament. [...] Jesus Christ is alone⁵, and you are alone in your duties, each one

³ From Guillot: *nourishment*; instead of Raulin: *virtue*

⁴ Guillot and (S7bis) variant: not be *very* strong

⁵ From Guillot and (S7bis): *and you have your little cell; he is alone,*

rendering an account only to obedience and to God. It is needed to preserve interior silence; that is very important, otherwise you will never succeed in becoming daughters of prayer. It is not for us to judge those in another vocation; they have their own grace. However you have been called by our Lord to the Eucharistic vocation, you must have all its privileges, as well as all its graces.

How many there are who suffer in the religious communities! They are there only half-heartedly. Many of them could be very holy, but they have become instruments of zeal, and not interior souls. Whose fault is it? Everyone has some responsibility. The founders should have called their foundation a project, rather than a religious congregation. Their intention was very good. Some secular founders, often saints, see a good work to be done and think of nothing else. Some say, I need a religious body to put up a good hospital; that's how the nursing religious women began. I need to educate children; here is a school and religious sisters. Education and health care are works for the Church. A beautiful habit is designed, a rule is composed to be helpful for the work, but not for grace. They succeed, yes, and it's considered a good work. There are many persons who don't have religious virtues, but they have Christian virtues, practiced in religious life. In a sense this is sad: You have much to do, so all seems well. You are good workers for the Good Lord, but you fail in being good religious.

That is to be expected, since the interior life, the life of solitude and prayer is little known, even by priests. This comes from their formation. A young man spends only three years in a seminary, while the religious life is a state, not a science to be learned. Lacking in understanding, he mixes together the little knowledge he read in books and makes a spiritual amalgam. [...]

Not everyone is called to live an interior life. You have that call, my poor Daughters, but that does not mean that we know more about it. Our Lord does everything himself. We would only be an obstacle. Essentially, he is there, and he did not come from us. It would be a serious misfortune if someone came to regulate your life, if a priest wanted to do so. All of you have a duty not to allow this. Your work of adoration is everything.

If you want to introduce the Office during adoration, personally I don't want it. We take only a little break of five or six minutes to cut the half-hour, especially at night. That wakes us up. Some communities with adoration pray the Office during half of the time, and not even the Office of the Blessed Sacrament. I don't want vocal prayers [during adoration]. You are given the topic of your adoration, and then you are free according to your grace. My God, if we were to fill the hour with vocal prayers and *Our Fathers*, this would not be the Eucharistic life. Some tend to that; I see some good people with books, with this and that; I don't like that. You might take a book on the Blessed Sacrament to help you, that's better than sleeping; but simply to read, to keep yourself busy, I don't want that. Love does not borrow someone else's words; it has its own eyes, its own thoughts, its own abilities, everything it needs. It is perfect only when it is itself.

Today, very few communities live an interior life. When you see a community entitled, The Interior of Jesus and Mary, what do you find? A boarding-school! May I ask you... the Interior of Jesus and Mary in a boarding-school?... especially when we know what a boarding-school is! It's a good name, but it was not a good idea to have chosen it. Are you then living an interior life? Victims of Jesus... are you already great saints, victims? Who chose that title? A good priest, one morning during his meditation! After the meditation, he forgets. Where is the Spirit in this? For the women, a beautiful name inspires them a bit; they begin by looking for a name. We are more fortunate: we did not look for anything, since it was already there⁶.

⁶ "The Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, greatly desired that a religious community would carry this name; he even has a brief (decree) to that effect. But they wanted it composed of women of high society and nothing could be realized.

Point for reflection:

According to this instruction, what are the priorities of our life? What means are to be used to attain them?

Therefore, we are going to revive this beautiful name!” cf. Instruction 26bis. *My Daughters, what name shall I give you?* See also instruction # 317. *The Month of Mary, Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament.*