

# Contemplative Love<sup>1</sup>

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament  
Paris, Friday, November 30, 1860

**My Sisters, live interior lives, in order to love the Good Lord well.** Every soul that does not live an interior life, and is not making the effort to do so, cannot enter into the essential meaning of love. This essence is in the interior life: we do not love through the senses; we love through the heart, which is the whole of us. A person is love, like God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8).

True love for God must come from within. When someone notices that he is not loved from the heart, by a pure and disinterested love, he will say: They love their own interest; they don't love me. Love is not in its essence; it is in the interior life. No one likes to live with someone who has no heart. We can try giving external signs of love, but that's not enough. We need compassion, that's what creates friendship. Supernatural love is the same. The love of God of its nature is silent and contemplative; it listens and receives. Simply speaking, it is Mary at the feet of Jesus (cf. Lk 10:39), it is a child on the heart of its mother; it is an angel before God.

**This love is essentially contemplative. Why?** In order to love God, we must be charmed by his goodness. Love is only the expression of the goodness of God. My Sisters, we should love God because he is powerful, majestic, and great, but he does not use these qualities to attract us to his love. On the contrary, he does not attract our love by claiming to be great and powerful. That would evoke fear. Rather, he tells us that he is good and merciful, in order to convince us that love is the expression of his goodness. Then, in order to love God, we must know his goodness. Our first words will be, My God, how good you are! That is our first spontaneous act, regardless of our degree of love: God is good to me; he has been good to my family and those close to me! This is the inner core of his goodness, goodness itself. This is the God that the soul contemplates.

**The soul contemplates the goodness of God in silence.** Love that speaks much is still imperfect: the love of humans for God is silent and contemplative, listening, watching, fascinated by his goodness. When a soul is full of this goodness, the rest follows, even sighs and tears. It is the flame in the hearth; the hearth is the divine goodness, from which everything radiates. The true life of love begins with God. What begins with us is self-love. The soul sees the goodness of God, and, as the contemplation proceeds, the heart will be moved.

Notice what the Holy Spirit says in one of David's Psalms: **Listen, my daughter** (Ps 44:11). God uses the designation of father, in order to tell us that he loves us, and to remove any idea of our being servants and creatures. A daughter does not fear her mother; she goes to her through her heart. **Listen**, because the soul must begin by listening before speaking. She must place herself at the feet of God like Mary (cf. Lk 10:39). The angels have eyes on God himself. *Et vide* – God adds: **and see**. What is there to see? God is no longer visible, he cannot be experienced through the senses; Jesus Christ has veiled his sacred humanity. What can our eyes see? Nothing at all. However, the soul has a supernatural vision, a vision of grace and love. **What does one contemplate?** God and his goodness. Leave creatures aside, along with everything that can be reached with the senses. **Enter into me and see.** What will you see? God himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Number 283. *L'amour contemplatif*.

The eyes of the soul and of the body cannot see the beauty of God. It is too beautiful: our eyes are not strong enough for the beatific vision. We must pass through the judgment of God in order to see his glory and supremacy. Power frightens children. We cannot even see his love; we can see only moderate signs of it. Otherwise, it would devour us like a blazing fire consumes pieces of straw. What does God want to show us? He wants us to see an aspect of his love in his goodness. At this sight, our only thought is to adore. That is why **every loving soul has two characteristics: it listens, and it contemplates the goodness of God.** How does this happen? Doesn't a soul recognize a close friend at a distance? The soul seems to be under the attraction of its power: it has the power to hear and to see. The more we place ourselves in grace, the more we approach God – just as the closer we come to a person, the more distinct is the sound of his voice, especially if this voice is weak.

The more a soul approaches God through **the contemplation of love**, the more it hears and understands. As if this were not enough, God adds: ***Incline your ear to my voice.*** He has not said enough the first and second time: ***Listen and see.*** Now, it's like hearing a precious message, we incline our ear so that we will not miss a word. When the voice is soft, we incline all the more. This means that the interior voice of God is soft, and can hardly be heard, ***like a gentle breeze*** (1 Kg 19:12), says the Holy Spirit. To hear it we need complete silence. Why does God speak so softly? So that the soul will give its full attention to listen to him. The soul, so to speak, will go out of its body. That is love.

God seems to hide himself, to make us search for him. In the Sacred Scripture, God speaks to the spouse of his heart: ***Forget your people*** (cf. Ps 44:11), come to the inner part of my house, we will not be disturbed. He adds: ***Enter the hollow of the rock*** (cf. Ex 33:22). What is this rock? It represents the wounds of our Lord; it is his open heart, into which the soul can enter into the very nature of Jesus Christ, in order to listen well and converse with his divinity. In that place this soul is in him, as it is in this body. God still adds: ***Forget your father's house***, forget your brothers and everything. When you are with me, you don't need to be concerned with anyone, and the Holy Spirit says: *Et concupiscet rex decorum tuum—And the king shall desire your beauty* (Ps 44:12).

What can be so attractive to God in a soul? God takes the title of king, so as to tell the soul that she is his spouse and his queen, since she has left all things to listen to him and love him. Ah! My dear Sisters, **love transforms a soul.** Love is transforming by its nature. Profane love makes a person profane; one word can kill this virtue. Love is like two flames that join and become one consuming flame. Two friends share only a few words, and you see them crying. Why? Because one of them is sad, and communicates sadness to the other. Love unites: if they share words of joy, their joy expands. The soul reacts in the same way: it has its own language with God. It becomes beautiful with his beauty. The sun's rays brighten everything. The moon takes its splendor from the sun which reflects it. A soul takes on the beauty of God when she looks at him. St. John says: ***We shall be like him*** (1 Jn 3:2). God is beautiful and God is good: we shall become like him if we live in his love. Love transforms us into God himself.

**You may ask, How can one arrive at this contemplative love?** You must do what I told you, and you will get there. That's the way. Love gathers; all active love is still on the doorstep, searching. Divine love, by its nature, is active only secondarily; it is a flame that needs to devour. But before becoming a flame, there was a hearth; the flame is only the effect, not the cause. **Souls that have only an external love** are nothing else than will-o'-the-wisps emanating from the earth and which die immediately. If I can speak this way: they have only a nervous love that is quickly spent. Also, my poor Daughters, souls that know only charity for their neighbor are nothing else than mercenaries, laborers whom the master sends to work in his field (cf. Mt 20:1). They say: We have a good master; but they don't eat with him, they are always outside. These souls are still like messengers who are sent on errands.

There are many people who take only what is external from divine love! Nature takes its toll. Some speak much about the love of God and want to light a fire, but nothing happens. They claim to love God when they do something for him. A soul that has an absolute love considers all she does as nothing. Love that is merely external is a flame that is not worthy of the hearth; all love that comes from the exterior tends to weaken and die out. Many beautiful souls in the world allow themselves to be attracted to these false lights, to these false rays of love! They don't nourish themselves; they are like a dry reservoir, surprised that they have not even a drop left. I believe it, because they gave everything away.

My poor Daughters, true love is interior. Notice that in the Proverbs our Lord says: ***My son, give me your heart*** (Prv 23:26). He does not ask for the rest. Once we have given our heart, we have nothing left; we have given all our thoughts, our joys, our sorrows – everything belongs to our Lord. A rented land or house, no longer belong to the master, but to the one who has rented or bought it. Every time that the interior soul receives a grace of love, it remains recollected and remains at rest rather than moving about; it remains in silence rather than speak. That is its true character. When it does not remain that way, then it either wastes the grace, or it never even received it. Therefore, every grace of love finds its perfection in recollection of the person who received it, if she is dutiful. First of all, the soul must adore. And she will terminate that adoration only when God will tell it, as he said to the angel: Go and carry out my orders.

I know very well that at first a soul needs to talk: to talk and cry: but love will silence the soul. How eloquent this silence! One day, Moses was sad, because his people had disobeyed; God was angry and wanted to punish them. Moses presents himself before the tabernacle, never alone, and remains in silent adoration. God said: *Quid clama ad me? – (Why are you crying out to me?)* (Ex 14:15) Moses could have answered: I'm saying nothing, I am dumb. However, he was really crying out in his soul: he was asking mercy for his people. He loved both God and his people: I come to ask grace for my people. Notice that love is eloquent, while it says nothing. What is love saying?

My poor Daughters, do you hear our Lord speaking in the Blessed Sacrament? Do you hear even a word? Do you see anything at all? With open eyes, do you see the least little thing? Not at all. Doesn't he love us in the Blessed Sacrament? He has never loved us more than here – it is the gathering of all his love and sacrifices: everything is here. We don't see him, we don't hear him, there is nothing for our senses. Everything is interior. **If we could see this furnace of love with its activity that never rests, we would be astounded.** When a soul is silent at the feet of our Lord, it is so powerful that he cannot resist it. Furthermore, my Sisters, you would never be satisfied with an external act of love: you could try many ways, but you would never be happy, even if you spent and gave (much). On the other hand, oftentimes you do nothing except place yourself in a contemplative love, and you experience satisfaction and recollection.

When a green and bitter fruit is put in a well-prepared liqueur, what happens? The fruit takes on the goodness and sweetness of the liquid into which it is placed. It loses its bitterness, and becomes ripe and excellent. Cut off from its tree, it has no more sap to feed it; however, the liqueur communicates and shares all its goodness. The soul, full of faults, that throws itself into the love of our Lord, reacts in the same way. Even if it remains there only briefly, it will take on a rich nature, it will become good simply by remaining there.

Like it or not, there is no choice: that's how you must go. **Enter into the interior of our Lord, into his love, if you want to have an interior life.** Remain in recollection, enter more deeply into God, pass up created things, and leave everything to enter into our Lord. That's the way – there is no other. You will never succeed unless you go that way.

In order to force us to arrive at<sup>2</sup> this spiritual love, our Lord has completely spiritualized himself. Otherwise, we would focus on his attractive body, on a single strand of his hair; we would be ecstatic with gratitude, we would die of happiness. What would happen? Our love would stop at the senses. If he would show us his beautiful soul, deified by its union with the Word, his soul that is a thousand times more beautiful than his body, that reflects all his truth and goodness and virtues, and all the graces of his love of God... if we could see his soul, we would not go all the way to his divinity. We would be too happy. What does God do in order to lead us to his divinity? He spiritualizes himself, veiling his body and his soul, so that we will not stop there, and so that we will go all the way to his divinity. That's what happens: the more we advance, the broader the road becomes; the greater the light, the more it increases. As we go along, we get closer to the sun. Our love is nourished in this world, but it is never satisfied... and never should be. It will never reach the full satisfaction of love.

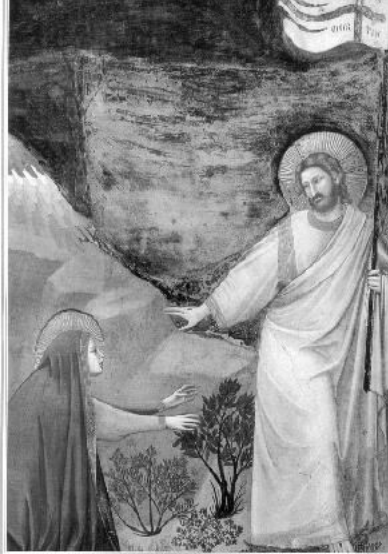
We can see this love clearly in the Blessed Virgin. How interior! Do you not see her contemplating the actions of the incarnate Word at Nazareth? She alone holds the secret and sees its perfection. If external love were necessary, it would probably be lacking for the Blessed Virgin, since internal love replaces everything else. The exterior is only a consolation; it is not the nature of love.

My Sisters, enter fully into this interior of our Lord. Remember that you do more at his feet than if you travel around the world. By uniting your soul with that of our Lord, you give him a hundred times more glory than by all your exterior work. **Let us work at this interior life more than ever.** The more we work at it, the more we advance. Those who advance the most are not those who live a natural life. St. Francis de Sales used to say: Your true self is what you are before God.

Be very interior. **Allow yourselves to be attracted by the love of our Lord.** Don't believe those people who think they are doing nothing if they are not in action. Isn't a child loved more by her mother when she is held close to her breast, than when running far from her? The soul at the feet of God gives witness that she loves him above all. She renounces her body, her soul, and the exercise of her will in order to do nothing else than **acts of gratitude and love.** I know very well that this is difficult. When drawn by consolation, all goes well, but sometimes we must go searching, like the spouse in the Song of Songs: *Have you seen him whom my heart loves?* After a few steps, she found him, and held him tight: *Now, I will never again be separated from you* (cf. Sg 3:3-4). God wants us to look for him out of love, and to say, like the spouse speaking to the guards of the city: ***Have you seen him whom my heart loves?*** But he is there, waiting. St. Magdalene was active, running about – she could not see our Lord who was in front of her very eyes. There was activity, not love. When our Lord called her: ***Mary***, she cried out: ***My Good Master*** (cf. Jn 20:16), ***and she prostrated herself at his feet*** – love took hold of him. My Sisters, take hold of the Lord.

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<sup>2</sup> From Guillot and (S7bis) : forcer à arriver à (force us to arrive at)



**Points for reflection:**

What is the nature of the love of God?

This text is a commentary on Psalm 44, and describes the nature of the love of God and of the interior life. What touches you most?

Can you compose your personal Psalm on the love of God?