

We Must Give Our Lord Our Personality¹

St. Peter Julian Eymard to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Nemours, Thursday, November 8, 1866

Let us place ourselves in the presence of our Lord by an act of faith, etc.
[...]

My dear Daughters, in order to love our Lord, we must give ourselves to him as he gives himself to us: we must love him as he loves us. Do you know the greatest gift that we could make to the love of our Lord? Here it is: to give him our person, and forever – I will explain. To give our person to our Lord – there are very few persons who give our Lord their personality, even among religious; there are very few. We give our Lord our goods by the vow of poverty; we give our Lord our body by chastity – and a little of our heart; and we give him our will by the vow of obedience: and we call religious profession a self-holocaust. And while giving all this, we keep our personality. By giving our personality we give more than what is given in religious life. And, what is amazing, God does not dare ask us to make the sacrifice of our personality – he does not dare.

Let me ask why! It is too great! To give one's personality is the heroism of love – but God only asks what is required by law or proposed by counsel. What leads us to give our Lord our personality? There is only one reason: Our Lord gave us his human person. No one except the Word made flesh has given us the sacrifice of his personality. Note well: no saint has ever challenged you to give your personality. Why? Because it is not in the domain of virtue – to give oneself is the highest degree of love.

My Daughters, since you are Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, I challenge you to give our Lord your personality. Since you may not understand the way, I will explain it to you. By your religious vows, you give your life to our Lord. But you don't give yourself; you keep hold of yourself. – Do we keep ourselves? – O yes!

You give your possessions by the vow of poverty so as to preserve yourself for eternal life. Notice that you keep hold of the self. It is said that evangelical poverty means to give everything to Jesus Christ in order to receive a hundredfold – that's the nature of the vow of poverty. Our Lord said: *Whoever leaves home, or his brothers, or his sisters, or his father, or his mother, or his wife, or his children, or his lands for my sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will possess eternal life* (cf. Mk 10:29-30). Those are his words. And so, you enrich yourself in another way. Our Lord also says: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs* (cf. Mt 5:3).

You make the vow of chastity in order to preserve your virginity. While you renounce respectable unions, you do so to choose to make a covenant union, to have Jesus Christ as your spouse. You lose nothing: you leave man behind for the sake of God. You always gain: you give Jesus Christ your heart and your body, but you keep hold of yourself.

By obedience you give your will; but the one who obeys earns a reward. You give the entire tree and its fruits – that is why we call it a holocaust. But, you hold on to yourself, as you do this in order to have eternal life, to be assured of heaven. And why do you leave your family? In order to find a new family,

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your religious family. While you leave everything, you still have all that you need. You obey very well, but you don't have the problem of commanding and choosing. This is a great sacrifice, but you can say: I sacrifice everything in order to recover everything in Jesus Christ – in order to be a perfect adorer in spirit and in truth.

But to give one's personality is a greater sacrifice, to give oneself, to give the “me”. By religious profession, I give what belongs to me. And what is it that belongs to you? Your body, the legitimate possession of your goods. To belong to God, you embrace a life of penance. Clearly you give what belongs to you – but here we are talking of the self. You give the external freedom that belongs to the self – but the interior, the self, you hold on to. You give what belongs to you, but you don't give yourself – your self, the root and marrow. God does not ask you for your self, because he wants to reward you personally in heaven. He leaves you free, because he wants to crown you: you will become a personality in heaven, as you are on earth; and you will be great in heaven by being faithful to your religious profession on earth. But the one who will be even greater will be the one who gives her personality, because love can go no higher than to give one's person.

You will not find what I am telling you in books of spirituality. You will not find anything about giving your personality, your self to God. It is too perfect, too spiritual. You are beginning to understand what I am saying. **What is this self that I am asking you to give?** This self is what guides and directs our actions. In fools who can no longer reason, the self is no longer in command. They are merely human beings who can no longer reason. And I am saying: From the moment that we lose our reasoning power, we are civilly dead. And again, what is this self? It is the one who commands, who is the center of relationships, of attachments in society. Note well. When we love someone we don't love him by parts. We don't tell him: I love your body – that would be insulting and worthy of an animal. Rather we say: I love your person – that is the self which is made up of soul and body. That is the royal dignity of man: we love the complete person and the qualities that are joined to him. We don't love a dead person; we love the memory of someone's existence, but there is no longer any friendship, any relationship. The center of relationships is the person.

What then is the self? It is the goal of what we do, the reason for every deed. Thus, in the natural order we work for the self, and in the supernatural order to attain eternal life – it is the self that sanctifies². The self is the entire person: yes, it is the one who commands, who is everything. It is the absolute end, the supernatural end. There you are, my poor Daughters, I tell you: Do you want to be true adorers of the Blessed Sacrament? Give your personality. – Do you want to do so? Do you understand what you are giving? This is a new way. I will try to explain, and God will do the rest.

In giving your personality you are giving the self. Therefore, you renounce being your own master: you have no more self; you should no longer say: This or that belongs to me. You obey in order to command your self. You should no longer say: I want this or that. No. Take away the self from your life. That is why in the old orders, they found a word “*our*”, which expresses well what I am saying. For example, the Benedictines had adopted certain religious expressions: our cell, our clothes. However, it seems ridiculous in absolutely personal matters, such as our health, etc. Basically, however, it is beautiful, because it removes the personality. I am saying: remove the self, no longer be you – we are no longer the starting point of life's choices. You often make personality your starting point, such as, I don't want to make this little sacrifice; or I want it very much.

² Possible interpretation: That is, it is the self that decides, and in the case that it decides to give itself to Jesus Christ, then it is Christ who lives in him and sanctifies him.

In religious life, sacrifices are not prescribed; they are encouraged and personal. You can choose and alter them. Again I tell you: **If you want to be true adorers, if you want to be Eucharistic, give your personality**, the principle of your self. Then, put aside your thoughts. No longer say: my thoughts, my life, me. Put aside all of that if you want to enter the way that I am showing you. And don't think this makes you stupid. Do you believe this is easy? If you do this ten times a day, on one hundred occasions, you are beginning [...]. The Good Lord does not require it. But for those who wish to arrive at identity through love, that is the way they should go.

Let me add **that we have relations with God only through our personality**. In the social world, we look for the master of the house before we ask for domestic helpers or children. When we address a person socially, we praise his qualities, his merits, by saying: You have good qualities, beautiful things. We praise the person, and if this pleases her, it is only human: [...] This is the start of natural relations – if you want, they are not bad, but it is so. As long as a person has not agreed, the feelings will not follow. Feelings can not act when the will says no. You see now how the personality is in charge. For example, take a Christian who does not want to think of something – his heart desires it, but his will says: No, you will not do that. And so, he will not do it! The will commands the self. We do many things this way, in spite of one's self.

The same thing happens in our relations with God. The human person is at the center: Our Lord, the angels, the saints have relations with our personality. – See how he tells us: ***My son, give me your heart*** (Prov 23:26) – our Lord is talking to our personality. It is very clear when he says: Humble your spirit and if you are faithful to me, I will give you glory – I will bring you with me to heaven. And then the soul says: I want this very much. And you make a contract. Is this perfect? Yes, but it is not the most perfect. By acting like that, I am working for myself in order to reach paradise. And so, what now? You must give up this personality of principle, of center, of end. You must no longer say: Me. But where am I going then? To our Lord who will be my point of departure, my principle, my end, my law, the will of my will – he will be the master.

In the world, a married woman is under the authority of her husband; [...] she sacrifices her name, her person. Why? Because she loves. You will do the same for our Lord. You take him as your spouse: you make the sacrifice of your passions, of your freedom, of your name, of your person, and our Lord becomes the commander, the point of departure of your life. St. Paul says: *I live* – but immediately he corrects himself – *I am mistaken* – he has given away his life – *it is Jesus Christ who lives in me* (cf. Gal 2:20). There you are. – But I already do this. – If you do this constantly that's wonderful. You can say with St. Paul: Jesus lives in me personally and I live from him and for him, perfectly.

Notice what our Lord says in the gospel: ***Whoever eats me will live by me, because of me*** (cf. Jn 6:57) – that is the true translation. Jesus Christ has said it: ***Whoever eats me will live by me.*** Isn't it evident that we live by food? Clearly, Jesus Christ becomes our food, our life. If you give your personality to Jesus Christ, you have no more self; we no longer praise you for your qualities. You should no longer be the center of natural and human relations with your sisters. You are no longer a person.

[...] Therefore, if you are asked to give your personality, you must say: I don't want to be unfaithful to my spouse: I gave him my personality; I can no longer receive anything. That is the difference with the vows of religion. The religious says: I don't want; I would do wrong. But you will say: I cannot. That is the difference: **you start with your status as bride, and the others start with their vows.**

[...] You are no longer serving our Lord so that he will bring you to paradise. You no longer tell him: I give you everything, but you will bring me to heaven, you will give me glory. No, you can no longer say that, once you have given your personality. Understand me rightly: you can no longer say that. You are not rejecting heaven, but you are not looking for heaven to be happy apart from our Lord.

Neither should you say: My God, you will give me your virtues, your merits to enrich me. You are no longer a personality that can be enriched. [...] Nothing at all for yourself; you must enrich only your spouse – you must honor only him. Everything that you receive, you should send it on to your spouse. [...]

You will say: What a sacrifice! To give not only one's life, but to give even one's personality – that's even much more than martyrdom. It is good to give your life. Fine! But you know that you are bravely facing martyrdom: when your head is cut off, you will go to heaven with head and body. It is a triumphal battle, but you know that you are going to heaven. On the other hand, I say: My God, I love you for your good pleasure, for your own happiness, and I am not asking you to make me happy. Do you understand this love, my poor Sisters? My God, I am happy that you be honored, loved by your saints in paradise so that you would not lose anything, because if you had only me, you would be served very badly. I am happy that they love you one hundred times more than I do, and that others give you what I fail to give you. Do you understand that? Ah! Love the Good Lord very well. Tell him: I am happy that they love you because you deserve it; I am happy that they love you because love is the true and lasting good. To love him for himself – that is worth more than all the religious lives put together.

Why is it that, in religious life, there are so many who hold back? It is because they hold on to their personality³. And in the world, why do people love our Lord so little? Because they don't love him for himself, but for their own self. Here I am talking about a really pure and perfect love of our Lord. Is this possible? Yes, thanks be to God, there are some who love our Lord in this way. Oh, what goodness! Do you understand that our Lord must be happy, that the blessed Trinity Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be happy, and they must be saying: Here is a soul that loves me for myself, for my happiness: she requests neither glory nor honor for herself – at least there is no self-seeking.

Earlier, I was telling you: We are not rejecting heaven by doing this. No. We are more resourceful than the others by saying: No, my God, I am sufficiently rewarded by your allowing me to serve you, to love you. And then we add: Leave me here on earth till the end of the world if you want, you deserve that I love you and I will be happy to glorify you. And we are no longer concerned about paradise, nor the sufferings connected with this world. But God, who needs to place us in paradise, says: *Here is a soul who loves me more than I command, more than the gospels prescribe – here is a soul who loves me for myself.* And then, if the Good Lord had not created paradise, he would create it explicitly for you, because you touch his weakness – you love him for himself. We must be loving – therefore, love very well, since that is paradise. Allow our Lord to worry about your happiness. Concern yourself with glorifying him. Trust him. He will see to your happiness. Your concern is to love him.

In the world, I met some servants who had been serving the same master for fifty years. At first, they had salaries, but then they said: We no longer want salaries: we will serve you like children. We are part of the household: if we get sick you will take care of us. Yes, we find this in servants who say: I love you; that is enough for me – allow me to live with you. And would I not do this for our Lord?

Imagine! If there could be a soul with this attitude who would say to our Lord when seeing the earth purified by fire at the end of the world – because you know that the world will not be destroyed, it will be purified by fire, but it will remain as a constellation: the earth will no longer be sullied by sin, it will be purified by a deluge of fire while remaining along with the elements founded and divinized by our Lord. How could our Lord destroy his manger, his little house of Nazareth, his Calvary where his blood was

³ A little later in the text, he deals with some souls who are ready to stay on earth till the end of the world because they have given themselves completely, forgetful of themselves. In contrast, others stay here for the opposite reason: because they hold on to their personality, do not give themselves, and therefore, do not advance.

poured out... that's impossible; what else could happen, since this is the paradise of his love – now, I am saying, if by some impossible circumstances, a soul in love with our Lord would tell him after her resurrection: Do not bring me to heaven. The earth here will be alone; leave me as the only one on earth so that someone could love you here, so that I could keep you company here. At least you will have me to love you and to glorify you. How beautiful that would be! And our Lord would be obliged to make a separate paradise here for that soul, of course!

So now, my poor children, ask our Lord to help you understand very well what I have just said to you; grace is needed. It is a new explanation, like a new doctrine. People don't know what we mean by personality. It is the self – we must give this to the Good Lord. Say to our Lord: Because I am made that way, I give you my personality, my self – you will be my self, me, my person. If you make this exchange, our Lord will become your person. To him the honor, the glory and the affection. Our Lord is your end and your life. Your entire life returns to him. But your life becomes divine, because its driving force is divine. I wish you this grace.

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Points for reflection:

This teaching on the gift of self reflects the spiritual experience of the Founder concerning the gift of his personality. What coloring does this gift add to the vows? Notice the gospel texts that are quoted. The link with Eucharistic adoration. Pray over the underlined texts.

He asks: “Do you want to be true adorers of the Eucharist? Give your personality.” – Do you want to do so? – “Do you understand what you are giving?” Reflect on these questions.

