

# THE REAL PRESENCE

## Eucharistic Meditations by St. Peter Julian Eymard

### THE EUCHARISTIC VEIL

*Cur faeiem tuam abscondis?*

Why hidest Thou Thy face? (*Job xiii 24*)

#### I

WHY is our Lord veiled beneath the Sacred Species in the Most Blessed Sacrament?

It is difficult to get accustomed to this hidden state of our Lord. We must frequently insist upon this truth; for we must believe firmly and practically that although Our Lord Jesus Christ is veiled, He is really and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist.

But why this silent presence, this impenetrable veil? We are often tempted to say:

“Lord, show us Thy face!”

Our Lord makes us feel His power; He draws us to Himself; He keeps us respectful; but we do not see Him. And it would be so sweet, so good to hear words from our Lord’s lips!

What a consolation for us were He to show Himself! What an assurance of being His friend! For He would supposedly show Himself only to those He loves.

#### II

WELL, Our Lord is more lovable when hidden than if He were to show Himself. He is more eloquent when silent than if He were to speak. And what we look upon as a punishment is an effect of His love and goodness.

Yes, if He were to show Himself as He is, we would be unhappy; the contrast of His virtues, of His glory would humiliate us. We would say: “What! A Father so good, with children so miserable!” We would not dare approach Him or show ourselves. Now that we know only His kindness, we come at least without fear.

And everybody comes to Him. Let us suppose that our Lord were to manifest Himself to the good only,—for since His Resurrection He cannot reveal Himself to sinners—who would dare rank himself among the good? Who would not dread coming to church lest Jesus Christ, on not finding him good enough, would not manifest Himself to him? People would grow envious of one another. The proud alone would dare think enough of themselves to come to our Lord.

Whereas under the present order of things everyone has equal rights and can take it for granted that he is loved.

#### III

BUT perhaps the sight of our Lord’s glory would convert us?

No, no! We cannot convert people by dazzling them. The Jews became idolaters at the foot of a flaming Sinai; the Apostles talked nonsense on Mount Thabor.

We would be either frightened or elated by our Lord’s glory, but not converted. The Jewish people were afraid to come near Moses after his face shone with divine light. “No, Lord, please remain hidden; that is better for us. I can thus draw near to Thee and at least hope that Thou lovest me since Thou drivest me not away.”

But would not the great power of His words convert us?

The Jews heard our Lord for three years; were they converted? A mere handful of them. The human words of our Lord, those that strike the ear, will not convert us; the words of His grace will. Now, Our Lord in The Blessed Sacrament speaks to our heart, and that ought to be enough for us, for His words are real.

BUT if I could at least experience our Lord’s love, some of its ardent flames, I would love Him much more; they would transform my heart and set it ablaze with love!

We mistake feeling for love.

When we ask our Lord 'to make us love Him, we expect Him to make us feel that we love Him.

Things would come to a sorry pass were He to listen to us. No! Love means sacrifice, the gift of our will and submission to that of God.

*The* virtue of strength is the fruit of Eucharistic contemplation and of Communion,— which is perfect union with Jesus. The sweetness of it is short-lived; strength alone endures. And what are we in need of against ourselves and the world if not strength? Strength brings us peace.

Do you not feel at peace in the presence of Our Lord? That proves that you love Him. What more do you want?

When two friends get together, they spend their time looking at each other and in telling their love for each other. They are wasting their time; for their affection is not thereby increased. But separate them for a while; they will think of each other and recall each other's face; they long for each other.

The same is true of our Lord. What did the Apostles do during the three years they lived with Him?

He has hidden Himself in order to have us ponder over His goodness and His virtues; in order that our love might become serious, disengaged from the senses, content with the strength and peace of God.

LET us sum up what we have said. Our Saviour is really present beneath the veils of the Sacrament, but He denies us the *view* of His body so as to have us abide in His love, in His adorable personality. If He were to show Himself, or even a single ray of His glory, one trait of His adorable countenance, we would forget Him and abide in that manifestation of Himself, But He has told us His body is not our end; it is but a step to help us reach first His soul and then His divinity through *His* soul. We have His love to guide us thither.

The strength of our love will bring complete certitude to our faith. The senses having been reduced to silence, our soul will enter into communion with Jesus Christ; and since Jesus is happiness, repose, and joy, the more intimately we commune with Him, the happier we shall be.

## THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

*Hoc est opus Dei ut credatis in Eum.*

This is the work of God, that you believe in Him. (*John vi. 29.*)

### I

OUR Lord wants us to remember all He did for us on earth, and to honour His presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament by meditating on all the mysteries of His life.

To make the mystery of the Last Supper more vividly present to us, He was not content with giving us the Gospel narrative; He left us a living, personal reminder: His very Self, His adorable Person.

Although our Lord is in our midst, we cannot see Him, nor can we picture to ourselves the manner of His presence in the Eucharist.

Our Eucharistic Lord, however, has frequently appeared. Why did He not permit pictures of these august apparitions to be preserved?

Ah! Our Lord is well aware that pictures would only result in drawing us away from the reality of His actual presence under the sacred veils of the Eucharist.

But if I could see, would I not have more faith? Do we not love better what we see?

Yes, the senses may confirm my wavering faith. *But* our risen Lord does not want our perverted senses to reach Him; He demands pure faith.

He has not only a body but a soul as well. He does not want to be loved as bodies are loved; He wants us to go straight to His Soul with our minds and our hearts, without using our senses to discover Him.

For that matter, although our Lord is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament in body and in soul, He abides therein after the manner of spirits. Spirits cannot be analysed or dissected; neither can they be reached with the senses.

## II

BESIDES, why should we complain? Our Lord has arranged everything harmoniously. The Sacred Species do not touch Him, nor do they form part of Him. They are however, inseparably united to the sacramental Christ. They are, as it were, the terms of His presence. They tell us where He is. They localize Him. Our Lord could have taken a purely spiritual manner of existence; but then, how could we find Him? Where could we look for Him?

Let us thank this good Saviour! He is not hidden, but only veiled. A hidden object practically does not exist for us; we do not know where it is. But we can possess a veiled object; we are sure of it even though we do not see it.

Does it not already mean a great deal to us to know that our friend is at our side, that he is really there? Well, you can see where our Lord is. Look at the Sacred Host; you are sure He is there.

## III

OUR Lord veils Himself for our good and our advantage, to force us to study His soul, His intentions, and His virtues in Himself. If we saw Him, we would be satisfied to admire His appearance, we would have for Him only sentimental love; our Lord wants us to love Him with a love of sacrifice. It is hard for our Lord thus to veil Himself. He would prefer to show His divine countenance which drew so many hearts to Him in His mortal life; but He veils it for our good.

Our mind is thus forced to study the Eucharist; our faith is spurred on; we acquire a deeper understanding of Our Lord.

Instead of showing Himself to our eyes, He shows Himself to our soul. Through His own light He notifies us of His presence in us. He is both the light and the object we must contemplate in that light; He is the object and the means of our faith.

The clearness of one's insight into the Eucharist is proportioned to one's greater or lesser love and purity of life. Our Lord said so: "He that loveth Me, shall be loved of My Father: and I will love him, and manifest myself to him."

Our Lord gives to souls of prayer a deep understanding of Himself; He never deceives them.

He varies His grace of light. He directs it now to one point of His life, now to another. And since the Eucharist is the glorification of all the mysteries, Jesus Christ becomes Himself the object of our meditation, no matter what its topic may be.

## IV

HOW much easier it is, consequently, to meditate before the Blessed Sacrament than at home!

At home we are in the presence of the immensity of God; here, we are in the presence of our Lord, Who is very close to us.

And since the heart follows the mind, since affection follows knowledge, it becomes easier to love in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Love is then actual, since it has for its object Jesus living before us and renewing all His mysteries in the Eucharist.

He that meditates on the mysteries in themselves without giving them life through the Eucharist always feels that something is missing, and he harbours a regret in spite of himself. "Oh, that I had been there!" he says to himself.

But in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament, what is there to regret, to desire? All the mysteries live anew through the Saviour's presence. Our love actually enjoys Him. Whether you are thinking of the mortal life of Jesus or of His risen life, you know that Jesus Christ is there with His body, His soul, and His divinity.

Let us therefore put these ideas into practice. No matter what mysteries are represented in our imagination, let us strengthen and quicken the remembrance of them through the presence of Jesus Christ.

Let us then remember that our Lord is in the Host in all His different states, and in His entirety. He who does not realise that lives in darkness; his faith is always weak and fails to make him happy.

Let our faith be active and thoughtful; that is what will make us happy. Our Lord wants to bring us happiness all by Himself. No man can make us happy; even piety cannot do it of itself. We need a piety that has fed on the Eucharist; for happiness comes only from the possession of God, and in the Eucharist we own God.

## THE LOVE OF JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST

*Nos credidimus caritati quam habet Deus in nobis.*

We have believed the charity, which God hath to us.

*(1 John iv. 16.)*

WE believe in the love of God for us. That is a profound saying.

Belief in the truth of the words of God is required of every Christian; but there is another belief, which is more perfect and is the crown of the first: belief in divine love.

Belief in the divine truths will be vain if it does not lead to belief in divine love.

What is this love in which we must believe?

It is the love of Jesus Christ; the love, which He manifests to us in the Eucharist, a love that is Himself, a living and infinite love.

They who are satisfied with believing in the truth of the Eucharist, love not at all, or very little.

But what proofs of His love does our Lord give us in the Eucharist?

### I

FIRST of all we have His word, His veracity.

Jesus tells us that He loves us, that He instituted His Sacrament only out of love for us. Therefore, it is true.

We believe an honest man on his word. Why should we not trust our Lord as much?

When someone wants to give his friend a proof of his love, he tells him personally that loves him and he gives him an affectionate handshake.

Well, Our Lord sends neither angels nor ministers to assure us of His love; He comes in person. Love will have no go-between.

And so He perpetuates Himself only to tell us over and over again: "I love you. You see that I love you!"

Our Lord was so afraid we might forget Him that He took up His abode among us. He made His home with us so that we might not be able to think of Him without thinking of His love. By giving Himself thus and insisting on this gift, He hoped not to be forgotten. Whoever gives serious thought to the Eucharist, and especially whoever partakes of it, cannot help feeling that our Lord loves him, He feels that in Him he has a father. He feels that he is loved as a child and that he has a right to come to his Father and speak to Him. In church, at the foot of the tabernacle, he is in his Father's home; he feels that he is.

Ah! I understand why people like to live near a church, in the shadow of their Father's house!

And so, Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament tells us that He loves us; He tells us interiorly and makes us feel it. Let us believe in His love.

### II

DOES He love me personally?

To this there is but one answer; do we belong to the Christian family? In a family, do not the father and the mother love each one of their children with an equal love? And if there were any preferences, would they not be for the weakest and frailest child?

Our Lord's sentiments toward us are at least those of a good father; why deny Him this quality?

Besides, see how our Lord manifests His personal love for each one of us. Every morning He comes to see each one of His children in particular, to converse with them, to visit them, to embrace them. Although He has repeated this so many times, He is as gracious and as loving at His last visit as He was at the first. He is as young as ever and is not tired of loving us and giving Himself to each one of us.

Does He not give Himself whole and entire to each one? And if a greater number come to receive Him, does He divide

Himself up? Does He give less to each one?

If the church is full of adorers, can they not all pray to Jesus and converse with Him?

Is not each one listened to and his prayer granted as if he were the only one in church?

Such is the personal love of Jesus for us. Each one may take it all for himself and wrong no one; the sun gives all its light to each and everyone of us; the ocean belongs whole and entire to each and every fish. Jesus is greater than us all. He is inexhaustible.

### III

THE persistency of the love of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament is another undeniable proof that He loves us.

An almost incalculable number of Masses are celebrated every day; they follow one another almost without interruption. But how distressing it is for an understanding soul to realise that very often no one is present to hear or assist at these Masses, in which Jesus offers Himself up for us! While Jesus is crying mercy on this new Calvary, sinners are insulting God and His Christ.

Why then does our Lord renew His sacrifice so often, since men do not profit by it?

Why does our Lord remain day and night on so many altars to which no one comes to receive the graces He is offering so lavishly?

He loves, He hopes, and He waits!

If He came down on our altars on certain days only, some sinner, on being moved to repentance, might have to look for Him and, not finding Him, have to wait. Our Lord prefers to wait himself for the sinner for years rather than keep him waiting one instant; having to wait would perhaps discourage the sinner in his attempt to break with the slavery of sin.

Oh! How few reflect that Jesus loves them that much in The Most Blessed Sacrament!

And yet all these things are true! We have no faith in the love of Jesus! Would we treat a friend, or any man at all, as we do Our Lord?

## THE EUCHARIST, THE CENTRE OF OUR LOVE

*Manete in Me.*

Abide in Me. (*John xv., 4.*)

### I

THE heart of man needs a centre of affection and expansion. As a matter of fact, when God created the first man He said:

“It is not good for man to be alone; let Us make him a help like unto himself.”

And the *Imitation* also says: “Without a friend thou canst not well live.”

Well, Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament wants to be the centre of all hearts, and He tells us: “Abide in Me . . . Abide in My love.”

What does abiding in our Lord’s love mean? To abide in His love is to make His Eucharistic love the centre of our life, the only source of our consolation; it is to cast ourselves into the Heart of Jesus in our afflictions, in our sorrows, in our deceptions, in the circumstances in which the heart unbosoms itself more spontaneously. He invites us to do so.

“Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.”

To abide in His love is, in time of joy, to refer our happiness to Him; for delicacy of friendship wants a friend with whom to share its joys.

To abide in His love is to make the Eucharist the centre of our desires: “Lord, I desire this only if Thou desirest it. I will do this to please Thee.”

To abide in His love is to delight in surprising Him with some gift, or some little sacrifice.

To abide in His love is to live by the Eucharist; to guide ourselves in our actions by His thought, and to make it a point

unswervingly to prefer the good service of the Eucharist to everything else.

Alas! Is Jesus Eucharistic really our centre?

Perhaps in time of extraordinary difficulties, or of very fervent prayer, or of urgent need; but in everyday life, do we think, do we reflect, do we act in Jesus as in our centre?

## II

WHY is our Lord not my centre?

Because He is not yet the *ego* of my ego; because I am not completely under His control, under the inspiration of His will; because I have desires that are vying with the desires of Jesus within me; because He does not mean everything to me. And yet a child works for his parents, an angel for his God; I ought therefore to work for my Master, Jesus Christ.

What am I to do? I must enter into this centre, abide in it, and act in it, not indeed by the sentiment of His sweetness, which does not depend on me, but by repeated attempts, by the homage of every action. Come, () my soul! Leave the world; come but of thyself; renounce thyself; and go to the God of the Eucharist. He has an abode in which to receive thee; He longs for thee; He wants to live with thee, to live in thee. Abide therefore in Jesus present in thy heart, live in thy heart; live in the goodness of Jesus Eucharistic.

O my soul, study our Lord in thee, and do nothing but by Him.

Abide in our Lord. Abide in Him through A sense of devotedness, of holy joy, of readiness to do whatever He will ask of thee. 'Abide in the Heart and the peace of Jesus Eucharistic.

## III

WHAT impresses me is that this centre of the Eucharist is hidden, invisible, altogether interior, and, for all that, most real, living, and sustaining.

Jesus draws the soul spiritually into the wholly spiritualised state that is His in the Sacrament.

What, in fact, is the nature of the life of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament? It is entirely hidden, all interior.

He conceals therein His power and kindness; He conceals His divine Person.

And all His actions and virtues take on this simple and hidden character.

He requires silence around Him. He no longer prays to His Father "with a strong cry and tears" as in the Garden of Olives, but through His self-abasement.

All graces come from the Host. From His Eucharist Jesus sanctifies the world, but in an invisible and spiritual manner.

He rules the world and the Church without either moving or speaking.

Such must the kingdom of Jesus be in me, all interior. I must gather myself up around Jesus: my faculties, my understanding, and my will; and my senses, as far as possible. I must live of Jesus and not of myself, in Jesus and not in myself. I must pray with Him, immolate myself with Him, and be consumed in the same love with Him. I must become in Him one flame, one heart, one life with Him.

What nourishes this centre is something similar to God's call to Abraham: *egredere* (Go forth out of thy country); it is the renouncing and abandoning of outside things; the turning to those within and the losing of oneself in Jesus. This manner of life is more pleasing to His Heart and gives greater glory to His Father; that is why our Lord desires it ardently. He tells us: "Come out of thyself and follow Me into solitude where, alone with thee, I will speak to thy heart."

This life in Jesus is nothing other than the love of predilection, the gift of self, the intensifying of union with Him; through it we take root, as it were, and prepare the nourishment, the sap of the tree. *Regnum Dei intra vos est*. "The kingdom of God is within you."

## IV

THERE is no centre other than Jesus, and Jesus Eucharistic.

He tells us: "Without Me you can do nothing." He alone gives grace. He reserves to Himself the distribution of it in

order to oblige us to come to Him and ask Him for it.

He wants thus to establish and foster union with us. He reserves to Himself the right of giving consolation and peace, so that in sorrows and combats we may have recourse to Him. He wants to be the heart's only happiness. He has placed this centre of repose in none other than himself: *Manete in Me*. And lest we should ever miss Him when we come to Him, He remains always at our service, always ready, always lovable.

He is continually drawing us to Himself. The life of love is nothing other than this continual attraction of us to Him.

Alas! I am so little established in this centre of love! My aspirations to Jesus are still so imperfect, so rare, and so interrupted, often for long hours at a time! And yet Jesus tells us repeatedly: "He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me, and I in him."

### **GOD IS THERE!**

*Vere Dominus est in loco isto, et ego nesciebam!*

Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!

*(Genesis xxviii. 16.)*

### **I**

In order to form a fair judgment of a family, we must see whether the law of respect is observed. When you meet with a family in which the children and servants are obedient and respectful, you can say:

"Here is a good and happy family."

The respect and honour given to parents is the religion of the family, just as respect for the sovereign or his representatives is the religion of societies

We are not asked to honour the qualities of the individual, but his authority, which comes from God.

We owe respect to Our Lord; that is our first duty. Under pain of failing in our duties towards Our Lord, we must have for him a spontaneous respect, a respect of instinct that should require no premeditation.

It must be in the nature of an impression in us. We must honour our Lord wherever He is; His dignity as God-Man requires it. In His name every knee bows in heaven, on earth, and in hell.

In heaven, the angels prostrate themselves before His Majesty in trembling adoration; the place of our Lord's glory is also the place where He receives sovereign respect.

Every creature on earth has obeyed our Lord. The sea adored Him by becoming solid beneath His feet. The sun and the heavenly bodies mourned Him; they honoured Him while men were cursing Him.

And in hell the damned tremble beneath the justice of the severe Judge of the living and the dead.

### **II**

RESPECT for the presence of Our Lord should not have to be reasoned out. When the court or the King is announced, all stand; it is instinctive.

When the Sovereign goes by, everyone pays him reverence. A spontaneous movement of respect and deference greet him everywhere. He who is no longer of that sentiment or who wishes to destroy it in others is no longer a man.

Catholics have much reason to blush for their lack of respect in our Lord's presence. I am speaking only of spontaneous respect.

Enter a synagogue; if you speak or do not behave properly, you are expelled.

Before entering a mosque, you are requested to take off your shoes. All these infidels have nothing real in their temples, but we have everything. In spite of that, their respect far surpasses ours.

Our Lord might very well say the devil is honoured more than He is. "I have brought up children . . . but they have despised Me."

I ask mothers whether they would be pleased to be disowned publicly by their children. *Why* do we do to our Lord

what would offend us so much if it were done to us? Why are we less sensitive when our Lord's honour is at stake than when our own petty dignity is?

Nothing could be more false. Our dignity, in fact, comes to us from no one but God, by reflection from Him to us. When, therefore, we allow respect for our Lord to be lost, we destroy the respect due to our own selves.

Oh! If our Lord were to punish us for our lack of respect as we deserve!

God had Heliodorus scourged for profaning His temple; but there is more than the temple here.

Let us, therefore, give our Lord this first homage of a sentiment of respect as soon as we come into His presence. We are but wretches if we allow levity or carelessness to precede this homage.

Yes, our greatest sins against faith come from our lack of respect.

### III

He who believes knows where he is going when he goes to church: he is going to Our Lord Jesus Christ. On entering the church, he says to all his occupations, like Saint Bernard: "Stay here at the door. I feel the need of seeking comfort and strength from God."

Act in the same manner. You know how much time you are to spend in church, forget everything else. If you come to pray, you do not come to transact business. And if you are pestered with distractions and worries, turn them all out of doors without getting troubled over them. Persevere in prayer and make acts of reparation and of respect. Take a better posture, and let Our Lord see that you detest your distractions. By your respectful attitude, if not by the attention of your mind, you are still proclaiming His divinity, His presence; were you to do only that, you would be doing a great deal.

Watch a saint enter a church. He goes in without concerning himself with those who are already there. He concentrates on our Lord and forgets everything else. In the presence of the Pope we hardly give a thought to cardinals and bishops. And in heaven the saints do not idle away their time honouring one another; to God alone they give all honour and glory. Let- us imitate them; our Lord is the only one in church.

Remain quiet for a moment after you have come into church; silence is the greatest mark of respect, and the first disposition for prayer is respect. Most of our dryness and lack of devotion in prayer is due to our lack of respect for Our Lord on entering the church; to our disrespectful posture.

Let us therefore take the firm resolution to foster in ourselves this instinctive respect; we do not have to appeal to reason for that. Must our Lord prove His presence to us every time we enter the church? Must He always send us an angel to tell us that He is there?

It certainly would be most unfortunate if He did, but, alas! quite necessary.

### IV

YOU owe our Lord exterior respect, which is the prayer of the body. Nothing helps so much the prayer of the soul. See with what religious care the Church has regulated the minutest details of exterior worship. It must then be that this prayer gives great glory to Jesus Christ. He gave us the example of exterior worship by praying on His knees; tradition tells us He prayed with arms outstretched in the form of a cross and lifted up to heaven. The Apostles have handed down to us this manner of praying; the priest uses it during the Holy Sacrifice.

Since our body has received its life from God and lives on the divine favours that are constantly showered upon it, does it not owe God something? We must then make it pray by giving it an attitude full of respect.

Careless postures of the body unnerve the soul, whereas a crucifying posture strengthens and helps her. You must not torment yourself by taking too uncomfortable a posture, but let it be stern enough. Postures that denote too much familiarity are out of place in the presence of God; they breed contempt. Love Our Lord; be tender and affectionate towards Him, but never exaggeratingly familiar. Dryness and lack of devotion in prayer are nearly always the result of disrespect in posture.

When you are travelling or when you are saying extra prayers at home, you may take a less uncomfortable posture, but

in the presence of Our Lord you must also adore externally with your senses. Remember how strict God was on this point in the Old Law, and what a number of preparatory details the Levites had to go through. God wanted to make them feel their dependence on Him and prepare them to pray well.

Our piety is agonising because we lack this external respect. I know that we should not tremble with fear before God, nor be afraid to come into His presence; but, on the other hand, neither should we seem to be despising Him.

An austere posture helps us to pray better; we refuse this help in order to satisfy our sensuality. We imagine we are tired; how often our imagination deceives us! If the Pope were passing by, our imaginary fatigue would not prevent us from remaining on our knees. And even supposing that we are really tired, why be so afraid of suffering, which gives wings to prayer? We should at least have even then a becoming and grave posture. Let the lay people sit down if they are tired, but in a becoming manner; they should not slouch in their seats. Let them not take any position that would tend to weaken the soul's energy and render it unfit for prayer. We religious; however, should remain on our knees; that is the correct posture for an adorer. If we grow tired, we should stand up; that, too, is a respectful posture. We should never sit down. Let us be soldiers of the God of the Eucharist. And if our heart is not burning with love, let our body at least bear witness to our faith and our desire to love and to do things properly.

Let our body therefore take the attitude of prayer, of adoration. Let us all form the court of our King Jesus: Keep the presence of the Master in your thoughts; impress your *mind* with the truth of it. Let all your attentions be for our Lord Jesus Christ! *Vere Dominus est in loco isto*. Truly, the Lord is here.

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