

Alter Christus

*“As an **alter Christus** (another Christ) the priest is in Christ, for Christ and with Christ... Because he belongs to Christ, the priest is radically at the service of all people: he is the minister of their salvation” (Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monthly bulletin dedicated to all the Priests of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

Pardoning Love

By Saint Peter Julian Eymard

[From the book *The Divine Eucharist*]

I. God loves us personally since He has created us and all things for us, and has redeemed us by dying for us.

There is one greater proof of God's love for us, and that is, the power He gives of obtaining pardon after having offended Him.

God's mercy to us, which rises superior to all His others mercies, is His goodness in pardoning us.

How much has God loved us? As much as He pardons us, as He has pardoned us, as He will pardon us! God is good. He loves me, since He pardons me when I have offended Him. I need no other proof. There is none more convincing, none that touches me so deeply. It was from the love that had pardoned him that Saint Paul drew his own love as an Apostle. It was from the mercy which had remitted so many sins that Saint Augustine imbibed that love which inflamed and pierced his

heart, changing it into the heart of a seraph.

God's love for us is more merciful than benevolent, because, sinners by nature, we have need of mercy above all else. It is also His mercy that, above all His other attributes. He exerts during our life on this earth. This world is its empire, and time is its reign.

Mercy has abandoned heaven. It has come down to earth, it covers, envelops man. It is his centre, his atmosphere, the air that he breathes, the light that enlightens him. We live on mercy.

It shields the sinner from the justice which would punish every sin. It arrests it, retards it until death. It follows man, accompanies him everywhere, never quits him, no, not even after death, for it follows him to purgatory. Purgatory is nothing else than the last effort of God's mercy in behalf of the sinner. Above the portals of that fiery prison is written: *Misericordia Dei!*

God's mercy for man is infinite. We shall never exhaust it. We shall never stifle it by our ingratitude. We never wear it out, never discourage it. It pardons always, pardons everything.

Author: Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Peter Julian Eymard was born on February 4, 1811 in La Mure, France. He grew up in a poor family after the French Revolution, at a time when Catholicism was not looked upon kindly.

It was clear from an early age that Peter wanted to be a priest, although his father was not happy with that idea. After he entered the seminary, illness forced him to leave. But he persisted and was finally ordained for the Diocese of Grenoble when he was 23. A few years later he heard some Marist Priests preach. The Marist order is dedicated to Mary, the Blessed Mother. Their message appealed to Father Eymard, and he eventually joined their congregation. He traveled through Europe, giving retreats and missions.

As time passed, he felt very drawn to Jesus through the Eucharist and decided that there needed to be priests who urged devotion to this. In 1856, Father Eymard founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. The men who joined the congregation guarded the Blessed Sacrament 24 hours a day and soon attracted lay persons to do the same. This practice of prayer and devotion before the Blessed Sacrament became known as Eucharistic devotion.

In 1868, at the age of 57, Father Eymard died. He was canonized 1962 by Pope John XXIII. He has been referred to as "the Apostle of the Eucharist."

Even when the crime is evident, it says. “*Father, forgive, for they know not what they do!*”

When we reject it, ill-use it, it seizes upon us, pursues us, still eager to vanquish us: “*Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss! My Friend.*” Our sins will never be so great as the mercy of God. There is one thing, however, one thing that it cannot conquer, and against which it can do nothing, and that is, the pride of supernatural gifts, which with full knowledge reject’s Gods goodness, and kills itself.

II. The Holy Scriptures are full of proofs of the divine mercy. God designedly multiplied them, because we have absolute need of it. The sinner of necessity, as it were, despairs. That is the effect which always follows sinful pleasure, and the second effect is much more certain than the first. Adam and Eve, who fled and doubted of mercy, Cain, who rejected it and exclaimed: “*My sin is too great for pardon,*” are types of the sinner after his fall. They are discouraged

for having been unfaithful; and the majority of sinners who put off their conversion are held back by despair “It is impossible for me to be pardoned. I have too deeply offended God!” The day on which they would weep, they would be converted.

And the pious, - why do they fall? Because they, too, despair. They are discouraged by their falls. They have not succeeded.

That is not what they were hoping for. The demon fills their soul with diffidence. That is his best secret for entering into the soul and ruining it. May this sentiment never rule in yours! What? Would you doubt of the mercy of God?! No, no! - If you fall, rise again by humble and repentant confidence. Humility

that seeks to rest in its misery is only pride humbled and vexed. Humility flies toward God on the wings of confidence. “*Oratio humilitantis se, nubes penetrant* - The prayer of him who humbleth himself, pierces the clouds.”

The more pious and virtuous you are, the more you will experience temptations to discouragement.

How much has God loved us? As much as He pardons us, as He has pardoned us, as He loves me, since He pardons me when I have offended Him. I need no other proof. There is none more convincing, none that touches me so deeply.

One always holds on to self, fearing to cast himself into the arms of God. And yet would you make a good act of contrition? Instead of descending into hell to view your own place therein, make an act of faith in God's mercy. Take God by His weak side, His bowels of mercy and His Heart. A man taken by his weak side, will give his whole purse and something else besides. Show God that it is to His glory to grant you mercy, that it cannot be better exercised than on you, that you will be His victory and His masterpiece. Take God by the Heart!

I think that, by drawing nearer and nearer to God, a soul would reach the point of never again experiencing temptations to discouragement, and that in His vicinity, she would forever be established in perfect confidence. Saint Alphonsus di Liguori says that the temptations God sends to the saints are those against faith, confidence, chastity, and the confessor, who visibly represents God to the soul. Alas! this is very true. Such tempests are horrible! God rouses them to show

men's virtue in the highest degree of confidence, in naked faith grounded on His word alone. In proportion as they advance toward God, life is purified and transformed. When, above all, it is on the eve of finishing, in order to become the life of heaven and happiness, all the virtues impeach one. Sins grow greater, and one sees in his actions only defects. All conspire against confidence and the divine mercy. I have seen the holiest soul one could meet in heart-rending despair. It was not his faults

that had reduced him to such a state, but he accused himself with tears, frozen by despair, of not having loved enough! He feared for the graces he had received, being convinced that he had not profited enough by them. Impossible to restore to him confidence.

Neither exhortations, nor prayers, nor reasoning availed. He was weighed down by despair and, as it were, crushed by its weight. There was no other remedy than to say "Ah, well! I accept this state. I will go to hell, but Thou wilt come with me, O my God!" And he found peace in this heroic act of confidence.

What? Would you doubt of the mercy of God?! No, no! If you fall, rise again by humble and repentant confidence. Humility flies toward God on the wings of confidence.

Oh! those temptations to despair and discouragement, those temptations against confidence in God! - never entertain them in your soul. Tell them to your superior or to your confessor. Do not harbor them one instant, for they attack the sources of the spiritual life, they even dry up that of the body. Discouragement and despair produce sadness, of which the Holy Spirit says that it is a moth that preys upon the marrow of the bones. But God's mercy is life, the bright sun of life: "*Misericordia Dei super vitas!*" - The mercy of God is better than lives!"

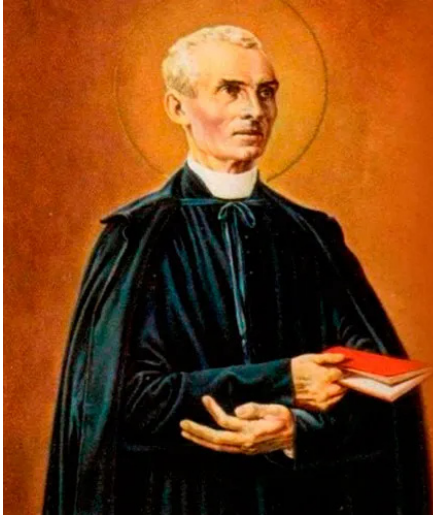
III. But see how God pardons. Ah! it is not like men. Man in pardoning shames the culprit, and the fear of shame prevents the child from asking forgiveness. The good God pardons with goodness. His forgiveness is a grace which restores honor, purifies, sanctifies, embellishes. It is one same act to be pardoned and to become

holy. It at once restores the robe of innocence, the white robe. One abases himself only to be raised up immediately by mercy.

But see how God pardons. Ah! it is not like men. Man in pardoning shames the culprit. Men grow weary of pardoning. But the more He pardons, the more merciful does God seem to become. Great sinners who return to Him are His greatest friends. He came for the sick, and for one sinner He left the angels. Provided there are some humility and confidence in our confession, we are always sure of being welcomed.

Men grow weary of pardoning. They are more severe toward the relapsing sinner, and impose more conditions on him. But the more He pardons, the more merciful does God seem to become. Great sinners who return to Him are His greatest friends. He came for the sick, and for one sinner He left the angels. Provided there are some humility and confidence in our confession, we are always sure of being welcomed.

God pardons absolutely and forever. He casts our sins behind His back, say the Scriptures. He plunges them into the sea, and the scarlet of crime assumes the whiteness of snow, of innocence, in the bath of His mercy. They will never again rise up to accuse us! I love this thought of a large number of theologians,



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according to whom, they will not even be mentioned at the Last Judgment, because the Lord says: *“I will pardon you them, and I shall remember them no more.”*

Only, it is necessary to obtain pardon for them, and to take care not to hold on to the fag-ends of sin.

Men exact some punishment for pardon, at least the loss of position or civil honor; but Jesus Christ restores to us our honors, reestablishes us in all our rights as before we sinned. Thus did He reestablish Saint Peter after his fall and confirm him in his charge of Supreme Pastor.

Jesus ennobles in pardoning. Of Magdalen, the sinner, He made the heroine of supernatural love, and He publicly praised her with the most beautiful eulogium a God can make: *“Dilexit multum - She hath*

loved much!”

He bowed down to the ground in order not to make that other sinner of the Gospel blush. He put no question to her concerning her offence; but, on the contrary, He accused her accusers: *“Where are they who accused thee? Hath no man condemned thee?”* He placed her above them all: *“Go, and ain no more!”*

He takes sinners and makes of them princes of His mercy and love, like Saint Matthew, Saint Paul, and so many others.

And could one become discouraged after that? Know, then, that it is a need for Our Lord to pardon. His Heart is weighed down by the thought of the necessity of condemning us. He weeps over us, and when He forgives us. He is relieved and His Heart dilated by mercy. If Our Lord could

still suffer, it would be at seeing us despairing of His mercy and failing to ask pardon.

But it is to us, priests and religious, that God's mercy especially shows itself. We deserved by our sins to be degraded from our dignity, as the world does its magistrates and officers of State. But then He would no longer have priests to pardon the other sinners.

Our Lord is more benevolent toward us. His mercies more abundant. His pardon more full of kindness. It is because we have need of more

pardon than others.

It is this that ought to render us more lenient toward sinners. Sinners ourselves, pardoned many times, still having need of pardon in the future, shall we not pardon?

Let us, then, have faith in the mercy of God, who will not abandon us provided we implore it with confidence and humility. Eternity will not be too long to thank Him for His infinite mercies, which have so frequently restored to us life and which will save us on the day of the Lord's justice.



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