



VII



# The Eucharist as the Center of Our Life

The Eucharist shapes our lifestyle as individuals, as family members and as members of society. We endeavour to understand every reality in the light of this sacrament and we contribute to a Christian vision of our global reality.

*Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA), 6a*

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**Associates of the  
Blessed Sacrament  
Initial Formation Program**

## The Eucharist as the Center of Our Life

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### 1. Opening Prayer

*Leader:* The church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened. /**R.** *Give us this day our daily bread.*

*Leader:* The Eucharist, as Christ's saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual food, is the most precious possession which the church can have in her journey through history. /**R.**

*Leader:* The Eucharist is a true banquet, in which Christ offers himself as our nourishment. This is no metaphorical food: "My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." /**R.**

*Leader:* Through our communion in his body and blood, Christ also grants us his Spirit. Whoever eats it with faith, eats Fire and Spirit. "Take and eat this, all of you, and eat with it the Holy Spirit. For it is truly my body and whoever eats it will have eternal life." /**R.**

*Leader:* Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life; they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness. /**R.**

*Leader:* The Lord wished to remain with us in the Eucharist, making his presence in meal and sacrifice the promise of a humanity renewed by his love. /**R.**

*Leader:* All who take part in the Eucharist must be committed to changing their lives and making them in a certain way completely eucharistic. /**R.**

*Leader:* In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, and enables us to become witnesses of hope. /**R.**

(Taken from the encyclical letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*)

**Scripture:** *John 15: 1 – 11 I am the Vine, you are the branches*

*Leader:* Let us pray.

*All:* Apart from you we wither, Oh source of all life.  
 You tend your vine; prune it so that it may bear more fruit.  
 As grapes on the vine may we ripen to become the wine  
 offered, in union with You, to the glory of God the Father.  
 Keep us in your love always. May our lives sacrament your  
 real presence to others and feed the hungers of their hearts.  
 In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen

## 2. Introduction to the Theme

From his childhood, Father Eymard felt attracted by the Eucharist. When he began to see in this sacrament a special vocation that was calling him, he used to formulate this mission first with words and images that he inherited from his theological and spiritual formation. As time went on, he ploughed through a spirituality of reparation and allowed himself to be touched by the love of Christ, who, in the Eucharist, gives himself for the life of the world. He was one of the first of his time to recognize in this sacrament the greatest proof of the love with which the Lord loved us and that, in this sacrament, he left us the sign of the new and eternal covenant. Once this profound truth is understood, everything changes. The Eucharist becomes the source of life, of joy, of hope, and of strength. And Father Eymard does not spare himself to introduce his contemporaries into this mystery of love. His mission: place the Eucharist at the center of Christian life like the shining rays of a love without limit and without reserve.

The *ROLA* captures this “mission” from Saint Eymard and hearkens back to the theme of V in this way: “Our ideal is to live the mystery of the Eucharist fully and to make known its meaning, so that Christ’s reign may come and the glory of God may be revealed to the world. In response to our baptismal vocation we seek to witness to Christ’s presence at the crossroads of society and, starting from the Eucharist, we strive to influence our world in the light of this mystery, source and summit of all evangelizing.” #2

### 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

“I am writing to return my New Year’s wishes to you.

. . . May Jesus be your divine center: that is my whole wish for you; a total and all-embracing center – that is, the source of your thoughts and desires, the impulse of your actions, the basis of your love, the measure of your sacrifices.”

To Mme. Antoinette de Grandville

December 26, 1867

“The Eucharist is the life of the people. The Eucharist provides them with a center for their lives. Everyone can gather without the barriers of race or language . . . The Eucharist gives them a law to live by, the law of love of which it is the source; it creates a bond among them, one Christian family. They all eat the same bread; everyone is a guest of Jesus Christ who fashions a spiritual bond among them.”

*The Real Presence*, Vol. 1 (French Ed., p. 270)

### 4. Bible Text

The disciples urged Jesus, “Rabbi, eat.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.” So the disciples said to one another, “Could someone have brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work.”

John 4:31-34, NAB



## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following readings

- Excerpts from *Emmanuel* article by Joel Giallanza, CSC.
- A passage from the Writings of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

### The Eucharist as the Center of our Life – Key Points

- Saint Peter Julian Eymard was captivated by the love of God manifest in and through the Eucharist, and it is this unconditional love that has the power to conquer the evils of the world. Every celebration of the Eucharist has the power to free us from sin and selfishness to live in greater unity and love of others.
- Our understanding and celebration of the Eucharist has changed according to paradigm shifts taking place within the church. All members of the Church have proper duties to fulfill by virtue of baptism. We are a community of believers whose words and actions influence others in the witness of our faith.
- A eucharistic life is oriented to the person of Jesus who is with us as we carry on the work of the Gospel in bringing the message of God's love to transform the world in which we live.
- Saint Peter Julian Eymard's followers were to become disciples and apostles of the Eucharist; to be bonded in a communion of love with one another; and to draw people to the Eucharist through lives of Christian service that flow from the love of God. Father Eymard's theology of the Eucharist had an energy that was transforming of lives and society.
- Greater emphasis is now placed on the social dimension of the Eucharist as the work of the church. Jesus in the Gospels speaks of the work the Father has given him to accomplish. He entrusts the Eucharist to the church as the means to carry out the work of our salvation.

## Readings

### ***The Eucharistic Life: A Reflection*** by Joel Giallanza, CSC

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“I am the bread of Life” (Jn 6:35). From the time Jesus first proclaimed this truth more than two thousand years ago, even to our own day, the Eucharist has been associated with life. It is the source of the spiritual life and the sustenance for that life; it is a promise of eternal life and the pathway to that life; it is a guide to union with Jesus and a guarantee that the promise of that union will be fulfilled. Even with these rich designations, the Eucharist is yet more. Beyond being intimately associated with life, the Eucharist is a way of life. Thus, we can speak of a eucharistic spirituality and way of life.

For the Christian dimension of our life, the usual standards set by society must be adjusted dramatically, for there can be but one standard, Jesus Christ. The eucharistic life is oriented to the person of Jesus; he is the point of reference we use to position our progress in life. Such an orientation challenges us to live so that our everyday attitudes and actions will point to Jesus, without compromise, as the unchanged meaning in our life and the unaltered direction in which we intend and desire to go.

By etymology, the word “orientation” is rooted in terms meaning *to move* and *to be*. We must move if we want to be one with Jesus. To be stationary is to stagnate. We must move toward Jesus if we truly desire union with him. At the same time, we must move away from whatever would hinder that union. This double movement is the work of a lifetime. As we take up that work, only then can we claim to be alive in Jesus, to live in union with him, and to root our identity in him. This is the eucharistic life.

This orientation toward Jesus requires faith in response to grace. It is not solely a matter of human choice; first of all, it is sensitivity to God’s work and a willingness to live in cooperation with that work. Just as the life of the church and all its activities are “bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it,” so too must it be with our personal lives.

There is an asceticism inherent in this orientation. The “whole spiritual good of the church” is contained in the Eucharist, in Jesus. That must be true also for us as individuals. Claiming that Jesus is our whole spiritual good requires that we reconsider all our other goods accordingly. That reevaluation will call us to self-denial and to the realignment of our priorities in life so we can assure the primacy of Jesus in all we do. This is the asceticism and orientation necessary for maintaining the eucharistic life.

### **A Life of Faith**

The eucharistic life is a celebration of faith. Faith enables us to orient ourselves toward Jesus even in the midst of so many realities competing for our time and energy and attention. And we should never underestimate the ferocity of that competition. We need reflect only briefly on the influence of contemporary society and culture to recognize the powerful forces of materialism that vie for our allegiance. Our orientation toward Jesus must be more than simply a wish, it must be a firm decision supported by our attitudes and actions every day. Such is the eucharistic life.

Life does not fare well in mediocrity. Life that does not at least strive to reach the fullness of its potential will be a life only half-lived. We are called to live with passion, with an intensity that reflects our conviction about the directions we are taking, the decisions we are making, and the values that are shaping our everyday tasks and responsibilities. Such passion and intensity provide us with a sense of progress, an awareness that our efforts are making a difference, and an insight into the extent and worth of our capabilities.

For the Christian dimension of our life such passion and intensity are evident in all that we do to promote the mission and proclaim the message of Jesus. He alone is the culmination of our life, he alone paves the way to our union with one another and, ultimately, with God. The eucharistic life reaches its pinnacle in Jesus. Regardless of the activity or work in which we are engaged, Jesus must always be directly in our line of vision so we do not lose perspective on what is most valuable for our life. We must choose to live in a way so our actions will witness to the truth that Jesus is the greatest good in our life, the deepest of our relationships, and the culmination of all our longings.

The word culmination traces its roots to terms that mean *to raise up* and *to be prominent*. If we raise our hearts to God, and remain fixed on God, then

our lives will make it clear that Jesus has prominence in our life, above all else. This is the eucharistic life.

To live so that Jesus is truly the culmination of our very existence requires love. Only by love can we have the passion and intensity necessary to sustain a relationship with Jesus. Only with love can we embrace the intimate union to which he calls us. Just as the “Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the church is kept in being,” so love gives us a share in that divine life and unity which keep us in existence as followers of Jesus.

Acknowledging and accepting that our life has a culmination point outside ourselves, beyond the boundaries of the personal and comfortable world we have created, demands selflessness and detachment. We must admit that we are not completely self-sufficient. And we must recognize that our longings can reach well beyond the limits of our own resources. We have to set aside self and redirect our energies toward union with Jesus. That union must become and remain our highest priority. This selflessness and detachment confirm our willingness to go beyond what our preferences can provide, and they affirm our desire for the fullness of life and love extended to us in the Eucharist.

### **A Life of Love**

The eucharistic life is a celebration of love. If the Eucharist is to be and to remain, for our whole life, “the culmination both of God’s action...and the worship (we) offer,” then we must be committed to cooperating with that action and to remaining faithful in our worship. This is a commitment born of love and sustained by love; our cooperation and fidelity will be the expressions of our love for God and our desire for union with Jesus. Nothing less than living in love is at the very heart of the eucharistic life.

Life flourishes when it is striving to reach the horizons that open before it. Life draws energy from that effort and refreshes its determination to continue on its way. This is more than the process of setting goals and then working to achieve them. It engages our whole life. So, we can begin living as if the goal has been reached, not by way of complacency, but by the conviction that we will complete the journey we have begun.

For the Christian dimension of our life, that conviction expresses a genuine

anticipation. We know by faith that the journey's end is true, that God's promises will be fulfilled, and that Jesus continues to be present and active among us. Thus we can live, even now, in celebration of those promises. This is the wonderful mystery of the Eucharist, we expect to be united with God for we have the sure promise of that; the Eucharist enables us to anticipate that union already.

Anticipation requires hope, a firm conviction that the promises we have received will not only be realized but are worthy of living even now. Our union with one another, our union with God, peace within our hearts, and peace among all people, must be more than distant dreams that we wish would be realized some day in the far-off future. Hope challenges us to make every effort to bring about that union and peace now in our daily lives. Hope that is not willing to act will never be fulfilled.

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### ***Eucharist: Sacrament of Life -***

from the Writings of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

The Eucharist is the life of the people! The Eucharist gives them a center of life. All can come together without the barriers of race or language in order to celebrate the feast days of the church. It gives them a law of life, that of charity, of which it is the source; thus it forges between them a common bond, a Christian kinship. All eat the same bread; all are table companions of Jesus Christ who supernaturally creates among them a feeling of togetherness. The Acts of the Apostles states that the whole community of the first Christians, converted Jews and baptized pagans, belonging to different regions, “had but one heart and one soul” (*Acts 4:32*). Why? Because they were attentive to the teaching of the Apostles and faithful in sharing in the breaking of the bread (*Acts 2:42*).

Yet, the Eucharist is the life of souls and of societies, just as the sun is the life of the body and of the earth. Without the sun, the earth would be sterile, it is the sun which makes it fertile, renders it beautiful and rich; it is the sun which

provides agility, strength and beauty to the body. In the face of these amazing effects, it is not astonishing that the pagans should have adored it as the god of the world. In fact, the sun obeys a supreme Son, the divine Word, Jesus Christ, who illumines everyone coming into this world and who, through the Eucharist, sacrament of life, acts in person in the very depths of souls in order to form Christian families and peoples. Oh how happy, a thousand times happy, is the faithful soul who has found this hidden treasure, who goes to drink at this fountain of living water, who eats often this Bread of eternal life!

Christian society is also a family. The link between its members is Jesus Christ. He is the head of the household who has prepared the family table. He is the head, Jesus Christ, who celebrated Christian togetherness at the Supper; he called his Apostles *filioli*, my little children, and he commanded them to love one another as he had loved them.

At the holy table, we are all children who receive the same nourishment, and Saint Paul draws out the consequence of this, that is, that we form but one family, one same body, because we all share in the same bread, which is Jesus Christ (*1 Cor. 10:16-17*).



## 7. Closing Prayer

*(alternate stanzas)*

Gracious God, all creation celebrates your empowering presence.  
All your creatures hunger for the new life you promise.  
In the humanity of Jesus you reveal the culmination of creation,  
the evolutionary fulfillment of many eons,  
the invitation to wholeness and the promise of new life.

In the power of the creative Spirit, Jesus lived life to the full.  
We, too, are blessed in the power of that same Spirit  
which we now invoke upon our gifts of bread and wine,  
that they may become food, which will sustain us  
into the fullness of life.

While sharing a feast at table, Jesus took bread,  
blessed you, God of all good gifts.  
Jesus broke the bread, shared it among friends.  
Then pouring out the cup to fulfill our deepest thirst,  
Jesus gave thanks and shared it with those at table  
to drink fully of his life and love.

As a Christian people, we inherit a story of liberation and new life.  
We remember the blessings of ages past, and we look forward in hope,  
knowing that you, our wise and faithful God,  
will continue to empower us in our earthly mission.

We unite in thought and prayer with all who are  
weighed down by oppression, trapped in poverty,  
victimized by violence and exploitation.  
We grieve for all who will never reach their full potential,  
because of the greed perpetuated by unjust systems.

Bless us, O God of liberation, to work for the freedom of all,  
to bring about a world where justice can reign and love can flourish.  
In the fellowship of our faith, with all the living and those gone before us,  
confirm our hearts in this resolve. May we never betray that fullness of  
life to which you invite all people who share the food of everlasting life.

Amen.

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Bernier, Paul, SSS. *Eucharist: Celebrating Its Rhythms in Our Lives*. Ave Maria Press, 1993
- Benedict XVI. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007) Online: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20070222\\_sacramentum-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis_en.html)



*Prayer in Honor of Saint Peter  
Julian Eymard*

Gracious God of our ancestors, you led Peter Julian Eymard, like Jacob in times past, on a journey of faith. Under the guidance of your gentle Spirit, Peter Julian discovered the gift of love in the Eucharist which your son Jesus offered for the hungers of humanity. Grant that we may celebrate this mystery worthily, adore it profoundly, and proclaim it prophetically for your greater glory. Amen.



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