

### III - Part 1

# Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Love for Mary, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament



## SESSION III - Part 1

### NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

#### *Suggested Environment*

Statues and art over the centuries depict Mary, the mother of Jesus, in many ways. Father Camire in his book *The Eucharist and Saint Peter Julian Eymard* refers to a statue of Mary he once saw in Norfolk, England at the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. She holds “her divine Son in the traditional manner, but her Son held in his hand the Eucharistic Chalice and Host. The depiction invited the beholder to reflect on Mary and her relationship to the sacrament of the Eucharist.” (P. 40)

The statue of Mary in the back of Saint Paschal Baylon Church is one of Mary holding up baby Jesus. The plaque says “Mary, the Mother of God,” but it is also known as “Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament.” The little statue that will be shown at this session is similar to the one Father Camire would have seen some years ago.

#### **Introduction to the Theme**

As the reflection readings for this session indicate, Mary, the Mother of God, had such a special place in Peter Julian’s life, especially after his dear mother died when he was 17 years old. This devotion to Mary has also played a prominent role throughout the history of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Guitton tells us that Peter Julian’s experience of Mary goes back to his first reception of Holy Communion. In preparation at the age of 12, he made a pilgrimage alone and on foot to Notre Dame du Laus, near Gap. The trip was some 38 miles from La Mure. He begged for food on the way. According to Guitton, “He returned with a special grace which he later noted: ‘There, for the first time I knew Mary and loved her.’ In the midst of all kinds of difficulties, he made another pilgrimage to find certitude and peace. And a few days before his death, he confided to Brother Tesniere:

‘Laus! Just thinking about it makes me happy. I received so many graces there. The Blessed Virgin was so good. My joy is to go there alone, and to pray as much as I want. I can still remember the column against which I cried very hard and with great joy, after a general confession at 13 years old! I cried a lot that day, because I had so many sins. It is there that I promised to be a religious. The shrine of Laus! No better place for recollection.’”

(Source: Albert Tesnière, SSS, *Scattered Memories*, Wednesday July 15, 1868)

So from his earliest days Peter Julian referred to Mary as “my good mother.” The title “Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament,” that he loved so much, suggests not only the intimate relationship between Mary and his eucharistic vocation, but emphasizes also how she served as model for him to live the consequences of this sacrament of love.

**Note:** The picture on page 23 is that of the Shrine of Notre Dame du Laus.

**Note 2:** Before we pray, we will take a moment in our small groups to share our experiences over the past weeks of putting into action what we chose to do after the last session.

The **Purpose** of Session III – Part 1 is to explain how fundamental the presence of Mary was in the life of Father Eymard.

## Session Three - Part 1

### Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Love for Mary, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament

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#### INVITATION TO PRAYER

*Leader:* Let us put ourselves quietly in the presence of the Lord.

*We take a few minutes to silence our minds and prepare for prayer.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*All:* Blessed are you, Mary  
exalted Daughter of Sion,  
you are highly favored and full of grace,  
for the Spirit of God descended upon you.  
We magnify the Lord and rejoice with you  
for the gift of the Word made flesh,  
our bread of life and cup of joy.  
Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament,  
our model of prayer in the Cenacle,  
pray for us that we become what we receive,  
the body of Christ, your Son.  
Amen.

## **Saint Eymard *In His Own Words***

“It is the Most Blessed Virgin Mary who has led me to our Lord, to weekly Sunday Communion through (Our Lady of the Laus) at (the age of) 12, from the Society of Mary to that of the Most Blessed Sacrament ...

“Today Saturday, I meditated on the Most Blessed Virgin. I thanked our Lord for having given us a mother so pure, so holy, so great; for having made her his divine mother in order that as her Son he might give her to us with her merits and graces ... What love and gratitude I owe to this good mother! So many good things have come to me through her! ... I owe her my safekeeping, my vocation, and above all the grace of the Most Blessed Sacrament ... What shall I do? What she did at the service of Jesus and for his glory ...

“I meditated on the Most Blessed Virgin’s love for me since my childhood. I blessed Our Lady of the Laus and the day I took her for my mother when my dear mother died. Since then so many graces!... She alone led me by the hand to the priesthood, and then to the Most Blessed Sacrament ... The Most Blessed Virgin has been so good to me! I shed tears of tenderness over it ...

“How I should like to adore our Lord as this good mother adored him! I asked our Lord for a great grace, that of giving me the adorer that was the Most Blessed Virgin for my real mother, of granting me something of her grace, of her state of continual adoration while she carried the Word incarnate in her womb so pure, in that heaven of virtues and of love so great, in that spotless sun ...”

February – March 1865

### **TEACHING: Key Points**

- From his childhood Mary is for Father Eymard “my good Mother,” who accompanies him and guides him throughout his entire life.
- There were key moments in Father Eymard’s life, especially the ones of crisis and fundamental choices. These were always characterized by an intense recourse to her protection. He owed the essential orientation of his life to her.
- In this light, we understand the importance of Mary in his Eucharistic vocation, and the example he gives of the role of the “Woman of the Eucharist” for the Eymardian family: religious men and women and the laity.





### III - Part 2

# Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Love for Mary, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament



## SESSION III - Part 2

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#### *Suggested Environment*

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(Source: Albert Tesnière, SSS, *Scattered Memories*, Wednesday July 15, 1868)

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**Note:** The picture on page 29 is that of the Shrine of Notre Dame du Laus.

**Note 2:** Before we pray, we will take a moment in our small groups to share our experiences the past month of putting into practice what we chose to do as a result of our “**INVITATION TO MISSION**” sharing.

The **Purpose** of Session III – Part 2 is to explore how to integrate a devotion to Mary, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, into a Eucharistic spirituality.



## Session Three - Part 2

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#### INVITATION TO PRAYER

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*We take a few minutes to silence our minds and prepare for prayer.*

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*All:* Blessed are you, Mary  
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you are highly favored and full of grace,  
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We magnify the Lord and rejoice with you  
for the gift of the Word made flesh,  
our bread of life and cup of joy.  
Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament,  
our model of prayer in the Cenacle,  
pray for us that we become what we receive,  
the body of Christ, your Son.  
Amen.

#### **Saint Eymard *In His Own Words***

During the 65 days of his Retreat of Rome (February – March, 1865), he left many notes. The following are some examples that relate to the Most Blessed Virgin:

“Oh yes, if I am a priest, I owe it to the Blessed Virgin; without her I would never have been able to overcome the many obstacles which stood in the way of my realizing my plans.”

(Source: Georges Marie-Joseph Troussier, SSS, study of the mystical life of Saint Peter Julian Eymard)

“Today, Sunday, November 16, [1839], I placed in the hands of my dear mother at Fourvière my health, my cares, and my work: everything material. When I need something, I will tell you, O Mary. When I'm feeling well, I'll tell you, O Mary. And when I die, it will be in your arms, O Mary.”

(Source: Donald Cave, SSS, analysis of the thought of Saint Peter Julian Eymard)

## REFLECTION TWO

### The Eucharist and Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Bernard Camire, S.S.S.

In chapter IX of his book, Father Camiré tells us that in order to understand more clearly Mary and her relationship to the sacrament of the Eucharist, we can look at Chapters One and Two of the Acts of the Apostles. It is from the evangelist Luke's description in these two chapters that "we have good reason to see, here, a symbol of the Blessed Virgin's spiritual maternity and praying maternity within the church. What does this mean? We can put it this way:

"...the tiny fledgling Christian community, a Eucharist-celebrating community, needed the presence of Mary, needed the maternal care of someone who could nourish and inspire with her sturdy faith and burning love. And it's very significant that within Catholic Christianity there has been a persistent conviction that, from the earliest days, Mary has continued her maternal care for the church (40).

"Of all the spiritual writers of the 19th century, I believe it was Saint Peter Julian Eymard who had the greatest insight in seeing Mary's maternal role in the church in a eucharistic dimension. In a directory that he wrote for the women's branch of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation, he had this to say, 'The great mission of Mary is to form Jesus in us...It is the life of Mary in the Cenacle which should be your inspiration and model.' He taught that at the level of the sacramental life of the church, Mary helps us to perceive the central place of the Eucharist in our personal life ... in Eymard's thinking, Mary is not only someone who can teach us how to enter into a deeper life of communion with Jesus Christ, how to acquire a taste for the interior life, but also someone who can reveal to us the...apostolic fruitfulness of a Christian life that is nourished regularly by the Eucharist" (41).

### TEACHING: Key Points

- Number 11 from the *Rule of Life for Associates* says this:

The virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus and of the church,  
is the indispensable model of the Eucharistic life.

She shared the disciples' life of prayer in the Cenacle  
and their apostolic journeying in the world.

Like her, we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit so that, docile to his action,  
we may contribute effectively to the coming of the kingdom.

We honor and also invoke her by the title Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament.

- Those who choose to be associated with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament are called to integrate into their own Eucharistic spirituality a special devotion to Mary.
- Saying the rosary, praying the *Memorare* are two examples of practices Catholics do as part of their devotion to Mary.

## **THE WORD OF THE LORD**

*The leader asks one of the participants to proclaim the Scripture passage from Luke 1:46 – 55, the canticle prayed at Evening Prayer in the Liturgy of the Hours.*

### **Sharing Faith**

1. As you listen to the very familiar “Magnificat,” what words or phrases strike you? In this moment, what meaning do they have for you?
2. Saint Peter Julian clearly had many religious experiences, quite a few of them connected to his devotion to and relationship with our Blessed Mother. Share the place Mary holds in your life and/or the ways she has assisted you in your own spiritual life.

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**Time for questions to our speaker and/or comments from the small group sharing (time permitting)**

## SENDING FORTH

Leader: *As we come to our closing prayer, for whom do we pray? I invite each of you to express his or her prayer aloud.*

All: (After each petition) *Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us.*

### Prayer

Mary, Mother of God and our Mother,  
Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament,  
you are the woman of the Eucharist  
who shared with Jesus  
the Mystery of the Incarnation and the Pasch,  
the Mystery of Service and the Last Supper;  
teach us to celebrate,  
adore and live fully  
the Sacrament of the Eucharist.  
Help us, Mary, to always say  
“Yes” wholeheartedly,  
and to live this response in gratitude,  
brotherhood and charity.  
Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament,  
Mother and model of adorers,  
pray for us.

**Note:** In preparation for the next gathering, we encourage you to read pages 13 – 18 from “*May God Be Praised!*” In the chapter “Mystic and Prophet of the Eucharist,” Sister Caron, S.S.S. highlights how much Saint Peter Julian valued his own baptism. Also, the complete article by Father McSweeney, S.S.S., is available for your reading.