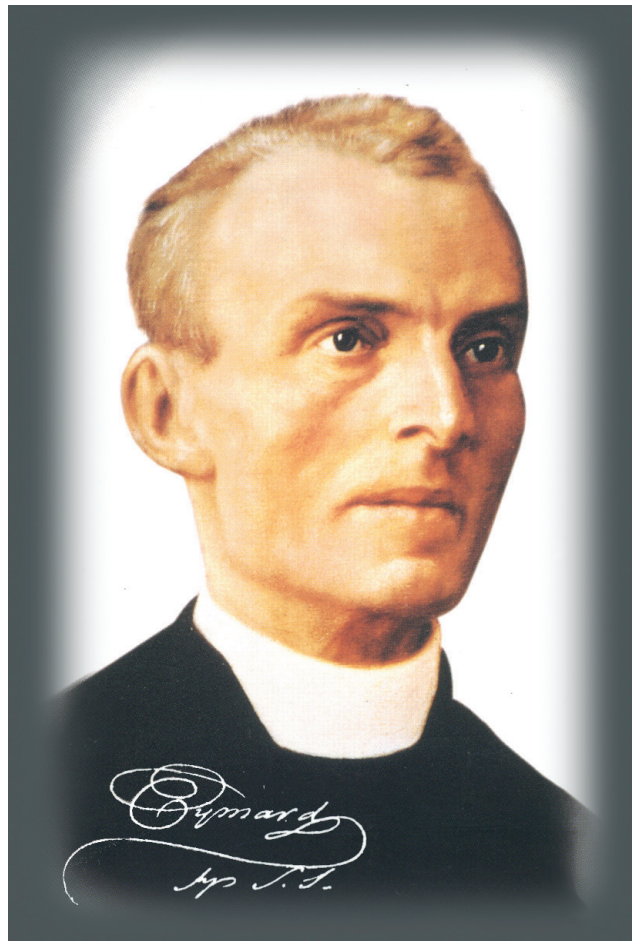


II - Part 1

Saint Peter Julian Eymard: A Man on a Mission



SESSION II - PART 1

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

A note about “*May God Be Praised!*”

This book was compiled as part of a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the canonization of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the opening of the Second Vatican Council at Saint Paschal Baylon Church, Cleveland, Ohio, in August 2013. “*May God Be Praised!*” - *The Eucharistic Life According to Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist* was published by the Province of Saint Ann of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. Articles from *Emmanuel* magazine dating back to 1997 were pulled together to reflect the rich dimensions of the life and eucharistic vision of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

As Father Norman Pelletier says in the introduction to the book, “Anyone familiar with this saint of the Eucharist will testify that his teaching and his mission are as important today as they were in his day.” No doubt many of the participants in this course have read many things by and about Saint Peter Julian. We hope that in these chapters, in those from Father Camiré’s book *The Eucharist and Saint Peter Julian Eymard*, and the other resources used, you will experience a deepening in your understanding of this “eminent apostle of the Eucharist.”

Introduction to the Theme

A good place to begin with a man, a saint who packed so much prayer and activities in the course of a day is with the idea that he was a man on a mission. Father Norman Pelletier, SSS, thus titled his biography of Saint Peter Julian, *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late*. Here was a man who spent countless hours in prayer and adoration. And yet, as we see detailed in Sister Caron’s article (Chapter II) in “*May God Be Praised!*” Saint Peter Julian was engaged in so many activities throughout his religious life. She suggests that in all his activities we discover his vision. In a word, it was the Eucharist, and when the Eucharist becomes life.

In the first chapter of “*May God Be Praised!*” Father Pelletier highlights what many have discovered about Saint Peter Julian: he was on a constant journey of faith and discovery inspired by the love of God experienced in the Eucharist. “Saint Peter Julian’s eucharistic vocation did not spring full grown from some mystical experience; it grew and matured progressively. The Eucharist, God’s manifest gift of love, was the focus of all the energies of his life. In time, he learned to subordinate everything to this love of his life. His heart, soul and mind were shaped little by little by the Eucharist. That should be the beginning of every Eucharistic spirituality” (p. 4).

The **Purpose** of Session II, Part 1 and Part 2, is to show how Peter Julian Eymard’s search for God and his journey of faith was conditioned by the familial, social, and religious context of his day; and, how this saint and “Apostle of the Eucharist” provides a holy guide for those seeking to live a deeper Eucharistic spirituality and – in the words of Father Pelletier, SSS – “becoming ever more authentic witnesses of God’s love in the Eucharist.”

Note: The opening and closing prayer for this gathering is taken from Morning Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours celebrated on August 2, the feast day of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

Session Two - Part 1

Saint Peter Julian Eymard: A Man on a Mission

INVITATION TO PRAYER

Leader: God, come to my assistance. Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Ant. As morning breaks I look to you, O God, to be my strength this day.

Psalm 63: 2-9

(Alternate sides)

O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy.

On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

All: Father, creator of unfailing light, give that same light to those who call to you. May our lips praise you; our lives proclaim your goodness; our works give you honor; and our voices celebrate you forever. Amen.

REFLECTION ONE (Saint Peter Julian Eymard)

“Now please pray so that I may respond to such a beautiful vocation; that, like the bread of the sacrifice, I may lose my life, my substance, my personality, to be changed into the spirit and life of Jesus, retaining only a human appearance, humiliation and poverty, so that the virtue of Jesus may dwell in the midst of my infirmities.”

(In the request Saint Peter Julian makes of Mme. Tholin-Bost for prayer, the beautiful vocation he speaks of is his own as a Religious of the Blessed Sacrament. May 18, 1856)

“When we work hard, we must eat well. What a joy that you can receive Holy Communion often! It’s our life and support in this life — Receive Communion often, and Jesus will change you into himself.”

(To Mme. Grisaud, January 13, 1855)

“Live on the divine Eucharist, like the Hebrews did on the manna. Your soul can be entirely dedicated to the divine Eucharist and very holy in the midst of your work and contacts with the world.”

(To Mme. Isabelle Spazzier, Nov. 5, 1859)

THE WORD OF THE LORD

The Leader asks one of the participants to proclaim the Scripture passage, Acts 2: 42–47.

The group spends a few minutes in silent reflection on the quotes from Saint Peter Julian Eymard and on the Scripture passage. Participants are invited to share a reflection on the Scripture reading.

Teaching: Key Points

- Peter Julian Eymard came from a very religious family. His mother often took him to Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament as a young child. He regularly attended mass with his mother and step-sister Marianne, and often went on his own. Late in life, Father Eymard wrote: “*The greatest grace of my life has been a strong faith in the Blessed Sacrament from my youth . . . from my 8th year. . .*”
- From an early age, Peter Julian Eymard also demonstrated a tenacious desire to serve God as a priest. This he pursued despite poor health and opposition from his father who wanted him, as his only surviving son, to carry on the family business and name. According to Andre Guitton, SSS, “Father Eymard had the tenacity of a mountain man, the force of character which permitted him, with God’s grace, to confront obstacles and trials and to respond to the call that he had received, even as a child: *‘to be a priest someday.’*”
- Clearly, the many activities Father Eymard engaged in over the course of his life reflect a man dedicated to his priestly ministry. However, “his inner thrust and vision continued to change” (p. 9). He was truly a man on a journey of faith – till the day he died.

INVITATION TO MISSION

You are asked to choose one or two practices or actions to do during this coming month that put into practice what we have reflected upon. Reflect on what in your own vision and purpose gives you life and energy. What specific thing can you do during the coming weeks to put your vision into practice. In deepening your understanding of Eucharist, you may want to commit to attending the monthly Holy Hour in the parish. How can you be a person of mission this month?

SENDING FORTH

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

Psalm 149

Sing a new song to the Lord,
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Let Israel rejoice in its maker,
let Zion's sons exult in their king.
Let them praise his name with dancing
and make music with timbrel and harp.

For the Lord takes delight in his people.
He crowns the poor with salvation.
Let the faithful rejoice in their glory,
shout for joy and take their rest.
Let the praise of God be on their lips
and a two-edged sword in their hand.

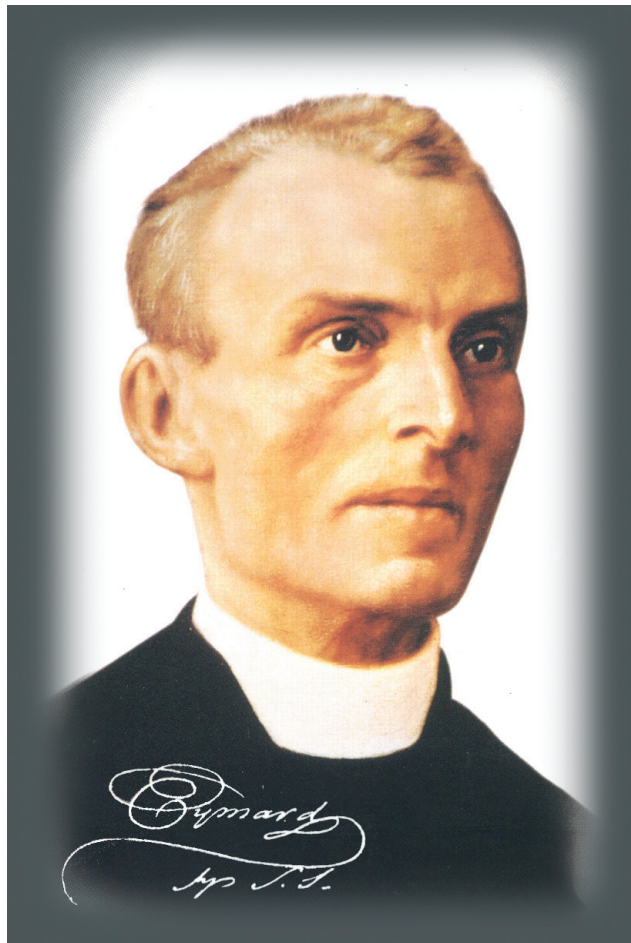
Prayer

O God, you filled Saint Peter Julian with wondrous love
for the mysteries of the body and blood of your Son.
Grant, we beseech you, that like him,
we may experience the richness of this holy banquet.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Note: In preparation for the next session, re-read pages 4 and 5 in chapter 1 of *“May God Be Praised!”* and answer the two questions on page 21.

II - Part 2

Saint Peter Julian Eymard: A Man on a Mission



SESSION II - PART 2

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

A note about “*May God Be Praised!*”

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Review of the Theme

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Session Two - Part 2

Saint Peter Julian Eymard: A Man on a Mission

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for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water.
So I gaze on you in the sanctuary
to see your strength and your glory.

For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise.
So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy.

On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

All: Father, creator of unfailing light, give that same light to those who call to you. May our lips praise you; our lives proclaim your goodness; our works give you honor; and our voices celebrate you forever. Amen.

LIVING OUR FAITH

Members of the group are invited to share their experiences over the past month of putting into action what they chose to do after SESSION II: Part 1.

Peter Julian Eymard: The Apostle of the Eucharist

Norman B. Pelletier, SSS

In the first chapter of *“May God Be Praised!”* Father Pelletier makes the case that Saint Peter Julian is a saint for our times and has much to teach the church today. He says,

“As the Eucharist became the dominant force of Father Eymard’s existence, the religious life itself took second place to the great love of his life: Christ in the Eucharist. Religious life became only a means to better incorporate the riches of the Eucharist, and to help shape the mission of his followers. He would say, ‘Religious life is not the end ... religious life is only a means.’ Or again, ‘... Religious life is for the road which leads to a eucharistic life.’ To further distill this significant insight of Saint Peter Julian’s, we can say that the living out of one’s vocation is part of and subordinate to our mission, because it helps to shape our witness. However, it is perhaps even more accurate to declare with him that the religious and priestly life, and any vocational state in the church, is at the service of mission. The church exists for mission. The Eucharist gives meaning and focus to our religious living and, consequently, it is the Eucharist which should shape our styles of living” (4).

Eymard: His Mission

Catherine Marie Caron, SSS

“The letters immediately before and after the foundation of his congregations are like a gigantic painting of his purpose and vision. Stroke by stroke, the artist completes and embellishes his work. So, letter by letter, Peter Julian perfects, refines, and completes the expression of what he was setting out to do.

“It would be an impoverishment to single out one activity rather than another, one statement rather than another. Rather, we do well to stand back and contemplate the picture as a whole, and be absorbed by its unifying vision” (10).

Teaching: Key Points

- As Father Eymard moved from being a parish priest to joining the Marists to founding the congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, he continuously sought the will of God for him. His deep prayer life kept him in constant conversation with the Lord. Reading his personal notes one comes to appreciate how God kept asking Father Eymard to go deeper into the mystery of the Eucharist.
- Father Eymard’s love of the Eucharist, experienced both in adoration and in his many apostolic activities, came into an even clearer focus during his “great retreat” in 1865 (two years before he died). Andre Guitton, SSS, tells us: “From then on, the love of God contemplated in the life of Christ or in the mystery of the Eucharist became the center of his life and the personal distinctive mark of his apostolate” (p. 254).
- We who desire to be disciples of Saint Peter Julian Eymard cannot, in the words of Father Pelletier “imitate this saint in his particular journey, since his awakening to grace and to God’s bounteous invitation can only remain singular and personal. Nevertheless, Peter Julian’s life shines as a kind of beacon in our own search for God and in our personal progress towards becoming ever more authentic witnesses of God’s love in the Eucharist” (p. 2).

SENDING FORTH

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

Psalm 149

Sing a new song to the Lord,
his praise in the assembly of the faithful.
Let Israel rejoice in its maker,
let Zion's sons exult in their king.
Let them praise his name with dancing
and make music with timbrel and harp.

For the Lord takes delight in his people.
He crowns the poor with salvation.
Let the faithful rejoice in their glory,
shout for joy and take their rest.
Let the praise of God be on their lips
and a two-edged sword in their hand.

Prayer

O God, you filled Saint Peter Julian with wondrous love
for the mysteries of the body and blood of your Son.
Grant, we beseech you, that like him,
we may experience the richness of this holy banquet.
Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Note: In preparation for the next gathering, read pages 13 – 18 from “*May God Be Praised!*” In the chapter entitled, “Mystic and Prophet of the Eucharist,” Sister Caron, SSS, highlights how much Saint Peter Julian valued his own baptism. Also, the complete article of Father McSweeney from which the quote on page 28 is taken is in the Appendix.