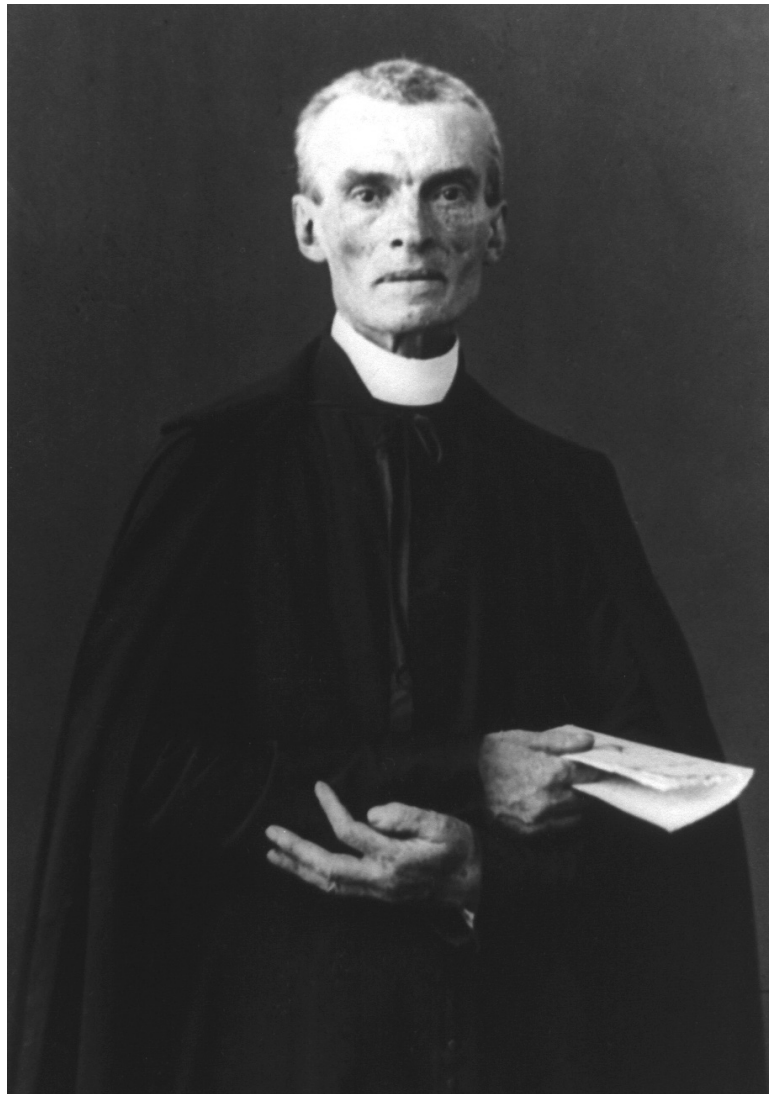


VIII - Part 1

Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Love for the Word of God



SESSION VIII - Part 1

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

A word on the Roman Catholic approach to interpreting the Bible

As Catholics, we believe that both the “Sacred Scripture and sacred Tradition form one sacred deposit of the word of God” (*Dei Verbum* from the Second Vatican Council). We also believe that God reveals himself in many ways: one another, nature, the events of our life, the sacraments and sacred rituals of the Church.

The stories and truths in the Bible were passed down for generations in oral form and eventually written down by ordinary albeit gifted people; that the authors of all the books of the Bible were divinely inspired in ways that are hard for us to understand. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. What we read today in English is taken from the original languages of the prophets, apostles and evangelists. The Bible was not printed until 1,500 years after the birth of Jesus Christ.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard wrote, “All Scripture must be read in the same spirit in which it was written . . .” Each biblical writer wrote within the context of his culture and time and particularly the four Gospels with certain audiences in mind (e.g., Matthew, a Jewish community; Luke, mostly Gentiles). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that “the inspired books teach the truth” (107); that “to interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words” (109); and, “in order to discover *the sacred authors’ intention*, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current” (110). We are also reminded in the Vatican II document *Verbum Dei* that “Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written” (12: 3).

The **Purpose** of Session VIII – Part 1 is to explain how important the scriptures were to Father Eymard and how the Word of God played such a fundamental role in Father Eymard’s life of prayer, in his preaching and in his pastoral commitments.

Note: On page 65, Saint Peter Julian is pictured holding a book in his hand. He regularly carried in his cassock a copy of Saint John’s Gospel, which he particularly loved. In his letter, writings, and conferences, he frequently quoted the Scriptures, especially the Gospels.

Session Eight - Part 1

Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Love for the Word of God

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: “Your word, Lord is founded on truth,
your decrees are eternal.” (Ps. 119: 160)
During his entire life,
Saint Peter Julian Eymard drew his strength and inspiration
from this fountain of life.
He lived your word with deep faith
and became for us a convincing witness of your love.
Place in our hearts an ardent desire
to know more clearly what you have revealed
and to live from it as our daily food.
Praise be to you, Lord.
Amen.

TEACHING: Key Points

- In the experience of the Big Retreat of Rome, the Word of God played a fundamental role for Father Eymard in the deep transformation that took place.
- In Father Eymard's life of prayer, in his preaching and in his pastoral commitments, the Word of God had a primary influence.
- When Father Eymard used the Bible, we are amazed at the immense quantity and the rich variety of his biblical quotations.

Saint Eymard *In His Own Words*

REFLECTION (Saint Peter Julian Eymard)

The word of God played a fundamental role in Father Eymard's life of prayer, in his preaching and in his pastoral commitments. We find in his personal notes how he set up his own systematic formation program which he dedicated himself to during his first years of ministry (1835 -1839). The four areas of research included Holy Scripture, theology, church history and the secular sciences.

Father Eymard was a man who knew the Bible, and he knew it by heart. He read, studied and meditated on it during his entire life. During moments of crisis, he looked to the scriptures to get re-oriented, find answers and a guide for his journey.

The following quotes are taken from notes compiled in 1837:

“The Sacred Scripture must be read during the course of the year . . . All Scripture must be read in the same spirit in which it was written. With humility, simplicity, and faith.”

“It's necessary for me to give preference to God's word over the written word. The written word is necessarily silent, a dead letter. It needs the faith and prayer of those who read it to animate it, so to speak, with a breath of life and lend it a voice to make it heard. But then, the word becomes living, afire from the heart and mouth of the priest. It speaks through all the senses at once, to the mind of man, and goes to the depth of his soul.”

Years later, Father Eymard left us these thoughts in the notes he wrote during the second or the “Great Retreat” of Rome in 1865:

“Jesus was the Word of the Father. That is what I must be for my brethren and my neighbor. I must therefore listen to this interior word of Jesus Christ, understand and repeat it, listen to it with faith, accept it with respect and love, transmit it with fidelity and confidence, with meekness and power.”

THE WORD OF THE LORD

The leader asks the participants to each read one of the following passages taking time between each reading to listen with the ear of the heart. (Take about a minute between passages for quiet reflection.)

- “When your words came, I devoured them: your word was my delight and the joy of my heart.” *Jeremiah 15: 16*
- “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path.” *Psalms 119: 105*
- “In receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe.” *Thessalonians 2: 13*

SENDING FORTH

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came to be through God's Word, and without him nothing came to be. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

Leader: Humbly welcome the word that has been planted in you and is able to save your souls. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. A hearer goes off and forgets, but a doer acts on the word. Such a one shall be blessed.

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

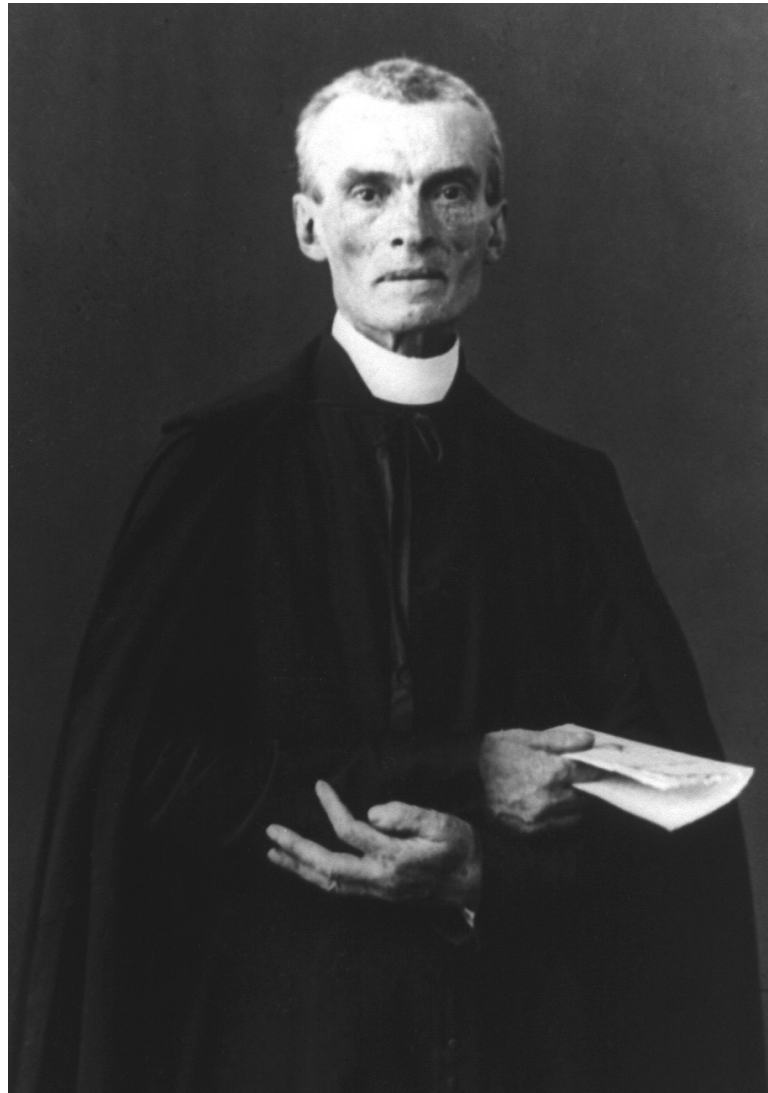
Leader: Blessed are you O Lord. We will never forget your word. Be kind to your servants that each of us may live and keep your word. Open our eyes to see clearly the wonders of your teachings.

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

Note: In preparation for the next gathering, please read if you did not get a chance Father Paul Bernier's article from 2011 Emmanuel "Liturgy of the Word."

VIII - Part 2

**Saint Peter Julian Eymard's
Love for the Word of God**



SESSION VIII - Part 2

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction to the Theme

The word of God played a fundamental role for Father Eymard for his life of prayer, in his preaching and in how he ministered in his pastoral commitments. One will find a rich variety of biblical quotations throughout his writings. He was a man who knew the Bible.

Those who aspire to be apostles of the Eucharist in the tradition of Saint Eymard are invited to make the Word of God, the Scriptures, an integral part of their own Eucharistic spirituality.

The *Rule of Life*, #6 for the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament states this: “The word of God calls us and gathers us together; it accompanies us as a lamp for our steps.” And the *Rule of Life for Associates of the Blessed Sacrament* #7 offers this guidance: “We nourish our faith at the Table of the Word of God, especially through the daily liturgical readings.”

In his article “Liturgy of the Word,” Father Paul Bernier, S.S.S., reminds us that the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist form but one act of worship. Both of them share equal importance as constitutive elements of what it means to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. He tells us “the light of God’s word must precede the mystery of faith and illumine the way to it. This is as true today as it was from the beginning, as we see in the story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. They were unable to recognize the Christ in the breaking of the bread, the Mass, until their hearts were set aflame within them by reason of the Liturgy of the Word that they had celebrated with Jesus on the Road.” (112)

You are invited to read the whole article by Father Paul (passed out with these materials) for an elaboration of his central tenet.

The **Purpose** of Session VIII – Part 2 is to show the connection of the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist and how together they nourish us for our journey of faith-filled living.

Note: On page 89, Saint Peter Julian is pictured holding a book in his hand. He regularly carried in his cassock a copy of Saint John’s Gospel, which he particularly loved. In his letters, writings, and conferences, he frequently quoted the Scriptures, especially the Gospels.

Session Eight - Part 2

Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Love for the Word of God

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: “Your word, Lord is founded on truth,
your decrees are eternal.” (Ps. 119: 160)
During his entire life,
Saint Peter Julian Eymard drew his strength and inspiration
from this fountain of life.
He lived your word with deep faith
and became for us a convincing witness of your love.
Place in our hearts an ardent desire
to know more clearly what you have revealed
and to live from it as our daily food.
Praise be to you, Lord.
Amen.

TEACHING: Key Points

- Both elements of our worship, the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist are integral: the word proclaimed and preached, the Eucharist offered as a living sacrifice of praise are essential to the transformation of our lives.
- The invitation to pray and worship as Father Eymard calls us to take the time to pray the scriptures and prepare for the reception of God's word. Personal or communal *lectio divina* helps us to receive the Word into our hearts and put into action, *action divina* in our daily lives.
- The message of the Word of God can bring comfort and consolation when needed just as it can challenge and confront us out of our complacency toward continual conversion.

REFLECTION

“Liturgy of the Word”

Emmanuel Magazine, March/April 2011, pages 110 – 118.

Paul Bernier, SSS

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Father Bernier provides a much needed perspective that the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist form but one act of worship and that it is only recently that we have given them equal importance as constitutive elements of what it means to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. He makes two important points in his article, providing for us a historical perspective:

“It took Vatican II to remind us that that there were only two parts of the Mass, and that both of them were essential: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The light of God’s word must precede the mystery of faith and illumine the way to it. This is as true today as it was from the beginning, as we see in the story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. They were unable to recognize the Christ in the breaking of the bread, the Mass, until their hearts were set aflame within them by reason of the Liturgy of the Word that they had celebrated with Jesus on the road” (112).

“It has always been the conviction of the church that the Scriptures are more than a human book. Paul was able to say of his proclamation, ‘For this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received it not as a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe’ (1 Thes 2: 13). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are a source of nourishment and strength. As we read in Hebrews, ‘Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart’ (4:12)” (115).

“The Liturgy of the Word is the biblical matrix in which the transformation of the gifts into the body and blood of Christ allows us to focus on more than the naked fact of the real presence of Christ in the elements, but to ask what is the purpose and finality of that presence. What does it mean for the personal transformation the sacrament is meant to effect, as well as the transformation of the world in which we live?” (117-118)

“If we wonder at times why so many eucharistic celebrations fail to have a real effect in people’s lives, why there seems to be such a split-level Christianity in many places, perhaps it is because Catholics are not overly familiar with the Bible. Neither do they consider it important enough to study, reflect on, or make the basis of their prayer. Lacking this appreciation, the celebration of the Eucharist becomes a ritual that is divorced from its power to transform. The Liturgy of the Word is not considered important enough to prepare for or reflect on and discuss afterwards. Perhaps, we all could make an effort to renew our appreciation of this element in our worship – one that has not been given the importance it deserves.” (118)

THE WORD OF THE LORD

The Leader asks one of the participants to proclaim the Scripture passage from Luke 24: 13-35.

INVITATION TO MISSION

Choose some specific action you can do during the coming weeks. Perhaps you can spend a short time each day reading from the Bible. Perhaps you can spend time in special prayer each day; or, pray over the readings from the Mass of the day, if you can't make it to Mass.

(For the readings for the Mass of the day, go to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' website and click on "Daily Readings.")

SENDING FORTH

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came to be through God's Word, and without him nothing came to be. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

Leader: Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

Leader: Blessed are you O Lord. We will never forget your word. Be kind to your servants that each of us may live and keep your word. Open our eyes to see clearly the wonders of your teachings.

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

Leader: We give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe.

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

Leader: Lord, enable your servant to speak your word with all boldness, as you stretch forth your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

Leader: The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that is, the word of faith that we preach. Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. I ask, did they not hear? Certainly they did; for "Their voice has gone forth to all the earth and their words to the ends of the world."

All: *Lord, you have the words of eternal life.*

Note: In preparation for the next gathering, please read Chapter VIII from Father Camire's book and Chapter IX from "*May God Be Praised!*"