

VII - Part 1

**Saint Peter Julian Eymard's
Life of Prayer**



SESSION VII - Part 1

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction to the Theme

Father Paul Bernier, SSS, tells us that Saint Peter Julian's emphasis on adoration of the Blessed Sacrament exposed fit in naturally with the many religious congregations founded in the nineteenth century. He writes, though, that there was a big difference with him. "Of the close to 200 religious congregations founded in that century, the majority saw adoration as a way of making reparation for the sins of society. ... (he) found the emphasis on reparation to be inadequate. ... he realized that the prayer of a congregation devoted entirely to the Eucharist should take its inspiration from the liturgy" (*"MGBP!"* 44).

Saint Peter Julian wrote in the Constitutions for the congregation (15):

"In their adorations our religious should strive to develop the four ends of the sacrifice of the Mass, namely, to offer unceasingly to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ, and to Jesus Christ our Savior, a sacrifice of praise and honor, of love and thanksgiving, of propitiation, and of petition..."

And even more says Father Mario Vecchiato, SSS, that in his own practice of contemplation in adoration, "he came to appreciate the personal love that Christ has for each human person. Through intense prayer, a prayer permeated by the sweetness of the love of God, Father Eymard came to the realization of the need of proclaiming to everyone, everywhere, the love that has saved us all" (*"MGBP!"* 37).

In this spirit then, it is not enough to simply promote the devotion of adoration. As Father Vecchiato suggests, "If we accept the Eucharist as the manifestation of God's love, one can there discover a sense of true life, entering positively into the enormous problems that beset the world and its history, and fight against any deepening rift between the rich and the poor of the world" (37 – 38).

The **Purpose** of Session VII – Part 1 is to explore the rich prayer life of Father Eymard and how it shaped his own journey of faith and his apostolic activities.

Note: The picture on page 57 is one of Father Eymard at prayer. Father Bernard Camiré reminds us that "those who witnessed his appearance at eucharistic adoration testified to his physical quiet and his steady, enraptured gaze at the host."

Session Seven - Part 1

Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Life of Prayer

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:

Eucharistic Litany

Jesus, Word of God.....grant us faith
Jesus, Son of God
Jesus, Son of Mary
Jesus, Conqueror of Death
Jesus, Conqueror of Sin
Jesus, Risen Lord of Glory

Healer of the Sick.....grant us hope
Friend of the Oppressed
Teacher of Wisdom
Herald of God's Kingdom
Worker of Miracles
Source of Peace

Lamb of God.....grant us love
Lamb of the New Covenant
Bread of Life
Bread from Heaven
Bread of Liberation
Bread of Reconciliation
Wine of Compassion
Wine of Joy
Wine of Forgiveness
Taste of our Future
Taste of Eternal Life
Pledge of Immortality

TEACHING: Key Points

- Father Eymard lived an intense prayer life. He discovered the love of God in the Eucharist, which as Father Bernier writes, is “the gift of the Father, who shows us his face as one of tenderness and goodness . . .”
- Father Eymard left his followers his own personal example and teachings on prayer. It is a prayer that flows from the Eucharist and guides our apostolic actions.

Saint Eymard *In His Own Words*

REFLECTION (Saint Peter Julian Eymard)

Father Bernier reminds us that Saint Peter Julian envisioned his new congregation to be both apostolic and contemplative. As he put it, “We want to adore Christ certainly; but we want to bring others to adore as well. We must take care of the First Communion of adults. We want to set fire to the four corners of France, beginning with the four corners of Paris, which need it so much.”

Quoted in George Troussier, SSS, *The Life of Blessed Peter Julian Eymard*

“Around the altar of exposition, we find an ever active piety and effective charity ... To propagate the glory of the Eucharist, to spread his reign and life divine torches, to light everywhere the heavenly fire which Jesus Christ has placed in the Eucharist ... what a beautiful mission! The mission of Jesus Christ’s divine charity.”

Quoted in Troussier, SSS

“Love is contemplative by nature ... Eucharistic contemplation is more active than passive; it consists in the soul giving itself unreservedly to God propelled by God’s continually new and sweet goodness, and by the ever increasing flame of his love.”

“Have confidence in prayer. It is the unfailing power which God has given us. By means of it you will obtain the salvation of the dear souls whom God has given you and all your loved ones. ‘Ask and you shall receive,’ our Lord said. Be yourself with the good Lord.”

January 4, 1864

THE WORD OF THE LORD

The leader asks one of the participants to proclaim the Scripture passage, Matthew 6: 6 - 13.

The group spends a short time in silent reflection before beginning the small group discussions.

INVITATION TO MISSION

Looking back over your response to the Scripture reading and discussion of prayer, on what aspect or practice of prayer do you feel called to concentrate your attention during the coming months. Select one or two practices you will give special attention to in the coming weeks.

SENDING FORTH

Leader: Let us gather our thoughts, and as we come to our closing prayer, for whom do we pray this day?

Each member of the group is invited to express his or her prayer aloud.

All respond with: Saint Peter Julian, pray for us.

Conclude with the Our Father and the Sign of Peace.

Note: In preparation for the next gathering, please review or if you did not get a chance to read for this session, read Chapters V and VI in “*May God Be Praised!*”, especially pages 37 – 38; and Chapter VII in Father Camire’s book.

VII - Part 2

**Saint Peter Julian Eymard's
Life of Prayer**



SESSION VII - Part 2

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction to the Theme

As we see in Father Paul Bernier's article in "*May God Be Praised!*" Father Eymard clearly envisioned a congregation that was both contemplative and apostolic. His hope was to bring others to adore *and* to invite lay adorers to be engaged in a very challenging ministry of catechesis of young "rag pickers" and adults for their First Holy Communion.

As we learned in earlier sessions, Father Eymard lived a very active life of ministry. Following his death in 1868 however, the congregation focused its mission almost entirely on perpetual adoration. His ministry with the poor in the slums of Parish was not picked up by other religious nor any of the members of the new Aggregation of lay associates. And this focus on contemplative prayer continued for some 100 years, as Father Bernier points out (page 45).

This all changed following the Second Vatican Council. The focus of the congregation's mission became the celebration of the Mass and putting the Eucharist at the center of one's spirituality. The *Rule of Life* for the congregation states ". . . the celebration of the Memorial is at the center for our understanding of the Eucharist, and inspires our prayer and ministry" (#21).

And so we who seek to follow in the footsteps of Saint Peter Julian Eymard espouse his conviction that the power of prayer flowing from the Eucharist transforms our lives. For he believed that prayer nourishes our faith, orients our faith commitment and directs our choices to live a Eucharistic spirituality in our everyday lives.

The **Purpose** of Session VII – Part 2 is to reflect upon different ways to pray in a Eucharistic way inspired by the spirituality of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

Note: The picture on page 77 is one of Father Eymard at prayer. Father Bernard Camiré reminds us that "those who witnessed his appearance at eucharistic adoration testified to his physical quiet and his steady, enraptured gaze at the host."

Session Seven - Part 2

Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Life of Prayer

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:

Eucharistic Litany

Jesus, Word of God.....grant us faith
Jesus, Son of God
Jesus, Son of Mary
Jesus, Conqueror of Death
Jesus, Conqueror of Sin
Jesus, Risen Lord of Glory

Healer of the Sick.....grant us hope
Friend of the Oppressed
Teacher of Wisdom
Herald of God's Kingdom
Worker of Miracles
Source of Peace

Lamb of God.....grant us love
Lamb of the New Covenant
Bread of Life
Bread from Heaven
Bread of Liberation
Bread of Reconciliation
Wine of Compassion
Wine of Joy
Wine of Forgiveness
Taste of our Future
Taste of Eternal Life
Pledge of Immortality

TEACHING: Key Points

- Eucharistic prayer can take different forms, whether in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament or in our “inner room” (*Matthew 5:6*).
- Father Eymard left his followers his own personal example and teachings on prayer. It is a prayer that flows from the Eucharist and guides our apostolic actions, whatever form it takes, wherever it happens.

REFLECTION

Contemplation through adoration before the Blessed Sacrament was very prevalent in the churches throughout France during the time of Father Eymard. Father Vecchiato reminds us how this practice shaped *his* journey of faith and how contemplation with a eucharistic focus is a point of reference for us as well. He says:

“Father Eymard lived an intense life of prayer, contemplating the Eucharist as the gift of the Father, who shows us his face as one of tenderness and goodness in the paschal mystery of Christ. In his contemplation, he came to appreciate the personal love that Christ has for each human person.

“Through intense prayer, a prayer permeated by the sweetness of the love of God, Father Eymard came to the realization of the need of proclaiming to everyone, everywhere, the love that has saved us all. If we accept the Eucharist as the manifestation of God’s love, one can there discover a sense of true life, entering positively into the enormous problems that beset the world and its history, and fight against any deepening rift between the rich and the poor of this world” (*“MGBP!”* 37).

“It is from such intense prayer that the compassion of Father Eymard sprang. ‘The fire has flame,’ he often said. He affirmed that in the contemplation of love and in the celebration of the Eucharist, one learns ‘to become love,’ love offered, Eucharist for the poorest of the poor. To achieve this, to be grasped, captivated by the love of Christ, he made what he called a ‘total gift of himself’ to Christ” (*“MGBP!”* 38).

Father Camiré paints a vivid picture of Father Eymard’s times of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament:

“Among the saints of the 19th century who understood the great virtue of prolonged prayer before the Eucharist, Peter Julian Eymard was second to none. With exceptional insight, he understood its value for the personal spiritual growth of the Christian and for the far-reaching benefit of the church. The personal example and teachings of Saint Eymard leave no doubt that he was a fervent man of prayer and an outstanding adorer of the eucharistic Christ. Those who witnessed his appearance at eucharistic adoration testified to his physical quiet and his steady, enraptured gaze at the host” (32).

THE WORD OF THE LORD

The Leader asks one of the participants to proclaim the Scripture passage from Luke 11: 9 – 13

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

Gift of Self – Gift of Mercy Prayer

Merciful God,
through your Son Jesus,
you show us your face and we are saved.

Your loving gaze
empowers us to zealously promote
your compassion and mercy.

Under the inspiration of Saint Peter Julian Eymard,
you call companions to journey together,
witness to the gift of self in Christ,
manifest forgiveness and love
and nourish one another
through the Eucharistic Mystery.

Send your Spirit
to proclaim liberty
to those bound by selfishness,
oppression and blindness
so that we may joyfully nourish the world
with the Good News of grace and mercy.

Grant success to our endeavors
that we may share the gift the God –
Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Note: In preparation for the next gathering, please read the article by Father Paul Bernier, SSS, from *Emmanuel* magazine (2011) "Liturgy of the Word."