

VI - Part 1

**Saint Peter Julian Eymard
and the Eucharist as
Bread Broken for a New World**



SESSION VI - Part 1

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction to the Theme

Saint Peter Julian Eymard had a passionate concern for the world and its great suffering. As a priest he had a reputation as a friend of the poor. His writings encouraged his contemporaries to bring their concerns for the political situation in Europe at that time to the “feet of the Master” and to see the Eucharist as a force to bring about social change.

The *Rule of Life* of the congregation he founded states in number 2: *Challenged by the religious ignorance and indifference of his time, Saint Peter Julian Eymard searched for the answers to its needs. He found it in the love of God manifested in a special way in the gift of Christ in his Eucharist. Captivated by this love, he made it known to his contemporaries.*

In number 3 of the *Rule of Life* we read: *Following in the footsteps of Father Eymard, our mission is to respond to the hungers of the human family with the riches of God’s love manifested in the Eucharist.*

In *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late*, Father Pelletier captures the essence of this theme:

“The Eucharist is to be shared as nourishment as well as adored (133). Father Eymard’s own very active apostolic life offers a convincing model and a lasting witness to his spiritual legacy. As essential as was his prayer for his interior life, so was the apostolate the center of his priestly life. If his prayer was the heat of the fire, his apostolate was its flame (134).

“In March 1865, Father Peter Julian wrote, ‘But shouldn’t we have both contemplatives and apostles in the society, both adorers and firebrands, since our Lord wants *this eucharistic fire to set the world ablaze?*”

Sister Caron writes on page 21 in “*MGBP!*” “In a conference to the Servants on July 31, 1862, Father Eymard said:

Remember that every group has its own mission. Saint Ignatius came to fight Protestantism ... Saint Francis’ mission was to counteract the simony which had slipped into the rules of the church... *As for us, we must fight the indifference which surrounds our Lord. By his service, we touch on everything.*”

She details (pages 21 – 26) the many social issues Father Eymard saw and what he did.

The **Purpose** of Session VI – Part 1 is to show how “Father Eymard’s own very active apostolic life offers (such) a convincing model and a lasting witness” to a Eucharistic spirituality for us as we engage the world today, especially those “broken areas.” Father John will also relate these reflections on Saint Eymard to the challenges Pope Francis presents to us.

Session Six - Part 1

Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the Eucharist as Bread Broken for a New World

INVITATION TO PRAYER

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

All: The God of our ancestors led you, Peter Julian,
like he did his servant Jacob in times past,
on a journey of faith.

All your life long you searched for a deeper union with God
and for an answer to the hungers of humanity.
You discovered in the Eucharist the answer to your quest.
God's love was there available to you and to all humankind.
In response to this unearned love
you made a "gift of self" to God
and tirelessly spent yourself to serve his people.

Your life, modeled on the Cenacle where Mary and the
disciples gathered in prayer and celebration,
inspired your own disciples, as it does again today,
to a life of profound prayer of contemplation
and of apostolic zeal for building Christian communities
where the Eucharist is source and center of life.

Saint Peter Julian, assist us in our journey of faith
to pray more fervently and to serve one another more
generously so that our lives may witness to a more just and
peaceful world.

May our celebrations of the Eucharist proclaim God's
liberating love for the renewal of the church and for the
coming of the kingdom.
Amen.

TEACHING: Key Points

- From the time Father Eymard was a Marist religious serving in Lyons, he was concerned about and involved in the plight of the working poor. When he founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, he told the Archbishop of Paris, that he was not only interested in promoting adoration but also catechesis for Holy Communion and especially among the children and adults living in the slums of Paris.
- Father Eymard envisioned members of the original Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament (Lay Associates) not only like the religious of the new congregation being active adorers but also involved in collaboration with him in this ministry of catechesis.
- Father Eymard was completely engaged in the societal issues and challenges of his day. He often offered advice on these matters in his many letters to people for whom he provided spiritual direction. He urged them to bring their own concerns and challenges to Jesus in prayer.

Saint Eymard *In His Own Words*

REFLECTION (Saint Peter Julian Eymard)

Notice the images that Peter Julian uses to encourage the writings of his dear friend who was known as the “philosopher of sorrow.” The Eucharist is necessary for giving birth to a new Society.

“Very dear Sir and friend,

Let me thank you once more for your gracious and warm hospitality! I found the beautiful dream of my life: our Lord, a mountain, a beautiful view, a beautiful sky, a friend of Bethany. May God repay you for all your goodness!

“...I read the precious book about the downfall of reason in Europe. It really struck me. I find it sadly too true; and I don’t see the remedy, because the evil is on the increase. Minds are led astray, and lead to the loss of both reason and heart.

“...I like your metaphysics. I follow them as if they were my own. Your books remain engraved in one’s mind. They follow the truth. They become like a practical principle, in spite of oneself. That is because light is independent. Continue to work in the same direction. You are planting the grain of wheat, the bread of kings and nations.

“Dear Sir, you have a beautiful but difficult mission. When we work to give birth to a new society, it requires a generation and a half; one to receive and develop it and the other to be fed upon it.

“Always consider me as a friend of Saint Bonnet and as a brother in God’s sight.”

Letter to Mr. Adolphe Blanc de Saint Bonnet, Dec. 3, 1863, Vol. 4, 1319

“Times are very grave at this moment. The wise men of our generation are losing their heads. I was told yesterday that the emperor had sent a message to King Emmanuel, telling him that if he made war on Austria, it would be at his own peril. France is strongly opposed to the war; debate begins today in the Chambers, and they say it will be lively.

“The bankruptcies in the stock market are terrible - the god of wealth is cursed by despair. Alas! If those who govern had at least some degree of faith in the church of Jesus Christ! Perhaps they will have it when they find themselves on Saint Helena’s rock (Calvary) or in tribulation.”

Letter to Father Van Derker, SJ, May 3, 1866, Vol. 5, 1793

THE WORD OF THE LORD

The leader asks one of the participants to proclaim from the Sermon on the Mount the Scripture passage from Matthew 5: 1 – 12.

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

INVITATION TO MISSION

Reflect on the Sermon on the Mount, the scripture reading for this session. Choose some specific action in the coming weeks which is inspired by this Gospel passage and/or this session. Some possible examples:

- Choose one social issue facing our society and/or Church that you are passionate about. Choose an action—perhaps writing a letter to your congressional representatives or finding out through the internet or local library if there are any groups or organization that could use your help or perhaps your donation.
- Put this issue or situation into your daily prayer requests.
- Think of ways you can influence or educate others to become aware of how we are called to live the Gospel teaching in the area you have chosen.
- Become aware of what your parish is doing to minister to those in need. Are there ways you can assist, support or volunteer yourself?

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: Apostle of the Eucharist, pray for us.

Conclude with the Our Father and the Sign of Peace.

Note: In preparation for the next gathering, please read Father Vecchiato's article on pages 35 – 42, Chapter V in "*May God Be Praised!*"

VI - Part 2

Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the Eucharist as Bread Broken for a New World



SESSION VI - Part 2

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction to the Theme

All the programs the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing promotes are based on three basic elements of a contemporary Eucharistic spirituality which we call the 3 C's: **Celebration, Contemplation and Communion**. Our starting point is the celebration of the Liturgy of the Mass. We strive in all we do to assist people in experiencing a full, active and fruitful participation in the Mass.

Eucharistic adoration is the natural consequence of the celebration of Mass, which is itself the Church's supreme act of adoration. The prayer of adoration prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the Mass. Contemplation intensifies the abiding presence of Christ within the adorer and leads to true and authentic communion with God, with self and with others, and especially the poor and the suffering.

The action of Communion is our saying "Amen" to live the Gospel in our everyday lives, to witness to God's love to others with charity and compassion. We are called to live a Eucharistic life as disciples who, having received Christ, now desire to bring Christ to others and others to Christ. Our communities, when they celebrate the Eucharist, must become evermore conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is for all, and that the Eucharist compels all who believe in him to become "bread that is broken" for others, and to work for the building of a more just and fraternal world.

In his article from "*May God Be Praised!*", Father Vecchiato, S.S.S., reminds us that in addition to a very active apostolic life, Father Eymard also "lived an intense life of prayer." He goes on to say that "from such intense prayer that the compassion of Father Eymard sprang. 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." (38)

On December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Francis inaugurated the "Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy." This theme of mercy and compassion has been a central message of Pope Francis since his first year as pontiff. He has stressed over and over again God's mercy and his faithful constancy of forgiving us. Remember how he compared the Church to a field hospital calling us to welcome and tend to the wounded and the dying in the daily battlefield of life.

In his first apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium* ("The Gospel of Joy"), he said "The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel (114)." A few months after issuing this call to the Church and during his general audience on February 12, 2014 Pope Francis reflected on how we live the Eucharist in our daily lives, saying "we celebrate the Eucharist not because we are worthy, but because we recognize our need for God's mercy, incarnate in Jesus Christ."

The **Purpose** of Session VI – Part 2 is to show how the centrality of the Eucharist and Father Eymard's intense prayer life led him to be such a man of love and compassion, a kind of life so called for in the writings and talks of Pope Francis.

Note: Following the opening prayer, we will take a moment in our small groups to share our experiences the past month putting into practice what we chose to do as a result of our "**INVITATION TO MISSION**" sharing at last month's session.

Session Six - Part 2

Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the Eucharist as Bread Broken for a New World

INVITATION TO PRAYER

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

All: ***Christ Has No Body***

A Prayer Poem attributed to Saint Teresa of Avila

Christ has no body by yours
no hands, no feet on earth but yours,
yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world,
yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
no hands, no feet on earth but yours,
yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

TEACHING: Key Points

- There is a social dimension to the Eucharist. Father Eymard clearly was a prophet in his times and he reflects a theme in Pope Saint John-Paul's *Vita Consecrata* (1996),
Prophets feel in their hearts a burning desire for a holiness of God and having heard his word in the dialogue of prayer, they proclaim that word in their lives, with their lips, and with their actions, becoming people who speak for God against evil and sin.
- Father Eymard believed that the love of Jesus found in the Eucharist is nourishment for the world and the means to confront the inequalities and injustices in the world.
- The spirituality legacy left to us by Saint Eymard is reflected in the idea that the Eucharist contemplated in adoration leads to a life of compassion, especially for the poor and suffering. As Father Vecchiato, S.S.S. writes: "As it was for Father Eymard, so it is for us: there is no true celebration nor adoration of the Eucharist that does not flow into compassion, concrete actions of love, or solidarity with the poor." (*MGBP!* 40)

REFLECTION

Saint Peter Julian Eymard: When Eucharist Becomes Life

Mario Vecchiato, SSS

“As it was for Father Eymard, so it is for us: there is no true celebration nor adoration of the Eucharist that does not flow into compassion, concrete actions of love, or solidarity with the poor.

“The ‘other,’ our neighbor, is not a competitor, someone who threatens our security, frightens us, or disturbs our tranquility. Rather, we should be asking ourselves what to do for our neighbor, sharing bread and goods, time and friendship, clothing and home; the Eucharist leads us to this source of serenity and peace. The Eucharist helps us to look at the ‘other’ with new eyes, to love and accept him as a brother and friend who awaits our service as gift” (“*MGBP!*” 40).

Mystic and Prophet of the Eucharist

Catherine Marie Caron, SSS

“In a recent church document, *Vita Consecrata* (Pope John Paul II, 1996), we read:

Prophets feel in their hearts a burning desire for the holiness of God and having heard his word in the dialogue of prayer, they proclaim that word with their lives, with their lips, and with their actions, becoming people who speak for God against evil and sin.

“That was the case in the life of Father Eymard. In fact, every founder sought to respond to a particular social need and a spiritual impulse they could not resist” (“*MGBP!*” 20-21).

“How concretely was Father Eymard prophetic? What did he see and what did he do? Could there be parallels for our own times?

- He saw society divided into distinct social classes . . .
- He experienced a church divided internally . . .
- He saw the large number of ex-priests . . . expelled . . . by the government . . .
- He observed the spiritual indifference . . . of people.
- He saw a lack of spiritual formation among the faithful . . .
- He saw a gap between liturgy and piety . . .
- He observed the lack of respect . . .” (“*MGBP!*” 22 – 23)

***Evangelium Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”)**

Pope Francis

54. “In this context, some people continue to defend the trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting. To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.”

SENDING FORTH

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

All: The God of our ancestors led you, Peter Julian,
like he did his servant Jacob in times past,
on a journey of faith.

All your life long you searched for a deeper union with God
and for an answer to the hungers of humanity.
You discovered in the Eucharist the answer to your quest.
God's love was there available to you and to all humankind.
In response to this unearned love
you made a "gift of self" to God
and tirelessly spent yourself to serve his people.

Your life, modeled on the Cenacle where Mary and the
disciples gathered in prayer and celebration,
inspired your own disciples, as it does again today,
to a life of profound prayer of contemplation
and of apostolic zeal for building Christian communities
where the Eucharist is source and center of life.

Saint Peter Julian, assist us in our journey of faith
to pray more fervently and to serve one another more
generously so that our lives may witness to a more just and
peaceful world.

May our celebrations of the Eucharist proclaim God's
liberating love for the renewal of the church and for the
coming of the kingdom.
Amen.

Note: In preparation for the next gathering, please read Chapters V and VI in "*May God Be Praised!*", especially pages 37 – 38 and 43 – 45; and Chapter VII in Father Camire's book.