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Bringing the Legacy and Charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard to Life: Ministry and Discipleship in the Market Place



SESSION X

NOTES FOR PARTICIPANTS

Introduction to the Theme

As Father Anthony Schueller said at the February session, the picture on the previous page is often referred to by Blessed Sacrament religious as the “Unfinished Eymard.” It is an original (and unfinished) painting by Father Daniel Roche, SSS. It now resides in the Blessed Sacrament Provincialate. Let it serve as an icon for our conversation tonight as we explore how we go forth to continue to live the legacy and charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, a saint for our times.

In the *Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA)* we read in #6:

“The Eucharist shapes our lifestyle as individuals, as family members and as members of society. We endeavor to understand every reality in the light of this sacrament and we contribute to a Christian vision of our global reality.

“By means of (formation programs) we strive to acquire an ever more profound appreciation of the qualities of a eucharistic life, in order to foster a mature faith and to extend our presence in society and in the church.”

We recall in our first gathering the words of Father Norman Pelletier, in Chapter I of “*May God Be Praised!*” that when Saint John Paul II inserted Saint Peter Julian Eymard into the general calendar of the church for August 2 he said that “he has something to offer the entire church at this time” (2). This same theme is picked up in Chapter IX of “*MGBP!*” by James Brown, who suggests “he truly is a saint for our times” (84).

As we go forth to live the legacy and charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard in our family life, in our parishes, communities and in the market place, let us take hope from the words of Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *The Gospel of Joy*:

“I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day” (3).

“Jesus leaves us the Eucharist as the church’s daily remembrance of, and deeper sharing in, the event of his Passover. The joy of evangelizing always arises from grateful remembrance: it is a grace which we constantly need to implore” (13).

The **purpose** of Session X is to explore together the two questions on page 105.

Session Ten

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INVITATION TO PRAYER

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

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

Prayer in honor of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Gracious God of our ancestors,
You led Peter Julian Eymard,
like Jacob in times past, on a journey of faith.
Under the guidance of your gentle Spirit,
Peter Julian discovered the gift of love in the Eucharist
which your Son Jesus offered for the hungers of humanity.
Grant that we may celebrate this mystery worthily,
adore it profoundly, and proclaim it prophetically
for your greater glory. Amen.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Apostle of the Eucharist,
pray for us.

Saint Eymard *In His Own Words*

“The Society of the Blessed Sacrament would not confine itself to the mission of prayer and contemplation. It would in an apostolic way devote itself to the salvation of souls by employing every means inspired by prudent, enlightened zeal and the divine charity of Jesus Christ.”

Words in petition to Pope Pius IX, August 1855”

“The Society has two special works of zeal for the moment. They have been approved in the Decree of Approbation of the Society: the First Communion of poor children and the work for the sanctification of priests.”

Letter to Community, December 15, 1867

REFLECTION

In *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late*, Father Pelletier tells us that Saint Peter Julian died an untimely death at the age of 57. Those who carried on his legacy followed a more “cloistered” or monastic orientation. This lasted until recent times when, inspired and guided by the Second Vatican Council, members of the congregation began to study the founder and to translate his many letters and writings.

“Father Eymard could not possibly have foreseen all the implications which contemporary theology has been able to offer the church. He indefatigably lived his own life, with the graces granted to him by God, between the priedieu, the pulpit, and the faithful, especially the poor. The Eucharist for him was ever new because it was the source of the life of the church and to be shared as nourishment in Communion as well as adored in contemplative prayer. 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.

“Today that fire, with its heat and its flame, continues to glow worldwide as the sons and daughters of Saint Peter Julian Eymard continue his mission by providing Christians with a eucharistic spirituality. It is a spirituality, in the spirit of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, that centers a person’s religious search in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is food for our journey; it is the bread broken for the life of the world and calls for justice and unity; it is the shared meal which builds the body of Christ, the church. The Eucharist is the bread of life, it is the Lord’s Supper where each one is summoned to wash the feet of others in a life of adoration and service. The Eucharist is the heart of discipleship” (134).

We discover in our study of Saint Peter Julian Eymard someone whose prayer life and devotion to the Eucharist reveal to the world a compassionate and caring man. James Brown, reflecting on the life of Saint Peter Julian, is left pondering:

“So Saint Eymard found a very personal love of Jesus in the Eucharist. He encouraged his followers – religious and lay – to meditate on that relationship in adoration so our living a eucharistic spirituality would result in the fruits of that love. Personally, I began to meditate upon such things as:

- Being present to the Rodins in my life;
- Being hospitable to the irreverent and angry;
- Having compassion and concern for the ‘rag-pickers’ of our day;
- Working to address unjust structures that hold down the least of my brothers and sisters;
- Sharing my faith and beliefs about the Eucharist;
- Contemplating more on what it means for Jesus to love me in a very personal way.”

(“MGBP!” 81 – 82)

“We celebrated in December 2012, the 50th anniversary of the canonization of Saint Peter Julian Eymard. Perhaps this is why he is now on the church calendar (August 2) and is a saint for the whole church and for all time. He invites me/us to find this love of Jesus in the Eucharist, meditate on it in adoration, and live it in the give-and-take, messy, rough and tumble crucible of the here and now. He truly is a saint for our times” (“MGBP!” 84).

It is the task of each disciple of Saint Peter Julian, religious and lay, to discern how to make a “gift of self” in *this* place and in *this* time.

