



THE
SPIRITUAL
JOURNEY
OF
ST. PETER JULIAN
EYMARD

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By Michael Perez, SSS

Preface

In the following pages you will read Saint Eymard in his own words, in his own manner of expression, in his own way of communicating the rich interior life that Christ in the Blessed Sacrament formed him in, and also the various counsels that he gave to the men and women of his day as the best way to develop an intimate conversation and great union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. His words are drawn from *Peter Julian Eymard: Apostle of the Eucharist* by André Guitton. *The quotes in italics are the actual words of Fr. Eymard.*

On the day I entered postulancy, August 7, 1963, I was introduced to Saint Peter Julian Eymard. From that day to the present, I have constantly found new insights into his person. As a religious of the Blessed Sacrament I have come to believe he is a magnificent mystic in the church and that he has given to the church through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit a great gift in the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard was canonized on December 9, 1962, the fruit of Vatican Council II, a Council which also invited all religious to return to the original charism of their founders. We, the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, have our *Rule of Life* which embodies the spirituality of Peter Julian Eymard and expresses how to live the Sacrament of the Eucharist in our times. In doing so, it accentuates the fundamental teachings of

Peter Julian Eymard, namely, the gift of one's self realized as the fruit of the Eucharist. This little booklet is my thanksgiving to both Saint Peter Julian Eymard and to the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament which received me in August of 1963.

I wish to thank Father Eugene LaVerdiere, renowned biblical scholar in our Congregation, for having inspired me through his life of study and his great dedication in proclaiming the gospel of the Eucharist through his many published books on the New Testament and the Eucharist. I would also like to thank my novices for their patient listening to my sharing the story of Peter Julian Eymard and his own spiritual formation and transformation because of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Enjoy this imaginary dialogue of Father Eymard with Archangel, Raphael. Listen to St. Eymard's words and be open to be transformed by the power of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Michael Perez, SSS





Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Imagine, if you will, a death-bed conversation between Saint Peter Julian and his favorite Archangel: Raphael.

In the early afternoon hours of Saturday, August 1, 1868, the bells began to ring in the little town of La Mure, in the south of France. Everyone asked each other: “Why are the bells ringing?” They were very quickly given the answer: “Our Father Julian is dying.” All the townspeople ran towards the house, 67, Rue du Breuil. As many as could fit inside started to pray; the rest stood outside. In all the rush and commotion, no one noticed the entry of the Archangel Raphael who went to the second-floor room where Peter Julian Eymard lay in bed.

As Peter Julian opened his eyes, he saw the figure of a young man dressed in white who looked at him and said, “Peter Julian, I am the Archangel Raphael. Since you have used me as an example of a true adorer of God and one who has always served him to edify the people you have inspired, I have been sent to



*Saint Peter Julian's Birthplace,
LaMure d'Isère, France*

assist you in remembering the touch of God in your life.”

Peter Julian answered, “Thank you for coming to help me. What a joy for me. I am moved to say, *O Jesus, receive my spirit, my body, my heart, my entire being!*”

O Raphael, I can remember very clearly that afternoon when I ran out of this room, down the stairs, and out the front door. I ran into the church with all the energy of a five-year-old. It was empty. I did something so out of place. I climbed and sat on the table of the altar and I just leaned my head against the tabernacle. My sister, Marianne, asked me, “What are you doing there?” I quickly answered, *I am near Jesus and I'm listening to him.* Marianne had a difficult time explaining this to our dear mother.

As I grew older I desired to receive communion but I knew I had to wait until I reached the age of twelve years to do so. In the mean-

time, I would go to Mass with my sister and, when she returned from receiving communion, I would sit close to her and put my head on her chest. I would say to her in joy and wonderment, *Godmother! I can feel his presence.*

I prepared myself for the great day of my first communion by going on foot to the shrine of Notre Dame du Laus. When I stood in front of the statue of Our Lady, I kept repeating, *How beautiful you are. I came to know and love Mary.* That was the grace I received there.

On the evening before my first holy communion, I wrote a little book of “Acts in the Presence of My Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.” As I remember them now, I must say that the sixth act has been the guiding light of my life: *My dear Jesus, I give myself to you as you have given yourself to me.*” On the following morning, Passion Sunday, March 16, 1823, I had the happiness of receiving Jesus into my heart. I immediately told him, *I shall be a priest, I promise you!*

Raphael, the shrine of Notre Dame du Laus has been very special to me. I received so many graces there. The Blessed Virgin was so good. I can still see the column against which I leaned when I promised to be a Religious.

I remember the day I entered the novitiate of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate as if it were yesterday. The founder, Father Eugène de Mazerod, was very sick and we prayed for his recovery. Before I entered, there had been a sacrilegious profanation of the sacred species. Because of this, we novices made adoration of reparation before the Blessed Sac-



Fr. Eymard's Parish Church in LaMure d'Isère

rament exposed. It was here in the novitiate that *I learned to make the Eucharist the center of my life and I grew in deeper love of Jesus in the Eucharist.* My health began to deteriorate and I was sent home to die. Throughout that illness I kept repeating, *I shall be a priest some day and will celebrate holy Mass.*

I finally realized my dream and fulfilled my promise to Jesus when I was ordained on July 20, 1834. With great joy and happiness, I celebrated my first Mass at the Shrine of Notre Dame de L'Osier on July 22, the feast of St. Mary Magdalene.

I was sent home to rest for the months of August through October. On October 17, 1834, I was assigned as a diocesan priest to the parish of Chatte by Bishop de Brouillard. I realized at the very onset of my pastoral ministry that I would *first nourish myself on Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist, and then feed others.*

I would also have to learn to speak to the hearts of people. I have lived this all my life.

Raphael, after being a diocesan priest for about five years my heart was yearning for the Religious life and for community. I had the great fortune of hearing about the Society of Mary founded by Jean Claude Colin. My Bishop was very understanding and gave his permission for me to enter that community. I remember packing quickly and leaving the same day, for as I told my sister: *Tomorrow will be too late.*

I entered the novitiate August 20, 1839. During my retreat reflecting on the Rule *I felt a strong attraction to live the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and to study constantly her obedience and her divine love. . . . I shall . . . storm heaven to obtain the spirit of the Society of Mary.* Because of our scarcity in membership, I was assigned to be Spiritual Director of the College of Belley on November 27, 1839, despite my short time in the Society.

In the past . . . I hardly noticed the priests in minor seminaries and colleges who were responsible for the hidden and arduous work of educating young people. I came to appreciate all those who engaged in the work of education. I likewise saw and experienced the graces God had given me, as I was able to work with the local people, parents and priests. This was also the fertile ground for many conversions.

Having entered a recently founded religious order, I had constant access to the Founder, Fr. Colin. In 1845 I was named Provincial and this is how I described my work:



Prayer in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament

*I am the Provincial, which means that I'm in charge of our houses in France, and even abroad. This new responsibility places me in front of everyone. Since all my actions become public knowledge, I must make many sacrifices contrary to my character. Now I must be serious, constantly thinking, and disciplined in everything because my life is on display. It's hard at times, because you know how I'm naturally rather joyful and, above all, simple. Through this position in my community, I also came to see the religious indifference of a world alienated from the church in France at that time. I would often say to myself, *I wish the world were full of zealous apostles to shake it from its lethargy and indolence. . . .**

In December, 1845 I was entrusted with the direction of the Third Order of Mary, an association of lay people who worked closely with the mission of the Society of Mary. In one of my letters to a friend, I said. *Here in Lyons,*

I'm directing the Third Order of Mary which already includes more than three hundred members who are very dedicated, among whom there are a certain number of clerics, and especially of men. Raphael, I do believe this was the mission God gave me while I was a Marist. I gave myself completely to organizing this branch of the Society which was the wish of Fr. Colin. Much later on I learned that he had prayed that the Lord send someone to assist him in realizing this goal. Little did I know then, that I was that person.

*My zeal for the work with the Third Order led to difficulties and misunderstandings with my superior. As a result, I was appointed Superior of the College of La Seyne-sur-Mer on September 12, 1851. My first thoughts were, *Here I am in the midst of children, and I bless God, since it is his will that sent me here, and that is what gives me strength and a bit of good will. . . . What is so difficult for me is this renunciation at every moment of the day. I must be concerned with a thousand things so far from my taste and attraction! God wants it; that is my only consolation in the midst of all these young people and their parents.**

My term as superior of the College of Belley came to a close in September 1855.

O Raphael I now want to tell you of the graces God gave me, through which I began to experience my call to establish the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. As an assistant in the parish of Chatte, I used to accompany the pastor as he made his rounds visiting the homebound. On one occasion I excused myself and went off to pray. I remember crossing a large cemetery in order to climb a hill to pray

before the Calvary of St. Romans. As I knelt there I experienced something wonderful. *I experienced the love, goodness, and tenderness God has towards his creation.*

May 25, 1845: Corpus Christi Procession at the Church of St. Paul in Lyons:

I had the privilege of carrying the Blessed Sacrament at St. Paul's. My soul was penetrated by faith and love of Jesus in the Divine Sacrament. . . . This is what I promised Our Lord, to bring all the world to the knowledge and love of Our Lord; to preach nothing but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Eucharistic. . . . O my God! What happiness if I were to deserve to hear from your lips. . . . You have spoken well of me, Peter.

Jan. 21, 1851: The Grace of Fourvière received in the Basilica of Our Lady of Lyons:

Kneeling there before the Blessed Mother I saw the great need that people in my country were experiencing:

- a. *The spiritual neglect of secular priests in the midst of their ministry. . . . the complaint that some priests have made to me about feeling isolated from all spiritual help.*
- b. *The lack of spiritual direction for most devout people, especially with regard to the interior life. . . .*
- c. *By the small amount of devotion shown towards the Blessed Sacrament . . . so much indifference and lack of devotion.*

April 18, 1853: Grace of the “Gift of Self” received at the College of La Seyne:

During thanksgiving after Mass, I was suddenly seized by a strong feeling of gratitude and love for Jesus, and as a result I said to him: *What great thing could I do for you?*

A sweet and peaceful, but strong and stirring thought made me happy. . . devoting myself to the service of the Blessed Sacrament. . . to press for the establishment of the Religious Order of the Blessed Sacrament. . . . I was willing to make any sacrifice for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Although I tried to continue in my religious community doing the ministry assigned, I finally responded to the call.

Therefore, on April 30, 1856 I wrote to a friend informing him that *I am leaving to make a retreat in Paris and to consult. . . .*

Then again on **May 13, 1856:**

Finally, after twelve days of waiting, of prayers, of tears and abandonment, the period of trial has ended: I received an answer (from the bishops). . . that I dedicate myself to the work of the Blessed Sacrament.

We should summarize the work of the Society with these words: A devoted love for the service and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, according to the spirit and laws of the holy Roman Church.



Eymardian Counsels for Eucharistic Living

Father Eymard wrote this prayer on March 16, 1823, when he was twelve years old. That was also the memorable day of his first communion, which took place on Passion Sunday.

I renounce with my whole heart the devil, his glamour and his works. I want to live and die as a true Christian, with the help of God's grace.

My dear Jesus, I firmly believe that your body, your blood, your soul, your divinity are truly and substantially present in the blessed Host which I am going to receive, because you told me so. I adore you with all the respect of which I am capable.

My dear Jesus, I hope that when I receive you, you will increase your grace in me in this world, although I am unworthy of it.

My dear Jesus, I love you with all my heart and above all things, I long to be one with you.

My dear Jesus, abide in my heart. Never leave it. Remove from it whatever displeases you and place in it whatever pleases you.

My dear Jesus, I thank you for the grace which you have given me that you have come to dwell in my heart.

My dear Jesus, I give myself to you as you have given yourself entirely to me.

In the opinion of this professed Brother of the Blessed Sacrament, this prayer became the blueprint on which he based his life, his prayers, and meditations, and on which he founded his Congregations with their way of life—a loving tribute to the Lord he loved so much.



Be the apostle of the divine Eucharist, like a flame which enlightens and warms, like the angel of his heart who will go to proclaim him to those who don't know him and will encourage those who love him and are suffering.

From a letter written to:
Mme. Antoinette de Grandville
July 4, 1859

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.

From a letter written to:
Mme. Isabelle Spazzier
November 5, 1859

Belong entirely to God through love, entirely to your neighbor through a gracious charity, entirely to the divine Eucharist by the offering and sacrifice of your whole self. Bear with yourself in the patience of our Lord.

From a letter written to:
Mrs. Stephanie Gourd
October 23, 1859

Keep your soul at peace, in order to be able to be attentive and very faithful to the inner movement of the Holy Spirit.

From a letter written to:
Mme. Stephanie Gourd
November 25, 1850

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.

From a letter written to:
Mme. Mathilde Giraud-Jordan
January 4, 1864

In order to succeed in it (prayer), it should be done when we first awaken, when our whole being is calm and recollected. We need to make our meditation before anything else.

As far as possible, you should pray in a quiet and silent place. Try to have a favorite topic of prayer, such as a devotion to the passion of Jesus, the Blessed Sacrament, awareness of the divine presence; go directly to Jesus without too much fuss.

Before prayer begins, leave aside any duties which would distract you.

From a letter written to:
Mme. Marianne Eymard
1837

Go to the good Lord very simply, with the surrender of a small child. Tell the good Lord what you are thinking, what you want, what is upsetting you. Oh! how happy we become when we discover this interior conversation with our Lord. We carry our treasure [with us] everywhere. He becomes the center of our heart and life.

From a letter written to:
Mme. Stephanie Gourde
January 29, 1848



Saint Peter Julian Eymard's words disclose how God worked in his soul and the effect this had in the day-to-day life of the saint. In response to Christ's love for him in the Eucharist, Peter Julian Eymard established the religious Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and made a valuable contribution towards building a better world.

If you would like to learn more about Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, refer to the address below.

Other materials on Saint Peter Julian Eymard can be purchased through *Emmanuel Publishing* at 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143, (440) 449-2103.

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