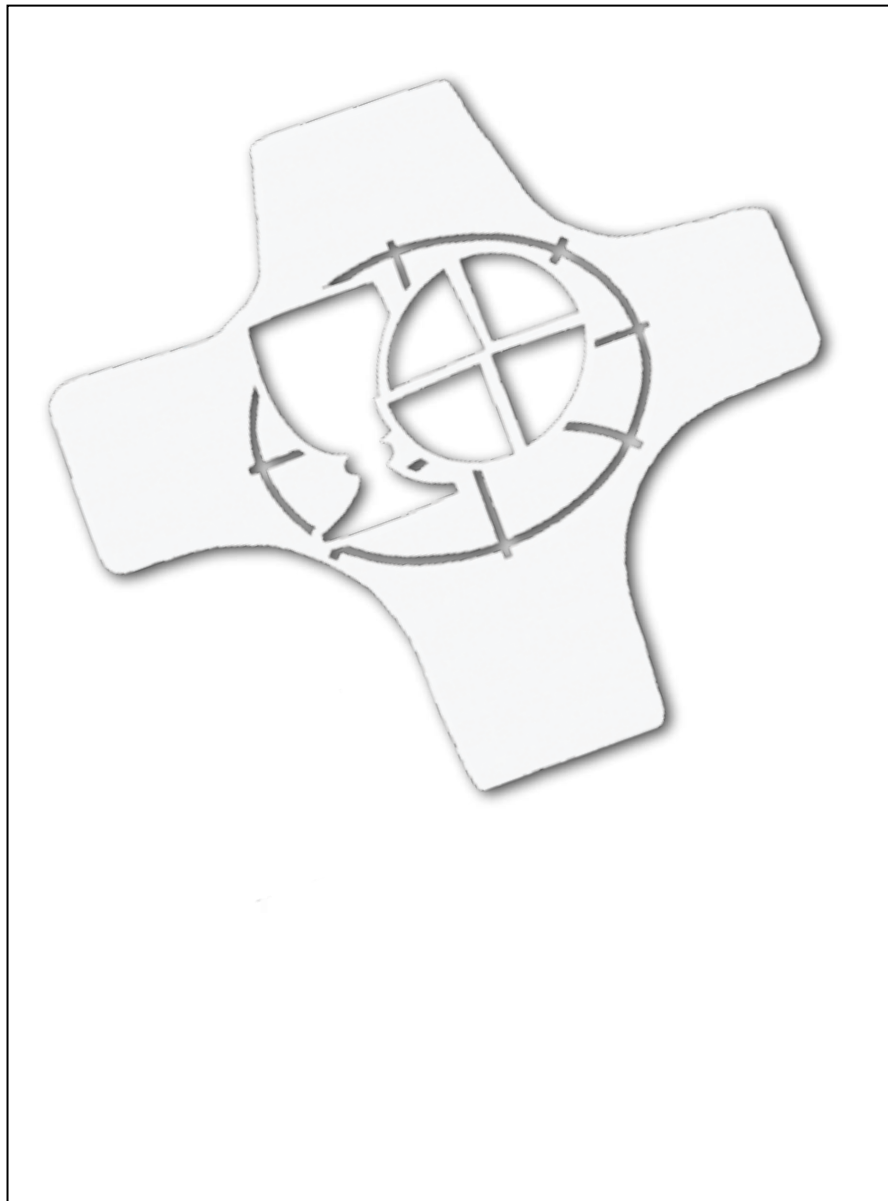




**Associates of the  
Blessed Sacrament  
Initial Formation Program**





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Blessed Sacrament  
Initial Formation Program**

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## Session 1

# Opening Meeting

Inspired by the spirit of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, we form a lay association, approved by the church, called the *Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament* in partnership with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament.

We thus seek to pursue our Christian vocation and our call to holiness by following the evangelical way taught by Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

*Rule of Life for Associates 1*

## Opening Meeting

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### 1. Opening Prayer

Leader: Jesus said, “I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!” (Luke 12:49)

All: **Creator of the universe, breathe upon us as we turn our hearts to you. Send your Holy Spirit upon us, as you did in giving birth to your church at Pentecost. Transform our lives to become apostles and disciples of the Eucharist.**

**Saint Peter Julian, we desire to live our lives with the same love for the Eucharist that burned within your heart. Be with us now, and send your grace upon all those throughout the world that seek to embody the fullness of the Eucharist for the glory of God and the good of the world. Grant all that we need through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

First Reader: A reading from a letter of Peter Julian Eymard to Miss Adele Julhien (July 18, 1861).

Keep your soul in constant thanksgiving. It is most pleasing to our Lord, the most refreshing for the heart. Turn everything into thanksgiving, because everything is a grace, everything can be to the praise of God. If you want to be the beloved disciple of our Lord’s heart, do as I tell you!

Go to his heart by pure love. Pure love is the flame which rises and emanates from the hearth without turning back. It moves towards its goal.

Pure love is the angel who loves God without looking at itself, or does so only to give back to God what it has received from him.

Let this good Master turn you to and fro as he likes, and be content with God’s contentedness. You no longer belong to yourself, nor have you for a long time. Therefore, the good Lord must be your Master to do what he wills with you.

Remember that the soul is never quite the same; God is always leading it to a new state, in order that its love may always be new. So look at God within you and follow him.

*(Pause for silent prayer. Leader invites people to express words of gratitude to God for blessings they have received recently in their lives.)*

Second Reader: A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (2:1-4).

Third Reader: A reading from the Decree of Canonization of Peter Julian Eymard.

This holy priest turned all his energies toward the sacrament of the altar with ever-growing fervor. He spent himself without counting the cost to nourish everyone with love for the Eucharist, and to awaken the zeal of religious groups. Peter Julian Eymard, while meditating on the sacred banquet, understood that the divine promises of Christ would be fulfilled at all times: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him.” And “I am here with you for all time, until the end of the world.”



He rekindled the fire with fire, and fed his own love for the Most Holy Body of Christ with greatest care, desiring to rekindle the devotion of every believer, especially that of priests. He believed that the duty of priests was to offer the bread of angels to the army of faithful Christians, so that they might feed upon it.

*(Pause for silent prayer. Leader invites people to share their thoughts and inspiration at this time.)*

Leader: Jesus said, “I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!” (Luke 12:49)

All: **Spirit of the living God, awaken in us the sense of your call to place the Eucharist at the center of our lives. You entrusted to Saint Peter Julian Eymard the great desire to light the four corners of the world with the fire of the Eucharist. Through personal hardships, he encountered the transformative power of your love in the Blessed Sacrament. We ask you, Father, to enflame our hearts with the same desire that enabled Saint Peter Julian to offer the gift of his life in service of this great sacrament. Give us the grace we need to continue his mission of proclaiming the love of Christ to others. Grant this in the name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.**

Following Prayer, we proceed with the following:

1. Introductions  
(Personal story, ministry involvements, association with the congregation, etc.)
2. Review of the Formation Syllabus
3. Reception of and explanation of the *Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA)*
4. Pass out *Prayer to Saint Peter Julian Eymard* card and end with *Ceremony of Commitment* on page 4..

## 2. Associates of the Blessed Sacrament: Initial Formation Syllabus

Initial formation is a process of introduction to the vision and mission of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, who saw the Eucharist as a powerful means for the transformation of individuals and society, and who collaborated closely with lay persons and others in propagating this vision. This formation takes place through a variety of experiences designed to prepare the candidates for living a life centered on the Eucharist.

1. Opening Meeting
  - An opportunity to meet one another, pray and clarify the purposes and overview of the Associates’ initial formation program, the *ROLA* and the manual *Living as an Associate*.
2. Saint Peter Julian Eymard: his life and mission
  - God led Peter Julian Eymard on a journey of faith: first as a diocesan priest, then a religious of the Society of Mary; then to found a religious community dedicated to the Eucharist.
3. The Vocational Call of the Laity in Service to the Church
  - Our baptism calls us to live an authentically eucharistic spirituality.

4. Saint Peter Julian Eymard: The Apostle of the Eucharist
  - God inspired Saint Peter Julian Eymard to establish within the church a new way of living the Christian life as disciples and apostles of the Eucharist.
5. The Eucharist as the Center of our Life
  - Following the example of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, we place the Eucharist at the center of our lives and witness to the love of Christ offered in this sacrament for the transformation of the world.
6. Table of the Word
  - When received in faith, the word of God resonates in our innermost being and reveals the meaning of our lives. We pay careful attention to the texts of the Mass and internalize them in prayer.
7. Liturgy of the Eucharist
  - The celebration of the Eucharist proclaims the paschal mystery of Jesus, the source of our salvation, and invites our full, active and conscious participation. By doing so, our lives become what we celebrate.
8. Liturgy of the Hours
  - This “prayer of the church” is prayed by clergy, religious communities, and a growing number of laity at parishes. It is offered for the whole church and is encouraged in the *ROLA*.
9. Saint Peter Julian Eymard and Prayer in the Presence of the Eucharist
  - Prayer holds an important place in our lives and is part of our mission. By it, we hope to become adorers in spirit and in truth. Eucharistic adoration extends the celebration of the Eucharist and leads to service in daily life.
10. Historical Development of the Congregation and the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament
  - Understanding the origins and recent history of the congregation and the aggregation offers us a sense of who we are and where God is leading us today.
11. Evangelizing and Mission
  - We all share in Christ’s mission to bring the love of God and the hope that is ours to others.
12. The Covenant Commitment
  - In studying and reflecting on these themes and the *ROLA*, we prepare ourselves for our Covenant Commitment as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation.

### **3. Ceremony of Commitment to the Initial Formation Program for Associates of the Blessed Sacrament**

**Preparation:** *Celebrate rite at either the baptismal font of the church or with a bowl of holy water and candle placed on a table in the space.*

**Opening Song (optional):** All the Earth or City of God

**Leader:** Thank you for responding to the invitation to begin your candidacy, a period of discernment and preparation in becoming an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament. We ask the Holy Spirit to come upon us as on Pentecost and enflame our hearts with love for the Eucharist. Guide us to center our lives on the Eucharist and share this precious gift with others.

Candidates: *Good and gracious God, you invite us to be in your presence and to make an offering of our lives in the service of your Holy Sacrament. You instruct us through your Son, the Word made flesh who lives among us. Form your Word within us as you did in Mary so that our lives may bear fruit. Form us into disciples and apostles of the Eucharist. Mold us to become your bread to feed the hungry hearts that do not know how great your love is for our world.*

Leader: Lord God, we praise you for your goodness.  
You are the source of all holiness and life.  
With bread from heaven you feed the hungers of your people.

Candidates: *Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.*

Leader: Christ Jesus, you sit with us at table in friendship.  
Your body and blood become our food and drink.  
You give us an example of humble service and selfless love.

Candidates: *Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.*

Leader: Holy Spirit, gather your people in a communion of love.  
Powerfully breathe a mighty wind upon us that we might live.  
Unite us in one bread and one cup, a living sacrifice of praise.

Candidates: *Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.*

**Sign of the Cross, blessing with holy water one's self.**

Candidates: *I dedicate myself anew to the covenant of my baptism,  
to live my life centered on your love in the Eucharist,  
a life of prayer and service.  
May I find my wholeness and holiness in this place and at this time, where you have placed me.  
May my ministry, complete with failings and challenges,  
be leaven for your desire of me to rise in our world.  
I wish to be a servant to the needs of those around me,  
and to the needs of the entire world.  
Bless me now with your love,  
as I make a gift of myself to you,  
and strive to be your disciple and apostle of the Eucharist.  
I make this dedication in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*

**Concluding Prayer:** Prayer to Saint Peter Julian Eymard  
(See page C Appendix 120 for prayer.)

**Closing Song (optional):** The Summons or We Are Called





## Session 2

# Saint Peter Julian Eymard: His Life and Mission

We are inspired by the teachings and example of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, “Outstanding Apostle of the Eucharist.” He responded to the needs of the people of his time by proclaiming God’s love manifested in a special way in Christ’s gift in the Eucharist; he encouraged the faithful to share, as associated members, in the charism and the mission of the religious congregations he founded.

Convinced that a life cannot be fully eucharistic if it is not consecrated to God and to people, he left us an example of contemplation and apostolic action.

*Rule of Life for Associates 3*

## Saint Peter Julian Eymard: His Life and Mission

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**Opening Song (optional):** God Has Chosen Me or Christ be Our Light

### 1. Opening Prayer

Leader: O Sacrament Most Holy, O Sacrament Divine.

All: **All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.**

Leader: Let us pray.

All: **O God,  
you filled Saint Peter Julian with wondrous love  
for the mysteries of the body and blood of your Son.  
Grant, we beseech you, that like him,  
we may experience the richness of this holy banquet.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

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Leader: Our scripture reading is taken from the opening chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians. Let us open our hearts to contemplate the mystery of Jesus with faith and love, like Saint Paul and Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

**Scripture Reading:** Ephesians 1:3-23

Leader: In May of 1845, Saint Peter Julian carried the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of the city of Lyons, during the annual Corpus Christi procession. This was a powerful experience of God's grace, leaving an indelible mark on his spirit. In his personal journal he wrote:

*On May 25, 1845, I had the special privilege of carrying the Blessed Sacrament and I derived great benefit from it. My soul was penetrated by faith and love of Jesus in his divine sacrament. Those two hours seemed but a moment to me. How I wished at that moment to have all hearts and the zeal of Saint Paul! . . . I want to bring all the world to the knowledge and love of our Lord! I have asked our Lord for the spirit of the letters of Saint Paul, that great lover of Jesus Christ.*

*(A moment of silence or song)*

All: **Living Word of God,  
you entrusted to Saint Peter Julian Eymard  
the great desire of lighting the four corners of the world  
with the fire of the Eucharist.  
You showed him through hardships  
how to realize in truth this vision of love.**

Through his intercession,  
 may he who suffered greatly  
 in carrying out his mission,  
 help us to place our talents  
 at the service of others  
 and to live our various commitments  
 with joy and generosity.  
 Set our hearts afire with your love  
 in all we do through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## 2. Introduction to the Theme

Father Anthony McSweeney, SSS, in his Forward to *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late*, tells us a story about “a man who was about to be thrown into the Rhone River by a band of revolutionaries but was saved by being recognized in time as a priest beloved by the poor, thence carried back to his religious house on their shoulders, draped with the revolutionary flag ...” In fact, here was “a man who was welcomed into the so-called ‘red band’ of slums which encircled mid-nineteenth century Paris, where neither police nor clergy would dare to set foot.” The man, Peter Julian Eymard, was canonized some 110 years later in 1962 by Pope John XXIII, who stressed in his canonization homily Eymard’s singular eucharistic focus:

... Honor and celebrate with us him who was so perfect an adorer of the Blessed Sacrament. After his example, always place at the center of your thoughts, of your affections, of the undertakings of your zeal, this incomparable source of all grace: the mystery of Faith, which hides under its veils the Author himself of grace, Jesus, the Incarnate Word.

As a diocesan priest stationed in Monteynard, France, and later as a member of the Society of Mary for 17 years, Father Eymard grew in his love and devotion to the Eucharist. By the time he founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament on May 13, 1856, Father Eymard believed that:

- A healthy church life demanded that the Eucharist be in the center.
- Catholic lay women and men should have fuller access to spiritual writings.
- The laity should be involved in Eucharist-centered catechesis.
- Adoration as a prayer of his new congregation and of the church should take its inspiration from the liturgy.
- The love of God experienced in the Eucharist should be the center of a Christian spirituality.

## 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

“We have known the charity of God” (1 John 4: 16). To believe in love is everything! It is not enough to believe in truth; one must believe in love. The love, that is, that our Lord Jesus Christ shows in the Blessed Sacrament. It is by living faith in the Eucharist that we return Christ’s love for us. Pray for a simple and pure faith in the Eucharist. People may teach you the subtleties of its dogma, but Jesus alone can give you belief in it. Come and receive not only its consolation, but be strengthened in faith. Yes, here is the Eucharist! What more do you want?

Saint Peter Julian Eymard in his last sermon

## 4. Bible Text: Galatians 2:20

## 5. Conversation – share your story

- The story of Saint Peter Julian Eymard – in the words of Father Norman Pelletier, SSS (*Tomorrow Will be Too Late*, p. 13) – reveals a “life, if not filled with contradictions, is at times enigmatic and reveals an elusive personality ‘scarred’ by failures and disappointments but also full of courageous new beginnings.” Can you relate to this statement in any way? Please share how *your* life’s journey has been in any way similar.
- In your own spiritual biography, please share what experience or happening moved you to want to be an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation.

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## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following readings

- *An Auspicious Anniversary* by Father Paul Bernier, SSS. An editorial in *Emmanuel*, May/June 2006.
- February 4, 2001 Homily by then Superior General, Father Fiorenza Salvi, SSS.
- *The Mission of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and Saint Peter Julian Eymard: When Eucharist Becomes Life*. Two pamphlets published by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

### Saint Peter Julian Eymard: His Life and Mission – Key Points

- As we pray in the closing prayer, God led Peter Julian Eymard on a *journey* of faith. This was a journey that included five years as a diocesan priest and seventeen years as a religious of the Society of Mary before he founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in 1856. Each of us is on a journey of faith.
- Father Bernier reminds us that Father Eymard “had been struggling with a deepening devotion to the Eucharist for many years.” Through the “Eymardian family” he founded, Saint Peter Julian Eymard left a rich legacy to the church by placing the Eucharist at the center of its life.



- The Eucharist made the love of God tangible to Father Eymard and awakened within him a passionate desire to spend his life spreading the fire of this love in building the kingdom of God in the world.
- Deeply troubled by the societal evils of his time, Saint Peter Julian Eymard sought in prayer a solution to the religious ignorance, exploitation of workers, poverty and injustice causing social upheaval. He was convinced that God was providing a solution to these problems if people could be drawn to experience the love of God manifested in the Eucharist, through Mass, Holy Communion, and Prayer in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament (Adoration).

## Readings

### *An Auspicious Anniversary*

by Father Paul Bernier, SSS, Editor Emeritus of *Emmanuel Magazine*

On May 13, 1856, Saint Peter Julian Eymard founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. A Marist priest at the time, he had been struggling with a deepening devotion to the Eucharist for many years. The thought that struck him was that the Eucharist lacked a religious congregation to honor it. A legendary saying of Father Eymard was:

Isn't it amazing, that, since the foundation of the church, the Holy Eucharist has not had its own religious body, its honor guard, its court, its family, as the other mysteries of our Lord have all had a religious body to honor and to preach about them?

He had been a Marist priest for 17 years, during which time he had been spiritual director and later superior of a Marist college; provincial superior and assistant to the founder and superior general, Father Claude Colin; and director of the Third Order of Mary, for which he wrote the *Rule* and secured canonical approbation from Rome. If his leaving the Society of Mary seemed like a betrayal by many Marists, it was equally painful for Fr. Eymard. He bore the society a deep love and affection; and he had tried, at first, to realize his aim within the society. It was not to be, and he had to strike out on his own.

At first, he had but one companion who shared his dream, and they had to struggle to erect the first foundation in Paris. Three years later, however, a second foundation was opened in Marseilles. Yet another three, and Angers became the site of the third house of the new society. The eucharistic work was underway. Before he died, at the relatively young age of 57, shrines had been started in Belgium, and the congregation numbered some 40 religious.

The biggest threat to the vision of Father Eymard in the 50 years following his death was the lessening, if not the loss of the apostolic dimension that Eymard had insisted on from the very beginning, and of which he himself gave such eloquent example. His immediate successor as superior general saw the congregation essentially as a contemplative one, thus giving the apostolic dimension a back seat. Likewise, an assistant general two decades later proposed an actual affiliation with the Benedictine Order, whereby the congregation would become the Cistercians of Adoration. This also was an explicit option for a purely contemplative life. It was a lovely ideal; but it was not the vision of Father Eymard.

Unfortunately, Father Eymard's spirituality is nowhere set down clearly in any one place. He was revising the Constitutions of his congregation until the day he died. He authored no complete treatise on the Eucharist. His reading and reflection, to say nothing of the hours spent in prayer, however, resulted in a deepening understanding of the Eucharist, a fact made evident in the many letters of spiritual direction he wrote (of which we have six volumes!). He began to stress less the exterior cult in favor of the interior dedication and commitment that should be the result of a eucharistic life.

One example only: in the theology of the day, the purpose of the religious life and vows was for the perfection of the individuals and to better assure their eternal salvation. This was the norm to be included in the constitutions of the various religious congregations. Not so for Eymard. He insisted that the purpose of the religious life in his congregation was to facilitate a loving gift of self to our Lord in return for Christ's own self-gift in the incarnation and in the Eucharist - which he saw as a prolongation of the incarnation. Through this sacrament, Christ continued the work of salvation he carried out in his own lifetime.

Even as early as 1851, while still a Marist, he became more and more convinced that a healthy church life demanded that the Eucharist be in the center. He wrote: "I have often asked myself what remedies could there be for the almost total indifference that is evident in a frightening degree on the part of so many Catholics, and I must say I find only one: the Eucharist; love of Jesus in the Eucharist."

It is Eymard's singular eucharistic focus that Pope Saint John XXIII chose to stress in the homily at his canonization:

. . . Honor and celebrate with us him who was so perfect an adorer of the Blessed Sacrament. After his example, always place at the center of your thoughts, of your affections, of the undertakings of your zeal, this incomparable source of all grace: the mystery of faith, which hides under its veils the Author himself of grace, Jesus, the incarnate Word.

It is also the reason why Pope Saint John Paul II, in 1995, elevated his feast in the calendar of the universal church for August 2. In the words of the decree:

Font and fullness of all evangelization and striking expression of the infinite love of our divine Redeemer for humankind, the Holy Eucharist clearly marked the life and pastoral activity of Peter Julian Eymard. He truly deserves to be called an outstanding apostle of the Eucharist. In fact, his mission in the church consisted in promoting the centrality of the Eucharistic mystery in the whole life of the Christian community.

He is truly a saint for all seasons.

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## **Celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Saint Peter Julian Eymard**

Homily of Father Fiorenzo Salvi, SSS, Former Superior General  
February 4, 2011

*Two hundred years after February 4, 1811, the day of Peter Julian's birth, a Mass was celebrated in the chapel in which he was baptized on the next day and which now bears his name. The celebration began with a word of welcome from the parish to express its joy in these words:*

Today, February 4th, 2011, the parish of Saint Peter Julian Eymard is glad and proud to welcome the members of the Eymardian family who have come from all over the world.

*Father Fiorenzo Salvi, the Superior General of the congregation, who presided at this Mass, recalled in his homily the*

*main features of the life and thought of Father Eymard.*

Each time that we celebrate the feast of a saint, we can touch what God is doing in those who trust in him unreservedly. What God does in the life of the saints isn't simply what we want and think that he should do for our well-being. It is something that brings a fullness and zest to living. This is why a saint is for us: an example, a model, a guide, a teacher. He becomes for us like a father, mother, confidant, friend, refuge. Saint Peter Julian is all that for us. He is the patron of this parish, he is our Founder, he is an example for the whole church.

The father of Peter Julian wasn't very enthusiastic about the dream, desires, or idea of him becoming a priest. And we can understand him well. Widower after the death of his first wife, he also lost the second, and then all his children one after another. Only one daughter remained, Marianne, from his first marriage, and this son of his second marriage. Peter Julian was born here, at La Mure on February 4, 1811, about 11 o'clock in the morning, at 69 rue du Breuil. It was a Monday, market-day. The following day he was brought here to this church to be baptized.

His father had left Oisans to go to La Mure, where he became well integrated into the community. He had set up a little business as a cutler and also had an oil press. The future of his son was assured; it was enough to follow in his father's steps. But Peter Julian had a dream that drew him beyond that.

What was Peter Julian's dream, his vocation, this irresistible attraction that will impel him to leave his home, his parents, his sister Marianne, his native village, his mountains...? His vocation was revealed on the day of his First Communion, here in this church. An extraordinary meeting with Christ at the age of 12! In this encounter, he felt fascinated by the love of Jesus, who gives himself in the eucharistic bread and draws us to himself.

This flame that was kindled in his heart on that day of his First Communion grew in the course of time and little by little moved him to discover his vocation and his mission: to make the Eucharist known, loved, and received because in this sacrament Christ gives himself and communicates his divine life.

Struck by this, he was led first of all to become a priest in the diocese of Grenoble – as curate at Chatte and parish priest later at Monteynard. Then he entered the Marists in order to be a missionary in the entire world. And finally, he became the founder of two religious congregations (of men and women) which continue until our day his mission in the Church and in the world. He also considered setting up an association of laypeople, who also have a eucharistic vocation. This is the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, whose members together with the male and female religious form a great Eymardian family throughout the world.

How can the eucharistic mission of Peter Julian Eymard be described? *"To respond to the hungers of people, starting from the riches of God's love manifested in the Eucharist"* Rule of Life (ROL) 3. This is the mission of Father Eymard: to proclaim to all that the Eucharist is the fire able to transform the hearts of persons and the energy able to transform the world; because the Eucharist is Christ among us continuing his mission. Around the table of the Eucharist, the Lord brings to birth a new community that is able to live in reciprocal love, solidarity, justice, peace.

Father Eymard's existence was consumed in carrying out this mission by his living example, tireless preaching, predilection for the poor and abandoned, who are God's special concern and the guests of honor at the table of the Eucharist. When he left home, his family, his friends, this land that he loved, no one could imagine what God would bring about through this son of the Matheysine:

- He became a saint, like his friend and confidant, the Curé of Ars;
- He gave birth to a family comprising male and female religious, consecrated persons and associate laity, who are in the five continents and twenty-nine countries of the world;

- He became “the outstanding apostle of the Eucharist.”

Today we are gathered here in this church where he was baptized, where his mother brought him to pray, where he celebrated the Eucharist and preached when he returned to La Mure, where he used to pray, where his requiem and funeral were conducted. This church is now a place of prayer and pilgrimage. After he was beatified, this church became consecrated to him as the “Chapel of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.”

After Father Eymard’s death, the postulator of the cause of his canonization, Father Edmond Tenaillon, came here, to this region, to La Mure and the other parishes, where many people knew him, to collect their testimonies. His life is a patrimony belonging to you. Here are some sentences that can give an idea of the testimonies gathered: *“His memory is living at La Mure more still than elsewhere; he loved his native land, and was loved here.” “No sooner than it was known that he arrived, than the home of his sister was invaded. All wanted to see him, to speak with him, to ask his advice.”*

At his death on August 1, 1868, the townsfolk of La Mure placed the keys of their houses near him to be blessed by touching him. *“This was to choose him to guard and protect every hearth, as well as his native town, to which God brought him back at the last hour as if to make him its protector.”*

Dear sisters and brothers, may this anniversary of his birth be for all of us the occasion of thanking the Lord who has given him to us, and to make him a model for imitation, a guide to follow, a saint to intercede for us.

The message that he leaves us and that he entrusts to us as a mission is neatly summed up in this little French phrase of his that can be read on the monument in the cemetery at the side of the church where he was buried for a time:

**LET US LOVE JESUS WHO LOVES US SO MUCH IN  
HIS DIVINE SACRAMENT.**

## **7. Closing Prayer**

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.  
In response to this unearned love,  
you made a fourth vow, 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 own 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.**

**Closing Song (optional):** At That First Eucharist or Let Us Be Bread

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Camiré, Bernard, SSS. *The Eucharist and Saint Peter Julian Eymard*. Emmanuel Publishing, 2011.
- Fernandez, Erasto, SSS. *A Year with Father Eymard*. R.R. Graphics, For the Asian Conference, 2009.
- Pelletier, Norman, SSS. *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late*. Emmanuel Publishing, 1992, 2002 (2nd ed.).





## Session 3

# The Vocational Call of the Laity in Service to the Church

Our ideal is to live the mystery of the Eucharist fully and to make known its meaning, so that Christ's reign may come and the glory of God may be revealed to the world.

In response to our baptismal vocation we seek to witness to Christ's presence at the crossroads of society and, starting from the Eucharist, we strive to influence our world in the light of this mystery, source and summit of all evangelizing.

*Rule of Life for Associates 2*

## The Vocational Call of the Laity in Service to the Church

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**Opening Song (optional):** God Has Chosen Me or Sing a New Church

### 1. Opening Prayer

Leader: We stand before you, Holy Spirit, aware that we gather in your name.

All: **/R. Come to us, remain with us, and enlighten our hearts.**

Leader: Give us light and strength to know your will,  
to make it our own, and to live it in our lives. **/R.**

Leader: Guide us by your wisdom, support us by your power,  
for you are God, sharing the glory of Father and Son. **/R.**

Leader: You desire justice for all; enable us to uphold the rights of others; do not allow us to be misled by  
ignorance or corrupted by fear or favor. **/R.**

Leader: Unite us to yourself in the bond of love  
and keep us faithful to all that is true. **/R.**

All: **As we gather in your name, may we temper justice with love, so that all our discussions and reflections  
may be pleasing to you, and earn the reward promised to good and faithful servants. We ask this of  
you who lives and reigns with the Father and the Son, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

*[Adapted from the prayer used before every session of the Second Vatican Council.]*

**Scripture Reading:** John 1:35-39

**Prayer for the Gift of Self** (Adapted from the “Formula of Religious Profession,” Congregation of the Blessed  
Sacrament *Rule of Life* 102)

All: **You number us among those who hear the voice of your call, loving Father, to live the paschal mystery,  
to interiorize it in prayer, and to share with others the life that springs from it.**

**May the love manifested in Jesus Christ and celebrated in the Eucharist inspire us to respond to your  
gift of love with the gift of ourselves.**

**Accompany us on our journey and may our hearts burn within us in the proclamation of the word  
and the breaking of the bread.**

**In your ever faithful love and trusting in the intercession of Mary, the Mother of the Word made flesh,  
and of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, apostle of the Eucharist, we ask you for the grace to persevere  
throughout our life in living the gift of ourselves as we serve Christ and our sisters and brothers.**



**Grant that we may build up a world founded on justice and love so that the reign of Christ may come and your glory be revealed to the world. Amen.**

## 2. Introduction to the Theme

Reflecting a long history that dates back to the founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the laity share the vocational call to take an active role in the mission of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament: *“We invite all people to that communion with God, which we celebrate in the Eucharist. We collaborate with men and women of good will toward the building of a world of justice and solidarity. We are ready to assume lay ministries in liturgy, in sharing of faith, and in the pastoral structures of the church.”*

*Rule of Life for Associates 12*

## 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

The divine flame needs a little activity...there are no limits or degrees for the love of God, the gift of self, personal self-denial. We must die daily and be like the sun, which always rises as if it were the first time that it is obeying God, and follows its course until its setting. Live especially in the divine Eucharist. I will grant you the first blessings. I have just had the form printed for the aggregation. I am sending you the first copy; you will be my eldest from Paris.

To Mme. Marechal  
March 1, 1866

Continue to grow in the knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the purpose of time and eternity; it is life; it is happiness in exile. To succeed in it, become a disciple of prayer; prayer is the golden chain which binds us to God, it is the hearth of the divine flame, the nourishment of the inner life.

To Mme. Natalie Jordan  
January 1, 1853

## 4. Bible Text: Ephesians 4:1-6, 15-16



## 5. Conversation – share your story

- Please share what motivated you to seek a deeper relationship with the congregation of Saint Peter Julian Eymard; and, any particular hopes you have for following this call.
- The spirit proposed by Saint Peter Julian Eymard is the very same as that which animates the laity and the Blessed Sacrament religious in our time: *“The gift of oneself to God and to our neighbor out of love, as Jesus has given himself and still gives himself to us in the Eucharist.”* Take time to consider your gifts and the ways God has been working in your life. Share an experience of how the Eucharist enables you to give of your life in service to others.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

- Excerpt from *Emmanuel* article by Peter J. Riga.

## The Vocational Call of the Laity in Service to the Church – Key Points

- The Bible is a collection of vocation stories. It narrates the many ways in which God has spoken to people throughout time, and has promised to be with them to carry out the work of salvation in making God's message known to others. God speaks in deeply personal ways to individuals, yet the gift of each vocation is for the good of all the people. Vocation entails a response to God in serving others with the gifts that God bestows.

- God penetrated the heart of Saint Eymard with a profound insight into the transforming force the Eucharist could be within the church and society. He formed two religious congregations and an aggregation of laity to unite by means of eucharistic prayer and apostolic service to address the religious ignorance and indifference people had toward the Eucharist. Consider the situations that challenge society and the church in our time and allow the charism of Peter Julian Eymard to stir your heart into flames.
- The renewal taking place within the church's identity as the "*People of God*" situates our primary vocation in the sacraments of initiation (baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist), out of which flows the mission of the Church to teach, worship and evangelize. There is found a richness in the living of our Christian life when it is rooted in "*eucharistic attention*" to the world around us. As Associates of the Blessed Sacrament we feel the call to center our lives on the Eucharist and lead others to appreciate the fullness of God's love in the Eucharist.

## Reading

### *Eucharistic Lives* by Peter J. Riga

We know that the Eucharist is at the heart of Christian life. To celebrate the Eucharist is to remember the gift that Christ made of his life. It is also to celebrate the victory of love over death on the paschal evening. Finally it is to receive Christ as nourishment, thereby letting him live, grow, and act in us. By all of these manifestations, we are incorporated into the work of the resurrection.

What happens in the Eucharist, what it signifies and renders present, cannot be confined to a particular moment. The celebration in itself manifests at a precise moment the whole Christian vocation, all that must be deployed in our life. It is our whole being that is called to become the body of Christ; it is our whole life which is called to be Eucharist. But what does this mean concretely?

### Our Whole Existence

There are two risks today. *The first risk* is one of closure. On the one hand, our life is filled with work, commitments, serious demands, negotiations, even moral ambiguities with which we must deal regularly; and, on the other hand, there is God, faith, convictions, religious practice that we often confine to a moment or two in the week. There is no communication or connection between the two – as if the domain of religious convictions had nothing to do with real life. As if God had nothing to say about our everyday cares and concerns!

*The second risk* is a variant of the first. The world can be a fearful place and not a good spot for us; the risk then exists of a flight to a spirituality which becomes dis-incarnational—where all that is important is our intimate relationship with God. Clearly to give priority to God, and the desire to experience his love and his comforting presence, are desirable and legitimate goals provided we not flee our human condition and responsibilities. We must not forget that Christian existence is total human existence. Our whole existence in its totality must be orientated by choices in conformity with the imitation of Christ.

We should recall that where the synoptic gospels recount the institution of the Eucharist, John's Gospel proposes the incident of the washing of the feet, by which Jesus is revealed as master of a community of service (Jn 13:1-20). Christ at the heart of the Eucharist demands that we follow him in a similar life fashion. It is in the service of men and women that the eucharistic mystery is accomplished: "*Do this in memory of me*" are commands that accompany both the Eucharist and the washing of the feet.

On his part, Paul declares unworthy of the Christian community any participation in the Supper of the Lord in the context of division and indifference to the poor (1 Cor 11:17-22 and 27-34). This dimension of service and our presence to the other can take on various forms in our lives. Our union with Christ is true only because we are united to all men and women. Christ directs us without ceasing to be present to our sisters and brothers.

### **To Orientate Our Days**

To help us to have “eucharistic attention” in the totality of our lives, we can begin by stopping periodically to remember what God does and has done in our lives. God is present there; he acts. Do we see this? Just as the disciples on the way to Emmaus on that first Easter night, we are invited to reread our daily lives to discover how we were really never alone on the route of life. We just don’t realize God’s continuous presence.

Such a view naturally leads us to give thanks—which is the very translation of “Eucharist,” a term that replaced “the breaking of the bread” by the second century. It is a question of the movement of our entire being which recognizes the one who brings us life; and we thank him for it. This life given is manifested through multiple gifts, happy events, protection, and sustaining, every blink of our eyes, which are so many manifestations of the love of God for us. Every movement, every moment, is a gift of grace.

Each day God brings about in us, as well as in the world, his work of life. At every moment, God desires to associate us with that work. That relates us to the meaning of our existence: do we desire to follow Christ, to imitate him, to also enter into that movement of true life of which we and the world have such great need? The offering of our existence is our response to the offering of Christ to us. We bring ourselves to the Eucharist in order to make our lives eucharistic.

We are not all called to give our life in the same way Christ did, but we must really give our lives to others. And the way each person lives this following of Christ, the commitment and fidelity by which we choose to love and serve, remains for each of us within our own intimate and personal choices. They do not always appear brilliantly and sometimes remain unsuspected even by those closest to us. To give ourselves to others each day in the most ordinary tasks—which are often repetitive, boring, and humble—is not always glorious and visible, but something which permits the mystery of love to irrigate the whole world. We are “hidden in Christ.”

It is in really going all the way in this gift of ourselves that our lives will become more and more eucharistic, more and more the body of Christ, more and more self-giving, more and more love.

### **Thinking About The Eucharist**

- Our attitude toward life shapes the world around us and colors our relationships. God calls us to celebrate our lives each day, to be mindful of the sacred presence within the ordinary, and to see that our lives are lived in gratitude for all that we receive.
- The celebration of life and the celebration of Eucharist are one in the same. When life is challenged with hardships and disappointments we know that we bear the sacrifice, as did Jesus, with love and joy for the glory of God and the good of others. Our lives are then offered on the altar.
- Eucharist is lived in love and seeks to let others share in the blessings we receive from God. The bond of unity is realized as others can connect with the values the Eucharist brings into our lives.

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## 7. Closing Prayer

All:           **Yes, Lord, I come.  
Thank you for your invitation.  
I bring you my self – my gifts, my foibles,  
my joys, my sorrows,  
all the things I do well; and, all my sins.**

*(Pause for a moment of reflection)*

**I bring you my work, my vocation, my avocations.  
I bring you my family life, my friendships –  
all my commitments.**

*(Pause for a moment of reflection)*

**I bring you my successes and accomplishments,  
my love, my life.  
I sing your praise.**

*(Pause for a moment of reflection)*

**I come to hear your word  
and learn what it means to live like Jesus,  
love like Jesus, serve and give like Jesus.**

*(Pause for a moment of reflection)*

**I come to receive your body and blood.  
I take you into my humanity  
so that you may lift me up into your divinity.  
I learn to adore you  
with the angels and saints.  
I cry Glory and call you holy.  
May all nations and peoples adore you,  
especially me . . .**

*(Pause for a moment of reflection)*

**I come before your tabernacle  
and feast in your presence.  
In prayer I learn how my heart hungers  
and thirsts for you.  
“O God you are my God, for you my soul thirsts.”  
“He feeds us with finest wheat.”  
In your eucharistic presence  
I discover that you have set a banquet for me.  
My heart overflows. Amen.**

**Closing Song (optional):** The Summons or The Servant Song

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Bevens, Steve, SVD “The Church’s Mission in the Third Millennium: Religious and Lay Partnership for the Future.” *Emmanuel*, January/February 2004.
- *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*. Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2005. Online: <http://www.usccb.org/upload/co-workers-vineyard-lay-ecclesial-ministry-2005.pdf>.
- John Paul II. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *The Vocation of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World (Christifideles Laici)*. (30 December 1988. Online: [http://vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_30121988\\_christifideles-laici\\_en.html](http://vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_30121988_christifideles-laici_en.html).
- Second Vatican Council. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (18 November 1965). Online: [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651118\\_apostolicam-actuositatem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html).
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, especially 898-902, 905.



## Session 4

# Saint Peter Julian Eymard: The Apostle of the Eucharist

We are inspired by the teachings and example of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, “Outstanding Apostle of the Eucharist.” He responded to the needs of the people of his time by proclaiming God’s love manifested in a special way in Christ’s gift in the Eucharist; he encouraged the faithful to share, as associated members, in the charism and the mission of the religious congregations he founded.

Convinced that a life cannot be fully Eucharistic if it is not consecrated to God and to people, he left us an example of contemplation and apostolic action.

*Rule of Life for Associates 3*

## Saint Peter Julian Eymard - The Apostle of the Eucharist

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**Opening Song (optional):** Here at This Table or Love One Another

### 1. Opening Prayer

We thank you, God  
for having raised up in your church  
Saint Peter Julian Eymard.  
You call us, who follow in his footprints,  
to continue his mission  
in the church and for the world.

Grant also to us  
deep experience of your Love,  
and unconditional abandonment  
to Christ, your Son,  
docility to the Spirit,  
and lively faith in the Eucharist,  
so that we may be, after his example,  
credible witnesses and tireless messengers  
of the life that springs from this Sacrament.

### 2. Introduction to the Theme

On January 21, 1851, Father Eymard, then a Marist priest, received in the Basilica of Our Lady of Lyons what he called the “grace of Fourvière.” These are his words:

- 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. The small amount of devotion shown toward the Blessed Sacrament...so much indifference and lack of devotion.

Father Eymard was already beginning to believe that priests and laity alike were missing out on appreciating or experiencing the riches of God’s love that Jesus in the Eucharist made available to them. He approached his superior general, Father Jean-Claude Colin, and asked for permission to write a eucharistic rule for the Third Order of Mary, of which he was then the director. Father Colin asked him not to do that. As we look back, we see how Father Eymard was already seeing a new kind of charism, one that led him to believe that God was calling him to found a new religious community, one devoted to the Eucharist.



In April 1853, Father Eymard received yet another “grace,” the “gift of self.” These are his words:

During thanksgiving at 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.

Father Eymard went to Paris to make a retreat and discern the will of God for him. He wrote 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 bishop)...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.

At Father Eymard’s meeting with Archbishop Sibour, the prelate at first was not inclined to grant him permission to found a new religious community, thinking that this would be another congregation dedicated to adoration alone. But once Father Eymard explained that *his* congregation would also work for the First Communion of adults and set the fire of the Eucharist ablaze to the four corners of France, beginning with Paris, the face of the archbishop unexpectedly lit up. Now that he understood his project, his opinion was completely changed and he approved Father Eymard’s founding of a new community of religious dedicated to an apostolic eucharistic spirituality.

As we read in Father Bernier’s article in Session 2, in 1995 Pope Saint John Paul II said in the decree elevating Saint Peter Julian Eymard on the universal church liturgical calendar to an optional memorial for August 2 (from the previous general church calendar of August 1):

He truly deserves to be called an outstanding apostle of the Eucharist. In fact, his mission in the church consisted in promoting the centrality of the eucharistic mystery in the whole life of the Christian community.

### 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

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 the Lord.

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

#### 4. Bible Text: Luke 24:29–35

#### 5. Conversation – share your story

- Father Eymard exhorted his followers to be an “apostle of the divine Eucharist.” The word “apostle” comes from the Latin and Greek meaning a “messenger” or the verb form, “to send off.” Our common understanding as Catholic Christians is this: to be an apostle is to be chosen or called to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. How do you experience this sense of “call” or sense of mission to “spread the *good news*” of the “divine Eucharist?”
- Legend has it that Saint Francis of Assisi allegedly taught, “Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.” As associates in the Eymardian family, we are called to proclaim the good news celebrated at Mass and internalized at prayer in the presence of the Eucharist - or in our “inner room” (Matthew 5:6). What does this mean for you? Is there a story you can share that speaks to some loving action you took as a result of a Mass or prayer experience?

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## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

- *A Zealous Apostle of the Eucharist* by Father Flavio Fumagalli, SSS.

### Saint Peter Julian Eymard – The Apostle of the Eucharist – Key Points

- Placing the Eucharist at the center of his life, Saint Peter Julian Eymard left us an example of an interior life that was consumed in apostolic zeal: *“responding to the hungers of the human family with the riches of God’s love manifested in the Eucharist.”*
- Saint Peter Julian Eymard is most associated with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Yet his life as a religious was very apostolic, serving the poor on the outskirts of Paris, priests in difficulty, and in the work of preparing adults and young people for the reception of First Communion.
- Saint Peter Julian Eymard’s vision of the Eucharist focuses on the presence of the person of the Lord in the Eucharist. While emphasizing this notion, Father Eymard believed that this presence is the source of a dynamism that is related to a mission, an active apostolate in service to others.

## Reading

### *A Zealous Apostle of the Eucharist* by Father Flavio Fumagalli, SSS

Peter Julian Eymard, born at La Mure d’Isère, France, on February 4, 1811, was baptized on the following day. After some family and vocational difficulties, he eventually entered the diocesan seminary of Grenoble and in 1834 was ordained a priest. In 1839, after a number of years of zealous pastoral ministry, he began an experience of religious life, entering the newly formed Society of Mary (Marists) at Lyons. In a short time, he gained the confidence of the founder, Father Jean-Claude Colin, who entrusted him with various important responsibilities.

At the same time, his search for the will of God continued and led him to direct his life more and more toward the Eucharist, for which he wanted to achieve something exceptional. A significant point in this search was reached when he underwent a spiritual experience at the sanctuary of Fourvière in Lyons in January 1851. While praying there he was “profoundly moved” by the thought of the spiritual abandonment in which the secular priests were living, of the lack of formation for the laity, of the little devotion there was toward the Blessed Sacrament, and of the sacrileges committed against the Eucharist. As a result, he decided to form a third order of men dedicated to reparatory adoration. In the years that followed, this would evolve into the definitive idea of establishing a religious congregation entirely dedicated to the worship and apostolate of the Eucharist.

Not being able to carry out this work from within the Marists, Father Eymard left the institute and came to Paris where, on May 13, 1856, he founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. The newly formed religious institute for men immediately received the approbation of Archbishop Sibour and later the blessing and the definitive approbation of Pope Pius IX (1863).

The work began under somewhat poor conditions in some premises situated on rue d’Enfer where, on the feast of the Epiphany in 1857, the foundation was officially inaugurated with solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Again in Paris, in 1858, Father Eymard, with the help of Marguerite Guillot, founded the Congregation of the Servants of

the Blessed Sacrament. In 1859, he opened a second community and placed in charge of it his first companion, Father Raymond de Cuers. A third foundation was established at Angers, then two others in Brussels and a formation house for the novitiate at Saint Maurice in the diocese of Versailles.

In the meantime, these years of “eucharistic” life saw Father Eymard involved in serving the poor on the outskirts of Paris and priests in difficulty, in the work of First Communion of adults, and in many and various preaching commitments centered particularly on the Eucharist. Furthermore, certain initiatives which began or developed after his death can be traced back to his eucharistic activity, as for example, the Eucharistic Fraternity for the laity, the Association of Priest Adorers inspired by his concern for priests, and international eucharistic congresses.

Worn out by his responsibilities as first Superior General, and marked by trials of every kind, Peter Julian died at the place where he was born at only 57 years of age on August 1, 1868. Beatified by Pius XI in 1925, he was proclaimed a saint by Pope Saint John XXIII on December 9, 1962, at the conclusion of the first session of the Second Vatican Council. Exactly 33 years later, on December 9, 1995, his feast day was elevated on the general Roman liturgical calendar, presented to the whole church as an apostle of the Eucharist.

The life and activity of Peter Julian Eymard were entirely centered on the mystery of the Eucharist. Initially, he approached it with the theology of his time, stressing particularly the real presence. Nevertheless, he was able gradually to free himself from the devotional and reparatory aspect with which the eucharistic piety of his age was almost exclusively concerned, and he arrived at the point of declaring the Eucharist to be the center of the life of the church and society: “No other center than Jesus eucharistic.”

### **His Vision of the Eucharist**

“The Blessed Sacrament has always been supreme,” he wrote in his last personal retreat, thus characterizing in an incisive way the form of Christian life he proposed. At the center stands the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Faithful to post-Tridentine theology, Eymard strongly emphasized the fact of this presence and its unique character: the Eucharist is the person of the Lord. This gave rise to the concise affirmations with which he expressed his faith: “The Holy Eucharist is Jesus past, present, and future. ... It is Jesus sacramentalized. ... Blessed is the soul that knows how to find Jesus in the divine Eucharist, and in Jesus Hostia everything else.”

However, while emphasizing this “personalist” aspect, Father Eymard understood that this presence is the source of a dynamism, that it is related to a mission: “The grace of the apostolate: faith in Jesus. Jesus is there, therefore to him, through him, in him.” This faith in the Eucharist is nourished by meditation on the word of God. Adoration, which he proposed as the particular type of prayer for his religious and, in a general way, for the faithful, is a means of allowing ourselves to become penetrated by the love of Christ. This prayer takes its inspiration from the Mass. For this reason, he proposed to his religious that they pray according to the method of the “four ends of the eucharistic sacrifice” with the purpose of “actualizing, as it were, all the mysteries of our Lord Jesus Christ in the most eminent worship of the Holy Eucharist,” in attentiveness and docility to the Holy Spirit in order to “advance in recollection and in the virtue of holy love at the feet of the Lord” (cf. *Constitutions* 16-17). Therefore, far from being sufficient by itself, adoration tends toward sacramental Communion.

### **The Nourishment of Daily Life**

Eymard was a tireless promoter of frequent Communion. In a beautiful text of 1863, he clearly expresses the central role of the Eucharist:

Convinced that the sacrifice of the Holy Mass and Communion in the body of the Lord are the living source and

the aim of the whole of religion, each one has the duty to direct his piety...virtue...[and] love, so that these may become means that will allow him to reach this goal: the worthy celebration and the faithful reception of these divine mysteries.

Eymard broke with the practice of his time in which, under the pretext of respect for the sacrament, many pastors prevented the faithful from approaching the eucharistic table. This is how he expressed himself in one of his letters:

Whoever wants to persevere, let him receive our Lord. He is the bread that will nourish your failing strength, that will sustain you. The church wants it this way. [It] encourages daily Communion: as a witness to this we have the Council of Trent. Someone will say that we need to be very prudent. ... But our reply to that would be: this nourishment, if taken at very long intervals, would have to be considered as an extraordinary food. Therefore, where is the ordinary nourishment that is meant to sustain me each and every day?

Communion ought to become the pivot of the Christian life: “Holy Communion should be, above all, the aim of Christian life. ... Every pious exercise that does not have some relationship with Holy Communion is not directed toward its main goal.” To receive the Eucharist in Communion fruitfully is an action that changes one’s life. “Our Lord comes to us sacramentally in order to live there spiritually.” That is what he wrote in notes he made during the *Great Retreat of Rome* (1865). And a few months before his death, he wrote:

[The one] who does not receive Holy Communion has only a speculative knowledge. [You know] only the terms, the words, the theories, [but] is ignorant of what they signify....But [the one] who receives Holy Communion, while previously had just an idea of God, now...sees...and recognizes [God] at Holy Mass.

### **The Source of a New World**

“A purely contemplative life cannot be fully eucharistic: the fire has a flame.” Thus wrote Eymard in 1861. An adorer, he was also an impassioned apostle of the Eucharist and he sketched out ways of glorifying this mystery. The basic lines of his activity and teaching can be summarized in the following way.

Above all, a renewal of Christian life. It is not just a question of combating ignorance or indifference, but rather, and above all, of regenerating the Christian life which becomes lost in the middle of a thousand practices and devotions that forget the essentials. In the preliminary draft of the Directory of the lay Fraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, he lays down his principle:

“[We are] love like his divine prototype. Just as [God] is love, so [God] is life.” And he explains that “every love has a beginning, a center, a goal.” From this principle, Eymard draws a whole pedagogy for the spiritual life:

In order that the devout soul become stronger and grow in the life of Jesus Christ, it is necessary first of all to nourish it with his divine truth and the goodness of his love, so that it may proceed from light to love, and from love to virtue.

The religious institutes founded by him are called to live that spirit of love of which the Eucharist is the sacrament. “This eucharistic love of Jesus should therefore be for all our religious the supreme law of their virtue, the object of their zeal, and the distinctive mark of their holiness,” he wrote in the Constitutions. In a word, a community shaped by love. In the same way, he conceived the fraternity as a group of lay people who unite adoration and apostolic commitment. For this reason, he created centers not only close to his religious communities but also in numerous parishes. At times, he seems to have had thoughts of having some members who, for the purpose of leading a more eucharistic life, would form a family community in the world, like a small religious cenacle.

The ideal that he confided to his spiritual children was “to set the four corners of the world on fire with eucharistic love.” And he exhorted his religious, in the Constitutions, “that our Lord Jesus Christ be always adored in the Blessed Sacrament and glorified socially throughout the world.”

This is the meaning of the expression “the reign of the Eucharist” which appears frequently in the writings of Eymard. Thus, in an article entitled “The Century of the Eucharist,” written in 1864 for the review *Le Tres Saint-Sacrement*, Peter Julian wrote:

The great evil of our time is that people do not go to Jesus Christ as to their very Savior and God. They abandon the only foundation, the only law, the only grace of salvation. ... What is to be done then? We must return to the fountain of life, and not just to the historical Jesus nor to the Jesus glorified in heaven, but rather to Jesus in the Eucharist. It is necessary to bring him out from the shadows so that he can once again take his place at the head of Christian society. ... May the reign of the Eucharist increase. ... *Adveniat regnum tuum* [Your kingdom come].

In concluding, here is a text from Father Eymard, which the Liturgy of the Hours, Office of Readings (first edition) offers us:

The Eucharist is the life of the people. The Eucharist gives them a center of life. All can come together without the barriers of race or language in order to celebrate the feast days of the church. It gives them a law of life, that of charity, of which it is the source; thus it forges between them a common bond, a Christian kinship. All eat the same bread, all are table companions of Jesus Christ who supernaturally creates among them a feeling of togetherness. Read the Acts of the Apostles. It states that the whole community of the first Christians, converted Jews and baptized pagans, belonging to different regions, “had but one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). Why? Because they were attentive to the teaching of the apostles and faithful in sharing in the breaking of the bread (Acts 2:42).

Yes, the Eucharist is the life of souls and of societies, just as the sun is the life of the body and of the earth. Without the sun, the earth would be sterile; it is the sun which makes it fertile, renders it beautiful and rich; it is the sun which provides agility, strength, and beauty to the body. In the face of these amazing effects, it is not astonishing that the pagans should have adored it as the God of the world. In actual fact, the sun obeys a supreme Sun, the divine Word, Jesus Christ, who illumines everyone coming into this world and who, through the Eucharist, sacrament of life, acts in person in the very depths of souls in order to form Christian families and peoples. Oh how happy, a thousand times happy, is the faithful soul who has found this treasure, who goes to drink at this fountain of living water, who often eats this bread of eternal life!

Christian society is also a family. The link among its members is Jesus Christ. He is the head of the household who has prepared the family table. He is the head, Jesus Christ, who celebrated Christian togetherness at the supper; he called his apostles *filioli*, my little children, and he commanded them to love one another as he had loved them.

At the holy table, we are all children who receive the same nourishment, and Paul draws out the consequence of this, that is, that we form but one family, one same body, because we all share in the same bread, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor 10:16-17). Lastly, the Eucharist gives Christian society the strength to observe the law of honor, and to practice charity toward one's neighbor. Jesus Christ wants everyone to honor and love his brothers and sisters. For this reason, he identifies himself with them: “What you do to the least of mine, you do to me” (Mt 25:40); and he gives himself to each one of them in Communion.

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## 7. Closing Prayer Service

**Instructions:** *If possible, this service may take place in a chapel, with some time of prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament or a lengthy period of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament if a host was consecrated for prayer on this day from a previous Eucharist (Mass).*

**Song (optional):** Bread of Life or Table of Plenty

**Reading:** Luke 24:29–35

### Silent Prayer

#### Litany of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Leader:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, hear us.

God, the Father of heaven.

God, the Son, redeemer of the world.

God, the Holy Spirit.

Holy Trinity, one God.

Holy Mary, mother of God.

All:

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ, graciously hear us.**

**Have mercy on us.**

**Have mercy on us.**

**Have mercy on us.**

**Have mercy on us.**

**Pray for us.**

Leader:

Saint Peter Julian, apostle of the Eucharist.

Saint Peter Julian, priest of the Eucharist.

Saint Peter Julian, adorer of the Eucharist.

Saint Peter Julian, adorer in spirit and in truth.

Saint Peter Julian, lover of the Eucharist.

Saint Peter Julian, servant of the Eucharist.

Saint Peter Julian, teacher of the Eucharist.

Saint Peter Julian, disciple of Christ.

Saint Peter Julian, follower of Christ.

Saint Peter Julian, man of hope.

Saint Peter Julian, man of integrity.

Saint Peter Julian, man of the interior life.

Saint Peter Julian, man of contemplation.

Saint Peter Julian, model of adoration.

Saint Peter Julian, model of thanksgiving.

Saint Peter Julian, model of reparation.

Saint Peter Julian, model of intercession.

Saint Peter Julian, giver of self.

Saint Peter Julian, trusting in providence.

Saint Peter Julian, caring for priests.

Saint Peter Julian, caring for people.

Saint Peter Julian, caring for the poor.

All:

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

**Teach and inspire us.**

Saint Peter Julian, caring for the church.  
Saint Peter Julian, minister of the word.  
Saint Peter Julian, minister of the sacrament.  
Saint Peter Julian founder of the three branches  
of the Eymardian family.  
Saint Peter Julian, servant of Mary.

**Teach and inspire us.**  
**Teach and inspire us.**  
**Teach and inspire us.**  
**Teach and inspire us.**  
**Teach and inspire us.**

Leader: Pray for us Saint Peter Julian

ALL: **That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.**

### **Pause for Reflection**

Leader: Let us pray:

ALL: **LORD our God,  
Christ entrust your most wonderful gift of the Eucharist  
to the church as a memorial for all time.  
May we follow the example  
of Saint Peter Julian Eymard  
in the worship of so great a mystery,  
and spend our lives  
in the sharing of your love.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

*[Benediction if a cleric is present]*

**Closing Song (optional):** I Am the Bread of Life

## **8. Additional Reading Material**

- Camiré, Bernard, SSS. *The Eucharist and Saint Peter Julian Eymard*. Emmanuel Publishing, 2011.
- Fernandez, Erasto, SSS. *A Year with Eymard*. R.R. Graphics, For the Asian Conference, 2009.
- Pelletier, Norman, SSS. *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late*, Emmanuel Publishing, 1992 2002 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).



## Session 5

# The Eucharist as the Center of Our Life

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

*Rule of Life for Associates 6a*

## The Eucharist as the Center of Our Life

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### 1. Opening Prayer

Leader: The church draws her life from Christ in the Eucharist; by him she is fed and by him she is enlightened.  
**/R. Give us this day our daily bread.**

Leader: The Eucharist, as Christ's saving presence in the community of the faithful and its spiritual food, is the most precious possession which the church can have in her journey through history. **/R.**

Leader: The Eucharist is a true banquet, in which Christ offers himself as our nourishment. This is no metaphorical food: "My flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." **/R.**

Leader: Through our communion in his body and blood, Christ also grants us his Spirit. Whoever eats it with faith, eats Fire and Spirit. "Take and eat this, all of you, and eat with it the Holy Spirit. For it is truly my body and whoever eats it will have eternal life." **/R.**

Leader: Those who feed on Christ in the Eucharist need not wait until the hereafter to receive eternal life; they already possess it on earth, as the first-fruits of a future fullness. **/R.**

Leader: The Lord wished to remain with us in the Eucharist, making his presence in meal and sacrifice the promise of a humanity renewed by his love. **/R.**

Leader: All who take part in the Eucharist must be committed to changing their lives and making them in a certain way completely eucharistic. **/R.**

Leader: In the humble signs of bread and wine, changed into his body and blood, Christ walks beside us as our strength and our food for the journey, and enables us to become witnesses of hope. **/R.**  
(Taken from the encyclical letter *Ecclesia De Eucharistia*)

**Scripture:** John 15: 1 – 11 - I am the Vine, you are the branches

Leader: Let us pray.

All: **Apart from you we wither, Oh source of all life.  
You tend your vine; prune it so that it may bear more fruit.  
As grapes on the vine may we ripen to become the wine  
offered, in union with You, to the glory of God the Father.  
Keep us in your love always. May our lives sacrament your  
real presence to others and feed the hungers of their hearts.  
In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**

## 2. Introduction to the Theme

From his childhood, Father Eymard felt attracted to the Eucharist. When he began to see in this sacrament a special vocation that was calling him, he used to formulate this mission first with words and images that he inherited from his theological and spiritual formation. As time went on, he ploughed through a spirituality of reparation and allowed himself to be touched by the love of Christ, who, in the Eucharist, gives himself for the life of the world. He was one of the first of his time to recognize in this sacrament the greatest proof of the love with which the Lord loved us and that, in this sacrament, he left us the sign of the new and eternal covenant. Once this profound truth is understood, everything changes. The Eucharist becomes the source of life, of joy, of hope, and of strength. And Father Eymard does not spare himself to introduce his contemporaries into this mystery of love. His mission: place the Eucharist at the center of Christian life like the shining rays of a love without limit and without reserve.

The *Rule of Life for Associates 2* captures this “mission” from Saint Eymard and hearkens back to the theme of our Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament Formation Program Session 3 in this way:

Our ideal is to live the mystery of the Eucharist fully and to make known its meaning, so that Christ’s reign may come and the glory of God may be revealed to the world. In response to our baptismal vocation we seek to witness to Christ’s presence at the crossroads of society and, starting from the Eucharist, we strive to influence our world in the light of this mystery, source and summit of all evangelizing.

## 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

I am writing to return my New Year’s wishes to you.

. . . May Jesus be your divine center: that is my whole wish for you; a total and all-embracing center – that is, the source of your thoughts and desires, the impulse of your actions, the basis of your love, the measure of your sacrifices.

To Mme. Antoinette de Grandville  
December 26, 1867

The Eucharist is the life of the people. The Eucharist provides them with a center for their lives. Everyone can gather without the barriers of race or language . . . The Eucharist gives them a law to live by, the law of love of which it is the source; it creates a bond among them, one Christian family. They all eat the same bread; everyone is a guest of Jesus Christ who fashions a spiritual bond among them.

*The Real Presence*, Vol. 1 (French Ed., p. 270)

## 4. Bible Text: John 4:31-34

## 5. Conversation – share your story

- Saint Peter Julian Eymard discovered in the Eucharist the “shining rays of love without limit and without reserve.” How do *you* experience the love of Jesus when you celebrate the Eucharist.
- At the Second Vatican Council, the bishops of the world voted and implemented the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum concilium)* which stated in paragraphs 10 and 14 that the liturgy is the “summit” and “source” of the spiritual and worship life of a Christian. Describe how the Eucharist is the “summit and source” (center) of *your* life, your Christian spirituality.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following readings

- Excerpts from *Emmanuel* article by Joel Giallanza, CSC.

## The Eucharist as the Center of our Life – Key Points

- Saint Peter Julian Eymard was captivated by the love of God manifest in and through the Eucharist, and it is this unconditional love that has the power to conquer the evils of the world. Every celebration of the Eucharist has the power to free us from sin and selfishness to live in greater unity and love of others.

- Our understanding and celebration of the Eucharist has changed according to paradigm shifts taking place within the church. All members of the Church have proper duties to fulfill by virtue of baptism. We are a community of believers whose words and actions influence others in the witness of our faith.
- A eucharistic life is oriented to the person of Jesus who is with us as we carry on the work of the Gospel in bringing the message of God's love to transform the world in which we live.
- Saint Peter Julian Eymard's followers were to become disciples and apostles of the Eucharist; to be bonded in a communion of love with one another; and to draw people to the Eucharist through lives of Christian service that flow from the love of God. Father Eymard's theology of the Eucharist had an energy that was transforming of lives and society.
- Greater emphasis is now placed on the social dimension of the Eucharist as the work of the church. Jesus in the Gospels speaks of the work the Father has given him to accomplish. He entrusts the Eucharist to the church as the means to carry out the work of our salvation.

## Readings

### ***The Eucharistic Life: A Reflection by Joel Giallanza, CSC***

*Brother Joel is a member of the Moreau Province of the Congregation of Holy Cross and the author of several books. He served as administrative assistant to the provincial of the Moreau Province and is also a spiritual director who offers retreats on continuing formation and the spiritual life.*

"I am the bread of Life" (Jn 6:35). From the time Jesus first proclaimed this truth more than two thousand years ago, even to our own day, the Eucharist has been associated with life. It is the source of the spiritual life and the sustenance for that life; it is a promise of eternal life and the pathway to that life; it is a guide to union with Jesus and a guarantee that the promise of that union will be fulfilled. Even with these rich designations, the Eucharist is yet more. Beyond being intimately associated with life, the Eucharist is a way of life. Thus, we can speak of a eucharistic spirituality and way of life.

For the Christian dimension of our life, the usual standards set by society must be adjusted dramatically, for there can be but one standard, Jesus Christ. The eucharistic life is oriented to the person of Jesus; he is the point of reference we use to position our progress in life. Such an orientation challenges us to live so that our everyday attitudes and actions will point to Jesus, without compromise, as the unchanged meaning in our life and the unaltered direction in which we intend and desire to go.

By etymology, the word "orientation" is rooted in terms meaning *to move* and *to be*. We must move if we want to be one with Jesus. To be stationary is to stagnate. We must move toward Jesus if we truly desire union with him. At the same time, we must move away from whatever would hinder that union. This double movement is the work of a lifetime. As we take up that work, only then can we claim to be alive in Jesus, to live in union with him, and to root our identity in him. This is the eucharistic life.

This orientation toward Jesus requires faith in response to grace. It is not solely a matter of human choice; first of all, it is sensitivity to God's work and a willingness to live in cooperation with that work. Just as the life of the church and all its activities are "bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it," so too must it be with our personal lives.

There is an asceticism inherent in this orientation. The “whole spiritual good of the church” is contained in the Eucharist, in Jesus. That must be true also for us as individuals. Claiming that Jesus is our whole spiritual good requires that we reconsider all our other goods accordingly. That reevaluation will call us to self-denial and to the realignment of our priorities in life so we can assure the primacy of Jesus in all we do. This is the asceticism and orientation necessary for maintaining the eucharistic life.

### **A Life of Faith**

The eucharistic life is a celebration of faith. Faith enables us to orient ourselves toward Jesus even in the midst of so many realities competing for our time and energy and attention. And we should never underestimate the ferocity of that competition. We need reflect only briefly on the influence of contemporary society and culture to recognize the powerful forces of materialism that vie for our allegiance. Our orientation toward Jesus must be more than simply a wish, it must be a firm decision supported by our attitudes and actions every day. Such is the eucharistic life.

Life does not fare well in mediocrity. Life that does not at least strive to reach the fullness of its potential will be a life only half-lived. We are called to live with passion, with an intensity that reflects our conviction about the directions we are taking, the decisions we are making, and the values that are shaping our everyday tasks and responsibilities. Such passion and intensity provide us with a sense of progress, an awareness that our efforts are making a difference, and an insight into the extent and worth of our capabilities.

For the Christian dimension of our life such passion and intensity are evident in all that we do to promote the mission and proclaim the message of Jesus. He alone is the culmination of our life, he alone paves the way to our union with one another and, ultimately, with God. The eucharistic life reaches its pinnacle in Jesus. Regardless of the activity or work in which we are engaged, Jesus must always be directly in our line of vision so we do not lose perspective on what is most valuable for our life. We must choose to live in a way so our actions will witness to the truth that Jesus is the greatest good in our life, the deepest of our relationships, and the culmination of all our longings.

The word culmination traces its roots to terms that mean *to raise up* and *to be prominent*. If we raise our hearts to God, and remain fixed on God, then our lives will make it clear that Jesus has prominence in our life, above all else. This is the eucharistic life.

To live so that Jesus is truly the culmination of our very existence requires love. Only by love can we have the passion and intensity necessary to sustain a relationship with Jesus. Only with love can we embrace the intimate union to which he calls us. Just as the “Eucharist is the efficacious sign and sublime cause of that communion in the divine life and that unity of the People of God by which the church is kept in being,” so love gives us a share in that divine life and unity which keep us in existence as followers of Jesus.

Acknowledging and accepting that our life has a culmination point outside ourselves, beyond the boundaries of the personal and comfortable world we have created, demands selflessness and detachment. We must admit that we are not completely self-sufficient. And we must recognize that our longings can reach well beyond the limits of our own resources. We have to set aside self and redirect our energies toward union with Jesus. That union must become and remain our highest priority. This selflessness and detachment confirm our willingness to go beyond what our preferences can provide, and they affirm our desire for the fullness of life and love extended to us in the Eucharist.

### **A Life of Love**

The eucharistic life is a celebration of love. If the Eucharist is to be and to remain, for our whole life, “the culmination both of God’s action...and the worship (we) offer,” then we must be committed to cooperating with that action and to

remaining faithful in our worship. This is a commitment born of love and sustained by love; our cooperation and fidelity will be the expressions of our love for God and our desire for union with Jesus. Nothing less than living in love is at the very heart of the eucharistic life.

Life flourishes when it is striving to reach the horizons that open before it. Life draws energy from that effort and refreshes its determination to continue on its way. This is more than the process of setting goals and then working to achieve them. It engages our whole life. So, we can begin living as if the goal has been reached, not by way of complacency, but by the conviction that we will complete the journey we have begun.

For the Christian dimension of our life, that conviction expresses a genuine anticipation. We know by faith that the journey's end is true, that God's promises will be fulfilled, and that Jesus continues to be present and active among us. Thus we can live, even now, in celebration of those promises. This is the wonderful mystery of the Eucharist, we expect to be united with God for we have the sure promise of that; the Eucharist enables us to anticipate that union already.

Anticipation requires hope, a firm conviction that the promises we have received will not only be realized but are worthy of living even now. Our union with one another, our union with God, peace within our hearts, and peace among all people, must be more than distant dreams that we wish would be realized some day in the far-off future. Hope challenges us to make every effort to bring about that union and peace now in our daily lives. Hope that is not willing to act will never be fulfilled.

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## 7. Closing Prayer

*(Proclaim as alternate stanzas)*

Gracious God, all creation celebrates your empowering presence.  
All your creatures hunger for the new life you promise.  
In the humanity of Jesus you reveal the culmination of creation,  
the evolutionary fulfillment of many eons,  
the invitation to wholeness and the promise of new life.

In the power of the creative Spirit, Jesus lived life to the full.  
We, too, are blessed in the power of that same Spirit  
which we now invoke upon our gifts of bread and wine,  
that they may become food, which will sustain us  
into the fullness of life.

While sharing a feast at table, Jesus took bread,  
blessed you, God of all good gifts.  
Jesus broke the bread, shared it among friends.  
Then pouring out the cup to fulfill our deepest thirst,  
Jesus gave thanks and shared it with those at table  
to drink fully of his life and love.

As a Christian people, we inherit a story of liberation and new life.  
We remember the blessings of ages past, and we look forward in hope,  
knowing that you, our wise and faithful God,  
will continue to empower us in our earthly mission.

We unite in thought and prayer with all who are  
weighed down by oppression, trapped in poverty,  
victimized by violence and exploitation.  
We grieve for all who will never reach their full potential,  
because of the greed perpetuated by unjust systems.

Bless us, O God of liberation, to work for the freedom of all,  
to bring about a world where justice can reign and love can flourish.  
In the fellowship of our faith, with all the living and those gone before us,  
confirm our hearts in this resolve. May we never betray that fullness of life to which you invite all people  
who share the food of everlasting life.

Amen.

**Closing Song (optional):** Christ Be Our Light or Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Bernier, Paul, SSS. *Eucharist: Celebrating Its Rhythms in Our Lives*. Ave Maria Press, 1993.
- Benedict XVI. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist, *Sacramentum Caritatis* (22 February 2007) Online: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20070222\\_sacramentum-caritatis\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis_en.html).
- Paul VI. *Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)*, 4 December 1963: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html).





## Session 6

# Table of the Word

We actively and joyfully participate in the banquet of the risen Christ on the Lord's Day, on feast days, and whenever possible, even on weekdays. We nourish our faith at the table of the word of God, especially through the daily liturgical readings.

*Rule of Life for Associates 7b*

## Table of the Word

**Opening Song (optional):** Praise to You O Christ Our Savior or Your Words Are Spirit & Life

### 1. Opening Prayer

All:       **“Your word, Lord, is founded on truth,  
your decrees are eternal” (Ps. 119:160).  
During his entire life,  
Father 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, O Lord.**

*[Before reading the word of God, a candle is lit before a displayed Bible.]*

**Scripture Reading:** Luke 6:46-49

*[Pause for a moment and ask if anyone has a reflection they would like to share about the reading.]*

**Prayer:** *(Proclaim as alternate stanzas)*

Word of God, made flesh to dwell among us,  
there is a famine on earth, “not a famine of bread,”  
nor a thirst for water, but a hunger to hear the words of God.

No one can live on bread alone, our real hunger is for  
“every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”  
For without the truth of God’s word people continue to perish.  
They are devoured by ignorance and injustice.

You feed us daily at the table of your word.  
And, You send us forth,  
“to proclaim the good news to the poor...  
and liberty to captives...  
to announce a year of favor from the Lord.”

Spirit of God, enflame our hearts to be eucharistic evangelizers.  
That nourished on your word we may be the food of your love  
to help satisfy the hungers of those around us. For many of them  
we may be the only way they have to encounter your living Word. Amen.

Leader:

Consider making a place at your table for the word of God. The presence of a well-read Bible can turn a table into an altar. You may enjoy the random opening of the Bible to read a verse or two when you are about to eat. Try to think of ways to have a short bit of scripture as the daily bread you pray for when you pray the Lord's Prayer.

## 2. 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.

"The word of God calls us and gathers us together; it accompanies us as a lamp for our steps" (Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament *Rule of Life* 6). Father Paul Bernier, SSS, reminds us that the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist form but one act of worship. Father Frank O'Dea, SSS reminds us from the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* that each of these parts of the Mass "has its own 'table.'" The "table" for the Liturgy of the Word is the lectern where the readings are proclaimed and then commented on during the homily.

"It took Vatican II to remind us that there were two parts of the Mass, and that both of them were essential . . ." (Bernier, *Emmanuel*, March/April 2011). Both of them share equal importance as constitutive elements of what it means to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Father Bernier 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" (p. 112 of his article).

## 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

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 kind of voice to make it heard. But then, the word becomes living, afire from the heart and mouth of the priest, *sermo enim Dei vivus et efficax* (the Word of God living and effective). It speaks through the senses at once, to the mind of man, and goes to the very depth of his soul.

1838 *The Word of God* (OC IX, 94)

[Jesus] was the Word of the Father, [.....] He spoke it with authority, for it was meant to sanctify the world, to create it anew in the light of truth, to rekindle it in the fire of love, and to judge it one day. "*Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us on the road?*" Luke 24:32.

The words of Jesus Christ were the rays of the sun of truth. '*I am the light of the world.*' John 6:63. They were light in the midst of darkness. That is what I must be for my brothers and neighbors, *Verbum Christi*, the word of Christ.

Retreat of Rome  
February 24, 1865

## 4. Bible Texts: Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 119:105

## 5. Conversation – share your story

- It is necessary for us to prepare ourselves to receive the word of God. Please share ways in which you prepare yourself for the Sunday liturgy and in particular for hearing the Word of God.
- How the Scriptures have a place in your daily life? What are ways you have found to be helpful in deepening the message of the scriptures in your everyday life?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

**6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading**

- Excerpt from *Emmanuel* article by Father Paul Bernier, SSS

## Table of the Word – Key Points

- The Scriptures both inform us about God’s presence and action in time and transform us as we are reshaped by God’s word into a faith community whose lives are conformed to live as members of the body of Christ.
- The message of the Scripture brings comfort and consolation when needed just as it challenges and confronts

us out of our complacency toward continual conversion.

- Both elements of our worship, word and sacrament, are integral: the word proclaimed and preached, the Eucharist offered as a living sacrifice of praise are essential to the transformation of our lives and our world.
- Unfortunately few people take the time to pray the scriptures and prepare for the reception of God's word. Personal and communal *lectio divina* helps us to receive the Word into our hearts and put it into action, *actio divina* in our daily lives.
- The Eucharist remains incomplete if we fail to live as disciples of the word and show it forth through our lives. The Gospel is a living word made flesh in our lives.

## Reading

### *Liturgy of the Word* by Paul Bernier, SSS

*The Liturgy of the Word and Liturgy of the Eucharist form but one act of worship. Why is it only recently that we have given them equal importance as constitutive elements of what it means to celebrate the Lord's Supper? Here is a portion of Father Paul's article from Emmanuel Magazine.*

It took Vatican II to remind us that there were 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.

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 Th 2:13). As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes, "For this reason, the church has always venerated the Scriptures as she venerates the Lord's body. She never ceases to present to the faithful the bread of life, taken from the one table of God's word and Christ's body" (103). 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).

We might summarize the general purpose of the Liturgy of the Word under three headings. It is meant to be informative, transformative, and to be unitive.

1. The informative function of the Liturgy of the Word. Being steeped in the knowledge of the truths contained in the Scriptures tells who we are as God's people. Our baptism has incorporated us into a people, indeed a people born from the side of Christ as he hung on the cross. As such our relationship with God is mediated through the living experience of that people and their understanding of Christ and of God. The Bible is a record of the living faith of those who have gone before us. The new birth we have experienced in baptism has made us ecclesial beings.

The Eucharist we celebrate is, first of all, an assembly of people, a community, a whole network of relations. The deeper awareness of this reality enables us to see and define ourselves not in terms of biology, nationality, race, or profession,

but in terms of the relationship that we have with each other and with Christ. It is in the telling and retelling of our stories, as contained in the Scriptures, that we can come to see ourselves as part of salvation history, as members of a covenant people, in relationship with one another. These stories also engender a particular way of thinking, as we come to assimilate the values and ideals of Christ.

Awareness of both the Old and New Testaments also enables us to see people growing in their understanding of God, and at the same time to see the progressive unfolding of God's plan for the human race. We need only compare our understanding of God with that of the ancient Egyptians or Greeks, or any pagan culture, to see the difference that biblical revelation makes. Unlike gods created in our own image and likeness, with all the human faults and foibles of which we are only too aware, ours is a revelation of a God who wants us to know that it is we who were created in God's image and likeness, that he is a God who cares, who loves us evenly, and who was willing to enter our world to save us from ourselves. How much there is to learn from the word of the Lord!

2. The transformative aspect of the Liturgy of the Word. The purpose of the Liturgy of the Word is not simply to give us a deeper knowledge of who we are, and who God is in our lives. It is not mainly to make us feel good that we are loved by God and that he desires only to grace us with his love. It is to make us be good, to make us more Christ-like in our thoughts and actions. It is to rob us of our complacency, of our being too comfortable in our relationship with God. It is too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that because we pray, celebrate the Eucharist, and observe the commandments, we are pleasing to God, that we have, in a sense, earned his favor, and that we have nothing more to do to be pleasing to God.

Religious practice can easily deaden one to the ethical implications of being Christian. Long before Christ, even, the prophets condemned religious practice that was devoid of concern for the poor, or that masked lives of injustice and exploitation (cf. Is 1:11-20; 29:13-14; 58:1-8; Jer 6:20; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Jl 2:13; Mic 6:5-8). This concern for having religious practice have a concrete effect in our lives is found as well in the New Testament. Religion otherwise becomes merely a set of external practices.

The purpose of our religious practice is to challenge us to growth, not to make religion as comfortable as an old shoe. The aim is not to have a comfortable gospel, but a true one. Unless the gospel message enables us to see how God is working in us as well as in the world around us, and how God expects his children to continue the mission of his Son, we are blinding ourselves to the continual call to conversion that is at the heart of the Gospel.

3. The unitive aspect of the Liturgy of the Word. The call of the Gospel is not aimed at human perfection, or achieving nirvana here below. It is one of total transformation, so that we can truly become the body of Christ in this world. The New Testament image we have of Christ is of one who lived, loved, and died for others. To join in his Eucharist is to allow ourselves a depth of discipleship whereby we join Christ in his life of sacrificial love.

Saint Paul reminded us that as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup of Christ, we proclaim his death until he comes again (cf. 1 Cor 11:17-34). This cannot be done unless our lives are so one with his that we become extensions of his love to the world. This implies, of course, that our celebrations help us develop a deep love and intimacy with the Lord, intimacy that is symbolized explicitly in the rite of communion. Only this profound love made possible by the Holy Spirit, will prevent us from merely speaking to others about the Gospel or about God, and allow us to reflect to others our own deep experience of Christ himself.

Finally, the importance of the Liturgy of the Word and its relationship to the Liturgy of the Eucharist is based on a simple theological principle. It is that if we separate our core ritual, the Eucharist, from the scriptural matrix that gives it meaning, we risk reducing ritual to magical words and actions. The Eucharist is torn away from the matrix that gave it rise, and becomes an independent ritual—hocus pocus. The priest becomes one whose main power and responsibility is to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. The Eucharist, however, does not take place in a

vacuum. 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?

Divorcing the Liturgy of the Eucharist from the Liturgy of the Word reduces the Mass to a private devotion, whereby it is seen mainly as a way of personal sanctification, a means of grace, rather than a conscious participation in the sacrifice of Christ. The relation between word and sacrament is a symbiotic one. The sacrament is not only rooted in the word of God, the word of God presupposes the sacrament as its fulfillment; without this it can be reduced to mere doctrine.

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.

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## 7. Closing Prayer

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 everlasting life.***

Leader: The word of the Lord came to me: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you." "I know not how to speak; I am too young." The Lord answered me: "Say not, 'I am too young.' To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak."

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

Leader: Blessed are you, O Lord, I will never forget your word. Be kind to your servant that I may live, that I may keep your word. Open my eyes to see clearly the wonders of your teachings.

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

- Leader: Let the prophet who has a dream recount his dream. Let the one who has my word speak my word truthfully!  
My word is like fire, says the Lord, like a hammer shattering rocks.
- All: ***Lord, you have the words of everlasting 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 everlasting life.***
- Leader: Lord, enable your servants 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 everlasting life.***
- Leader: As they prayed, the place where they were gathered shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. The community of believers was of one heart and mind.
- All: ***Lord, you have the words of everlasting 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 everlasting life.***
- Leader: Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.”
- All: ***Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.***

**Closing Song (optional):** Rain Down or Your Words Are Spirit & Life

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Foley, Edward, OFM Cap. “Which Jesus Table? Reflections of Eucharistic Starting Points.” *Emmanuel*, March/April 2009.
- Bernier, Paul, SSS. “Saint Paul on the Eucharist (I), (II) and (III).” *Emmanuel*, January/February, May/June, July/August 2009.
- Bernier, Paul, SSS. “Reading Scripture Properly.” *Emmanuel*, March/April 2007.
- Benedict XVI. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Word of God, *Verbum Dei* (30 September 2010) Online: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/apost\\_exhortations/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_exh\\_20100930\\_verbum-domini\\_en.html#The\\_Word\\_Of\\_God\\_And\\_The\\_Church](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini_en.html#The_Word_Of_God_And_The_Church)
- O’Dea, Frank, SSS. *Eucharist: The Basic Spirituality*. An E-Book, January 28, 2011. Available free online at: [theeucharist.wordpress.com](http://theeucharist.wordpress.com)



## Session 7

# Liturgy of the Eucharist

The celebration of the memorial of the Lord is at the center of our life as individual persons and as family members. It is the starting point of our understanding of the Eucharist and the inspiration of our prayer and commitment.

*Rule of Life for Associates 7a*

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

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**Opening Song (optional):** Lord, Who at Thy First Eucharist  
or Here at This Table

### 1. Opening Prayer

*(The prayer is adapted from the Roman Missal, third edition, Eucharistic Prayer IV. The group may want to alternate stanzas or have each person take a stanza to pray.)*

It is truly right to give you thanks, truly just to give you glory,  
Father, most holy, for you are the God living and true,  
existing before all ages and abiding for all eternity,  
dwelling in unapproachable light.

Yet you, who alone are good, the source of life, have made all that is,  
so that you might fill your creatures with blessings  
and bring joy to many of them by the glory of your light.

And so, in your presence are countless hosts of Angels,  
who serve you day and night and, gazing upon the glory of your face,  
glorify you without ceasing.  
With them we, too, confess your name in exultation,  
giving voice to every creature under heaven. ...

We give you praise, Father most holy, for you are great,  
and you have fashioned all your works in wisdom and in love.  
You formed [us] in your own image and entrusted the whole world to our care,  
so that in serving you alone, the Creator,  
[we] might have dominion over all creatures.

And when through disobedience [we] had lost your friendship,  
you did not abandon [us] to the domain of death.  
For you came in mercy to the aid of all, so that those who seek might find you.

Time and again you offered them covenants  
and through the prophets taught them to look forward to salvation.  
And you so loved the world,  
Father most holy, that in the fullness of time  
you sent your Only Begotten Son to be our Savior.

Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary,  
he shared our human nature in all things but sin.  
To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation,  
to prisoners, freedom, and to the sorrowful of heart, joy.

To accomplish your plan, he gave himself up to death,  
and, rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life.  
And that we might live no longer for ourselves  
but for him who died and rose again for us.

He sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father,  
as the first fruits for those who believe,  
so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world,  
he might sanctify creation to the full.

Therefore, O Lord, we pray: may this same Holy Spirit  
graciously sanctify these offerings,  
that they may become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ  
for the celebration of this great mystery,  
which he himself left us as an eternal covenant.

For when the hour had come for him to be glorified by you, Father most holy,  
having loved his own who were in the world,  
he loved them to the end:  
and while they were at supper  
he took bread, blessed and broke it and gave it to his disciples.

In a similar way, taking the chalice filled with the fruit of the vine,  
he gave thanks, and gave the chalice to his disciples.

## 2. Introduction to the Theme

Vatican II's *Sacramentum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) informs those presiding at Mass that “more is required than the mere observance of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects” (SC, 11).

Father Paul Bernier, SSS, reminds us that Vatican II stated that the “sacraments are liturgical actions, not things,” and suggests to us in his book, *Eucharist: Celebrating Its Rhythms in Our Lives* (p. 18) that the council laid out a new vision for the celebration of the Eucharist by stating that “the full and active participation of all the people is the aim to be considered before all else” (SC, 14). An earlier translation by Walter Abbot phrased it in this way: “. . . that the faithful take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully.”

The Mass contains many elements to engage our whole selves – our minds, spirit and body (senses): gestures, song, touch, words, moments of intentional silence, objects/icons to the sacred, the use of food (bread and wine) and more. Our church documents repeatedly call for us, and forcefully challenge us, to bring our whole body into worship and allow God to engage our minds and hearts so that we are “alive with the Spirit of God to fully participate and be present.”

### 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

Nourish yourself on our Lord, on his spirit, his virtues, his evangelical truth, on the contemplation of his mysteries. Do not leave him. He said, “If you abide in me and my words abide in you, everything that you want will be done.”

To Edmee Brenier De Montmorand

May 19, 1868

A master feeds his servant: so receive Communion every day. Imagine how hard your work would be if you did not eat the bread of life! Eat in order to be able to work . . . Give him the glory of everything . . . I bless you very eucharistically in our Lord.

To Miss Adele Martel

May 29, 1868

### 4. Bible Text: John 4:23-26

### 5. Conversation – share your story

- The church calls us to be active participants in the celebration of the liturgy. What are the elements or components of the Mass that most engage your body, mind and spirit?
- Please share the things you do to put yourself into the celebration of the liturgy. Name those elements that for you make the Mass seem like a celebration.

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## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

- Excerpt from Chapter 5: Liturgy of the Eucharist from *Eucharist: Basic Spirituality* by Father Frank O’Dea, SSS (Edited by Father William Fickel, SSS)

### Liturgy of the Eucharist – Key Points

- The celebration of the eucharistic liturgy is the central action of the church’s mission in the world. The energy and attention given over to the full and active participation of all the worshippers in this prayer serves as the foundation for all of the other charitable and apostolic work in which the church engages. It is the Eucharistic Prayer which informs, inspires and nourishes the church’s work in the world. Our participation – whether as lay or ordained – is a joining in the death and resurrection of Christ in his unique memorial offered on the night he was betrayed. All are one in the body of Christ at the altar.
- In the remembering of Christ’s death and resurrection at the Eucharist, we identify ourselves with Christ and are taken into his death, to be raised up with him in his resurrection. It is by entering into this mystery of faith we discover, as followers of Jesus, our true identities, as our interior selves are filled with grace. The Eucharistic Prayer helps to build our relationship with God, with each other and with our own selves.
- The elements of the earth, our food and drink, are gifts from God and the people, and placed on the altar, to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit, imbued with the memory of Jesus’ free acceptance of his death and resurrection. This paschal sacrifice invites all people to be united in the offering of their own lives in union with the obedience of Christ to the will of the Father for the transformation of the world.

### Reading

(Edited by Father William Fickel, SSS)

Liturgy of the Eucharist from *Eucharist: Basic Spirituality* by Father Frank O’Dea, SSS

### THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

There is now a wonderful variety of Eucharistic Prayers: the four that were introduced originally with the reform of the liturgy after Vatican II, three for children, two for reconciliation, and one for Various Needs and Occasions which has four variations. It pays to be as attentive as possible to these words since they contain rich teachings for our spiritual journey. All the prayers have the following common divisions but with different wording.

### PREFACE

The Eucharistic Prayer (sometimes called the “*anaphora*”) is the central part of the Mass. It corresponds to the action of Jesus at the Last Supper, when “he gave thanks” over the bread and wine. The dialogue encourages us to lift our hearts to the Lord and to give thanks to God. In fact, the very word “Eucharist” means “thanksgiving” and this is one of the

key feelings expressed in the ritual: thanksgiving for all that God does for us, especially for the gift of Jesus his Son. We can add our own reasons for thanking God: for good health, financial security, freedom from terrorism, a democratic way of life, education, family life, good relationships, and so on.

Most prefaces begin: *“It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.”* As used in the liturgy, “preface” does not mean some kind of introduction as in the preface of a book. “Praefatio” means a proclamation *before* the assembly, that is, in the presence of the assembly, and given in a “high” tone. Sometimes it was used as the whole Eucharistic Prayer which originally was not split by the “Holy, Holy, Holy...”

## CALLING ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

There is an invocation to the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. For those interested in technical language this prayer is called the *“epiclesis.”* Activities that are outside the internal workings of the Trinity such as the creation of the world or sanctification of individuals, are attributed to the Holy Spirit, so the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is a work of the Holy Spirit. Eucharistic Prayer II calls on the Holy Spirit in this way:

*Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.*

As the priest says these words he holds his hands over the bread and wine to symbolize the coming of the Holy Spirit, the same gesture that is used for confirmation, holy orders and anointing of the sick.

Note that it is not the gesture that brings about the change in the bread and wine. To attribute the change to the gesture would be to believe in magic. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that brings about the change. The gesture is the outward sign of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Note also that I’m not saying the change takes place *at that moment*. Rather, it’s at this point that the liturgy recognizes the action of the Holy Spirit throughout the Eucharistic prayer.

## THE STORY OF THE LAST SUPPER

We hear the narrative of the Last Supper when we celebrate Eucharist. The story forms part of every current Eucharistic Prayer in the Western church and helps us to understand the Eucharist. As the name implies this was the final meal of many that Jesus had with his friends. Jesus knew it was his farewell meal, though the disciples were not aware of this.

The Gospels make it clear that Jesus took a lot of care in preparing this meal because it became the launching pad for the most important spiritual action of the community that he would leave behind. Following his example, let us carefully prepare our hearts and minds well for this awesome mystery.

For the purposes of this commentary, let’s use the story of the institution of the Eucharist as it is given in Eucharistic Prayer II:

*At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his passion, he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: “Take this all of you and eat of it: for this is my body which will be given up for you.”*

Following Jesus' instruction the disciples each took a portion of the bread and consumed it. By this action, Jesus showed that just as this bread was being taken, eaten, and chewed up, so his body would be taken and disposed of. This happened the following day when his body was nailed to a cross and Jesus died. At the Last Supper, Jesus prefigured this total gift of himself by identifying himself with the bread that was given out and eaten.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CUP

At the end of the meal, Jesus departed from tradition in a radical way. He took a cup of wine and said: "Take this, all of you, and drink from it: for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in memory of me" (John 13:1).

Jesus was offering himself totally for us in the complete gift of himself, holding nothing back. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

This totality of offering can be described as follows:

Thus the sacramental symbolism signifies precisely the *totality of Christ*, giving himself, and the *totality of the gift* of himself he thus presents to us. The glorified Christ gives himself completely in the Eucharist of history, completely: *body and blood*. It is thus that Christ gives himself in his entirety, as he makes a fragment of the world into an expression of his person" (Gustave Martelet, translated by Rene Hague; *The Risen Christ and the Eucharistic World*, William Collins, London, 1973, p.177).

Each of those at the table drank from the chalice that Jesus offered them; this drinking from the chalice symbolized in advance the pouring out of his blood. Eating the bread and drinking from the chalice was a prophecy in action, a gesture much more powerful than any number of words of explanation or theology.

In instituting it (the Eucharist), he (Jesus) did not merely say, "This is my body," "this is my blood," but went on to add: "which is given for you" "which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:19-20). Jesus did not simply state that what he was giving them to eat and drink was his body and blood; he also expressed its sacrificial meaning and made sacramentally present his sacrifice which would soon be offered on the Cross for the salvation of all (see Pope Saint John Paul II, *Ecclesia de eucharistia* 12, 2003).

The action of drinking from Jesus' own chalice was most unusual as each of those at a Paschal meal had his or her own chalice and usually there was no sharing of a chalice. Why did Jesus get each of those present to drink from his chalice? Perhaps it was an invitation to them to share in his impending suffering. Why say this? When James and John asked Jesus for places at his right hand and left in his glory (Mark 10:35 – 40), Jesus said to them, "*Are you able to drink the chalice that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?*"

Jesus was obviously challenging these two followers to something very difficult. Immediately after the Last Supper, Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane with the same two disciples plus Peter (Mk 14:32–42). Mark tells us, "he ... began to be distressed and agitated. And he said to them, I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here and keep awake." He went on a little further and prayed, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove *this chalice* from me; yet not what I want but what you want."

These two passages indicate that in this case the chalice of wine was not a symbol of joy as it would usually be, but

more like a chalice of bitter medicine that must be taken. In the garden, Jesus was disappointed that his friends could not stay awake and pray with him in his agony. Could you not keep awake one hour? (Mk 14:37) Jesus' human nature is well displayed here. He knew his suffering and death were rapidly approaching and his human nature shrank from the impending agony.

At the meal, he may have felt desperate for some company in his hour of distress, so the sharing of his own cup with the others may have been his way of encouraging them to share his suffering. But to his dismay the disciples were not up to the challenge. In the garden they slept, and when Jesus was arrested shortly after, all the disciples abandoned him.

When we take the chalice of wine at the Eucharist, we have the opportunity to share Jesus' pain. Father Anthony McSweeney, SSS, writes very poignantly:

As we are handed the chalice we may think of Jesus asking us, "Can you drink the chalice that I must drink? Are you willing to share in my lot or destiny, especially in so much as it entails suffering accepted as a covenant offering? Are you willing to accept your lot as I have accepted mine in trusting abandonment to the Father and in love for your fellow human beings? If you are, I will transform the chalice of your pain into a chalice of blessing, of overflowing life. This is the chalice of the covenant that I offer to you today. It is also the chalice of promise, my assurance that you too will drink the new wine of spirit-existence with me at my Father's table in the Kingdom" (McSweeney, *Ensemble/Together* 76, June 2002, p. 62).

It hurts when you are snubbed by a friend; it's agonizing when your spouse walks out on you, it's frustrating when you are overlooked again for promotion. When these painful events occur, you put them into the bitter chalice in your imagination and incorporate your personal pain with the pain that Jesus endured. Jesus' suffering is the archetypal suffering of all humankind and includes all the suffering of every person on earth. It is for each of us to consciously insert into Jesus' sufferings our own hurts each time we attend the Eucharist.

The reintroduction of the chalice for the use of the laity is a wonderful blessing, an opportunity not to be missed, a chance to be more in tune with the saving action of Jesus. Here's a wonderful witness to the importance of taking the wine:

By being alert to the significance of the chalice our spirituality is strengthened; we become more aware that Eucharistic spirituality can embrace the pains and hurts of life and can help us to integrate these into our lives in ways that make sense.

The Last Supper narrative is the story of Jesus giving himself in love. His self-offering is demonstrated clearly and vividly in the prophetic action of likening his offering of himself in love to bread being eaten and wine being drunk. Jesus goes on to say the pouring out of his blood seals a new covenant between the Father and us, a "*new and eternal covenant*."

"*Do this in memory of me*" is telling us that we are to repeat this prophetic action as the most effective way of remembering Jesus' self-offering, his extraordinary love for us in being prepared to surrender his life "*for the forgiveness of sins*."

## MEMORIAL

The emphasis on remembering the death and resurrection continues in the next part of the Eucharistic Prayer which is technically called the *anamnesis* (its opposite is amnesia). This remembering is not just a thinking back to an event of two thousand years ago. The Eucharist brings that event into the present moment. The Eucharist has something of the



time machine element to it. We can think of the death and resurrection being brought to us in the time machine or the time machine taking us back to Calvary and the tomb. This is one of the great mysteries of the Eucharist: the collapse of time. The death and resurrection of Jesus are as real to us as if we were actually present when Jesus died and when he was raised into a new life. This is a very important part of the spirituality of the Eucharist. It helps us to think about our own dying to self-centeredness and rising into a new life more centered on others as Jesus did. To celebrate the Eucharist in any meaningful way we must be attuned to this aspect of the mystery.

## THE OFFERING

We then offer to the Father the body and blood of Jesus. Usually, the prayer also uses the word “sacrifice” at this time. This word comes from the Latin “sacrum facere,” which means to make sacred. We have taken ordinary bread and wine and by the power of the Holy Spirit whose help we invoked earlier (remember the *epiclesis*?) they have become more than just bread and wine. They have taken on a presence of the risen Christ, and we now offer them to the Father just as Jesus offered himself to the Father during his lifetime. I seek to do not my own will but the will of him who sent me. (John 5:30)

As he was dying on the cross Jesus said: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). This offering continues the identification of the Eucharist with the death and resurrection of Jesus and inspires us to apply this theme to our own lives. *A genuine spirituality must encourage us to die to self and live for others.*

## INTERCESSIONS

We then turn to God for our needs, particularly the needs of the church, naming the pope and the local bishop as a special focus of our prayer. A prayer that touches my heart particularly is the one in the Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for Various Needs III which says:

Keep us attentive to the needs of all that, sharing their grief and pain, we may faithfully bring them the good news of salvation and go forward with them along the way of your kingdom.

Without giving away what is essential, we must be open to changing our practices as the world around us changes so rapidly. Without appropriate change, the church is at risk of being irrelevant to the lives of many people. I like the extension of this theme in Eucharistic Prayer IV which adds; “Remember ... all those who seek you with a sincere heart.” The Eucharist embraces all people in its loving arms.

Sometimes the prayer invokes the Holy Spirit in a kind of second “*epiclesis*” as in Eucharistic Prayer IV:

Look, O Lord, upon the sacrifice which you yourself have provided for your church, and grant in your loving kindness to all who partake of this one bread and one chalice that, gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit, they may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory.

Eucharistic Prayer of Reconciliation I prays for the unity of the church:

Look kindly, most compassionate Father, on those you unite to yourself by the sacrifice of your Son, and grant that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as they partake of this one bread and one chalice, they may be gathered into one body in Christ, who heals every division.

We also remember those who have died as they are an important part of the communion of Jesus' followers. We make no judgment on them, leaving that to God. The prayer from the Masses for Various Needs expresses this very beautifully:

Be mindful of our brothers and sisters (we can insert names) who have fallen asleep in the peace of Christ and all the dead whose faith only you alone have known. Admit them to rejoice in the light of your face, and in the resurrection give them the fullness of life.

Finally, we pray for ourselves. The prayers focus on asking God to ensure we become members of the community of the saints and the angels in the next world praising God in his glory. Most of the prayers name Mary as one whose company we would particularly like to share.

## DOXOLOGY

This central prayer of the Eucharist comes to a grand conclusion praising Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is called the "doxology," and it is fitting that this prayer concludes with praise of the Trinity, the ultimate goal of our worship. As the priest recites this prayer, he holds up high the bread and the wine. The gesture is very important.

At the Eucharist, the lifting up of the bread and wine may be seen as a symbol of the victory of Christ over sin and death and a spiritualization of our gifts, an ascent to the Father. It is a moment of jubilation and it is very appropriate for the presider to sing it and the people to sing the "Amen" with enthusiasm.

The Eucharistic Prayer is the living and pulsing heart of the Mass. The challenge is to listen attentively and respond enthusiastically not just with our minds but with our hearts so that we are participating fully, consciously and actively.

## 7. Closing Prayer (Continuation of Eucharistic Prayer IV)

Therefore, O LORD, as we now celebrate the memorial of our redemption,  
we remember Christ's death and his descent to the realm of the dead;  
we proclaim his resurrection and his ascension to your right hand;  
and as we await his coming in glory, we offer you his body and blood,  
the sacrifice acceptable to you which brings salvation to the whole world.

Look, O LORD, upon the sacrifice which you yourself have provided for your Church,  
and grant in your loving kindness to all  
who partake of this one bread and one chalice that,  
gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit,  
they may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ to the praise of your glory.

Therefore, LORD, remember now all for whom we make this sacrifice:  
especially your servant, (name) our pope, our bishop, and the whole order of bishops,  
all the clergy, those who take part in this offering, those gathered here before you,  
your entire people, and all who seek you with a sincere heart.

Remember also those who have died in the peace of your Christ

and all the dead, whose faith you alone have known.

To all of us, your children, grant, O merciful Father,  
that we may enter into a heavenly inheritance  
with the blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,  
and with your apostles and saints in your kingdom.

There, with the whole of creation, freed from the corruption  
of sin and death,  
may we glorify you through Christ our Lord,  
through whom you bestow on the world all that is good.

Through him, and with him, and in him,  
O God, almighty Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory and honor is yours, for ever and ever. Amen.

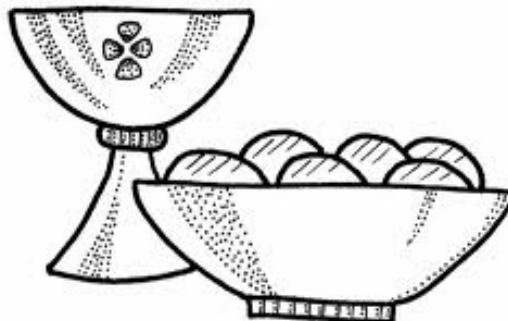
**Closing Song (optional):** Take & Eat (Joncus) or The Supper of the Lord

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- McSweeney, Anthony, SSS. *Lift Up Your Hearts: Eucharist and the Eucharistic Prayer*, Manna I.
- Lane, John Thomas, SSS. *Eucharist and the Elements of Celebration*, Manna III.
- Nogosek, Robert, CSC. *Fruitful Participation in the Eucharist*, Emmanuel Magazine, March/April 2011.
- Bernier, Paul, SSS. *Changing Eucharistic Perspectives*, Emmanuel Magazine, July/August 2006.

### *Note:*

*Please have copies of the Liturgy of the Hours (e.g., Christian Prayer book or iBreviary app) for the next meeting.*





## Session 8

# Liturgy of the Hours

The Liturgy of the Hours spreads the riches of the eucharistic mystery over the various hours of the day and at the same time it prepares for the celebration of this mystery. It is the voice of the church praising her Lord and with him offering the spiritual worship of the whole mystical body to the Father.

Insofar as we can, we share this prayer of the church, both in a communal and personal way, giving particular importance to Morning and Evening Prayer.

*Rule of Life for Associates 9*

## Liturgy of the Hours

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**Opening Song (optional):** From the *Christian Prayer* book suggestions for the Morning or Evening Prayer

### 1. Opening Prayer

Morning or Evening Prayer of the Day (First part up through the second Psalm). In celebrating the appropriate hour from the *Christian Prayer* book or iBreviary app on your tablet or phone, please pause after the psalmody and canticle and before the reading of Sacred Scripture.

### 2. Introduction to the Theme

From ancient times, the church has had the custom of celebrating each day with the Liturgy of the Hours (formally called before 1974 “Divine Office”). In this way, the church fulfills the Lord’s precept to pray without ceasing, at once offering its praise to God the Father and interceding for the salvation of the world.

The Second Vatican Council showed the importance of the traditional discipline of the church and desired to renew that discipline. It was, therefore, very concerned to bring about a suitable restoration of this liturgy of prayer so that priests and other members of the church in today’s circumstances might celebrate it better and more effectively (cf. *Sacrosanctum concilium* 84).

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read the disciples gathered at the third hour (3:1); elsewhere, at noontime (10:9); and, even at midnight (16:25). In time, the church established a set discipline for this Liturgy of the Hours, to be principally a prayer of praise and petition, using antiphons, psalms and canticles, a reading of Sacred Scripture, moments of silence, and time for intercessions.

The Liturgy of the Hours, like other liturgical actions, is not something private but belongs to the whole body of the church. When the laity are invited to the Liturgy of the Hours and come together in unity of heart and voice, they show forth the church in its celebration of the mystery of Christ.

### 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

The office recited [in the presence of] the Blessed Sacrament is a communal adoration, the official prayer of the entire Congregation. In our recitation of the office we all become adorers, not by right nor by rule, neither by the quality of our prayer, rather our prayer is changed into the prayer of the church itself.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard, [text III, 278]

### 4. Bible Text: Luke 6:12-13

## 5. Conversation – share your story

- Please share your experience of praying in the morning and/or evening. What does it contribute to your spirituality?
- Thomas Merton called the psalms “the most significant and influential collection of religious poems ever written” (*Bread in the Wilderness*, 1953). They have been the substance of daily worship in Jewish and Christian practices, the source of private devotion and reflection for people the world over. Share your experience of reading and praying the psalms.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

- *Emmanuel* article by Jim Brown

## Liturgy of the Hours – Key Points

- Over the years, the Blessed Sacrament religious have invited the parishioners of their parishes to join them for morning and (in some places) evening prayer. As the *Rule of Life for Associates* 9 states:

The Liturgy of the Hours spreads the riches of the eucharistic mystery over the various hours of the day and at the same time it prepares for the celebration of this mystery.

- As a faithful Jew, Jesus surely entered into the prayer customs of devout Israelites, taking part in public prayers, going to the synagogue and when in Jerusalem, to the temple, which Jesus called the house of prayer. Jesus' main prayer book was the psalms, his *Liturgy of the Hours*, if you will. Praying the *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours*, either Morning and/or Evening prayer, we pray two psalms at each hour, where we find all or some part of 125 of the 150 psalms.
- The psalms speak of the relationship of the ancient Israelites with their God. They express the *real* feelings of joyful praise and thanksgiving, songs of distress or *lament*, and even the honest expressions of anger and upset. The psalms give expression to a whole range of emotional realities – wonder, exultation, anguish and joy – written by poets who Thomas Merton reminds us “knew who God was.”

## Reading

### *Praying the Psalms by Jim Brown*

If you are like me, you often find yourself mouthing some unconscious, unreflective utterance invoking the name of God. Your teenager arrives safely at some destination. Before you can send a “Great!” text back, you have silently whispered, “Thank you, God.” The doctor has informed you that your parent has incurable cancer and has two months to live. As you walk back to his room you close your eyes and find yourself muttering, “God help us! How am I going to tell mom, my siblings?” Or if you are a sinner like me and you read in the newspaper about some tyrannical despot massacring thousands of innocent men, women and children you inwardly explode, “God \_\_\_\_ him!” and then maybe catch yourself, “How Christian is that?”

Well, for some 700 years, ancient Israelites didn't hesitate to cry out their real feelings at God. In fact, many of their utterances were written down and later included in the canon of the Old Testament. Try these examples:

- For all things small or large, the psalmist sang: “Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his love endures forever” (Ps 118); or “I thank you, Lord, with all my heart, you heard the words of my mouth” (Ps 138).
- There are many psalms that express the kind of distress alluded to above: “With all my voice I cry to the Lord, with all my voice I entreat the Lord. I pour out my troubles before (you); I tell (you) all my distress.” Psalm 142 says it about as good as any psalm.
- And those feelings of revenge or hatred that slip in from time to time, how about: “May God rain burning coals upon them, cast them into the grave never more to rise” (Ps 140); Or this stunner: “Fair Babylon, you destroyer, happy those who pay you back the evil you have done us! Happy those who seize your children and smash them against the rock” (Ps 137).

What!?! “Smash them against the rock?” Well, the first time I read that line I was shocked. The word of God? A passage from the Bible? At the time I did not understand nor appreciate the Israelite mindset; and the fact that such a psalm was written long before the Sermon on the Mount. Absent Jesus' challenge to “turn the other cheek,” or “love thy enemies,” the psalmists had a basic “black and white” worldview, especially when it came to their “enemies” or evil men who opposed God's law.

And so we read in many of the psalms the raw sentiments of hate, revenge, and a prayer that (they) “be put to shame and



disgrace” (Ps 35:4); that “death take them by surprise; let them go down *alive* to Sheol” (Ps 55:16); or this juicy curse for unjust rulers (the subject of my anger above): “O God, smash the teeth in their mouths; break the jaw-teeth of these lions, Lord! Make them vanish like water flowing away; trodden down, let them wither like grass. Let them dissolve like a snail that oozes away, like an untimely birth that never sees the sun” (Ps 58:7–9). Whew! Those psalmists said it like they felt it.

I gradually came to appreciate the brutal honesty expressed in so many of the psalms as my own spirituality evolved, formed by the likes of the peripatetic Malcom Boyd and his *Are You Running With Me, Jesus?*; the *Secular City* by Harvey Cox; *Confessions of an Innocent Bystander* and others by Thomas Merton. And somewhere during those days a retreat master encouraged us to “speak what was in our heart to the Lord.” He stressed honesty; that God, the one “who knit me in my mother’s womb” (Ps 139:13b) was big enough to take anything from a young man, struggling with doubt, disappointments, fallen heroes, etc. trying to grow into an adult spirituality. That wise and holy priest was like the psalmists who wrote 150 poems which, in the words of Merton (*Praying the Psalms*), “are the songs of men who knew who God was” (p. 7).

Ah, relationships! Isn’t it really all about relationships? When we read the Psalms, in the words of Etienne Charpentier (*How to Read the Old Testament*), “we are reading the language of relationships.” These ancient poets both teach us important truths about God and more importantly share their faith experiences of the almighty Creator *and* the one who dwells among us with tenderness and compassion.

One who comes to mind with that unique Jewish approach to conversing with God is one of my favorite characters, Tevye, in *Fiddler on the Roof*. He talks to God in honesty and faithfulness. Only one in a unique relationship with God could utter this classic line from the musical: “I know. I know. We are your chosen people. But, once in a while can’t you choose someone else?” Sounds like a line inspired by Psalm 10 or Psalm 77:

Lord, why do you stand afar off  
and hide yourself in times of distress?  
The poor is devoured by the pride of the wicked:  
caught in the schemes that others have made (Ps 10:1).

At night I mused within my heart.  
I pondered and my spirit questioned.

Will the Lord reject us forever?  
Show us favor no more?  
Has his love vanished forever?  
Promise come to an end?  
Does God forget mercy  
or in anger withhold compassion?

I said: “This is what causes my grief;  
that the way of the Most High has changed” (Ps 77:7–11).

And then there was *the* relationship: that between Jesus and his *Abba*. As a good Jew, Jesus’ main prayer book was the *psalms*, his Liturgy of the Hours, if you will. I imagine this very human Jesus, so attuned to all the wonders of his Father’s creation and his presence during difficult times, singing those various *songs of praise* or *thanksgiving* (Examples: Psalms 8, 9, 18, 22: 23–32, 31, 33, 34, 40, 67, 92, 96, 103, 104, 118, 136 and 138 (quoted below):

*I thank you Lord, with all my heart, (1a)*  
*When I cried out, you answered; (3)*  
*You guard my life when my enemies rage. (7b)*  
*The Lord is with me to the end.*  
*Lord, your love endures forever. (8a, b)*

I also imagine this very human Jesus being so aware and sensitive to the evils and sin in the world, the many human foibles, the injustices, lies and deceits, all the sad ironies and hypocrisies that make up the human condition. Comforting and reassuring would have been the many *laments* found among the 150 psalms – nearly one-third. These were the cries to a caring God in times of distress, anguish, loss of confidence, petitioning God to relieve a particular situation. (Examples: Psalms 3–7, 13, 10–12, 14, 22, 25–28, 35, 36, 38–40, 51–59, 61–64, 140–143).

One can imagine Jesus singing out Psalm 143 at various points throughout his life seeking God’s will for him. Don’t we often hope that God will help us find a life that is “level and smooth?”

*LORD, listen to my prayer;*  
*Turn your ear to my appeal. (1)*

*I muse on what your hand has wrought*  
*And to you I stretch out my hands.*  
*Like a parched land my soul thirsts for you. (5–6)*

*In the morning let me know your love*  
*For I put my trust in you.*  
*Make me know the way I should walk:*  
*To you I lift up my soul.*

*For you, O LORD, are my God.*  
*Let your good spirit guide me*  
*In ways that are level and smooth. (8–10)*

Four times the first eleven verses of this psalm appear in the *Christian Prayer* book, including Evening Prayer for Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

In addition to these two main types of psalms, Scripture scholars tell us there are *wisdom* psalms, named such because they are more like teachings, similar to the *Wisdom Books* (Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs). Examples would be: 37, 112, 128. There are also *royal* songs that address matters concerning the king, for example 2, 20, 45, 144. There are *Zion* psalms with a focus on Jerusalem, such as 46, 87, 132. There are a few about *divine kingship*; Psalms 47, 93, 95–99 would be good examples. Lastly, we have liturgical psalms, designed to be used in public worship situations; good examples would be 15, 24, 107, 122.

It is at Mass that most of us encounter the psalms, though only select verses are used. If we have prayed the *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours*, either Morning and/or Evening prayer, we pray two psalms at each hour, where we find all or some part of 125 of the 150 psalms.

Scripture scholars tell us that most of the psalms were prayed at worship services in ancient Israel, in the Temple at Jerusalem, and most assuredly wherever prayer was ritualized, including all the feasts and festivals. As the psalms are part of both Jewish and Christian prayer and worship, so it is likely that the ancient Israelites used the psalms for both

individual meditation and prayer as well as public worship.

I suspect that each of us Christians has a favorite psalm. For many it is the comforting Psalm 23: The LORD is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. Or Psalm 27: The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom do I fear? Psalm 42 – like most of the psalms – is so full of imagery: As the deer longs for streams of water, so my soul longs for you, O God. And the jubilant Psalm 92:

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,  
to sing praise to your name, Most High,  
to proclaim your love in the morning,  
your faithfulness in the night,  
with the ten stringed harp,  
with melody upon the lyre.

There is that hymn of thanksgiving, Psalm 118, that everyone would recognize;

Give thanks to the LORD, who is good,  
whose love endures forever.

My favorite is Psalm 51, said at Morning Prayer every Friday. It has it all: the wide range of emotions we can feel depending on the day and what's going on in our life.

*Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.  
In your compassion blot out my offense.  
O wash me more and more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin.*

O God, whom Jesus told us to call “Abba,”  
forgive me the stupid and hurtful things I’ve done.  
Make things right again – between me and \_\_\_\_,  
between you and me.

*Indeed you love truth in the heart;  
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.*

LORD, I try to be straightforward and do  
an honest day’s work.  
Give me Solomon’s wisdom  
with these complex challenges I face.

*Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,  
that the bones you have crushed may revive.*

May I feel again the joy and happiness  
that comes from getting on the other side  
of facing my challenges.

*A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.*

May my motives be pure O LORD.  
May I have the energy and stick-to-it-ness to be:

a good husband, father, friend, citizen, consultant.

*Give me again the joy of your help;  
with a spirit of fervor sustain me.*

LORD, show me signs that you're backing me up,  
especially when I falter or feel  
I cannot do it all alone.

As we said above, it's all about relationships, the psalms speak to relationship. The images used by these ancient poets reflect : in the words of Christian E. Hauer and William A. Young in *An Introduction to the Bible, A Journey into Three Worlds*, "A basic view of life that we might call the *relational world* of the psalms: God and me, God and other divine beings, God and Israel, and God and nature."

In closing, let me reference again that iconic Jewish parable, the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. At the wedding of their daughter Tzeitel to the tailor Motel, Tevye and his wife Golde sing:

Sunrise, sunset. Sunrise, sunset.  
Swiftly fly the years.  
One season following the other  
Laden with happiness and tears.

The song speaks to what anyone who has been married a long time knows, the wonderful and difficult journey of a good marriage. I believe it also speaks to the relationship many of us have with our God – at least if we're honest. The psalms give expression to the range of emotional realities expressed in these lyrics, songs of wonder, exultation, anguish, disappointment and joy written by poets who - Merton reminds us – "knew who God was."

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## 7. Closing Prayer

Continue praying the Liturgy of Hours from the Scripture Reading through the Concluding Prayer.

**Closing Song (optional):** All Creatures of Our God & King or Now Thank We All Our God

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- "General Instructions of the Liturgy of the Hours" (Abridged) *Christian Prayer: The Liturgy of the Hours*. , pages 8–19. Online: [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_2057577\\_pray-liturgy-hours.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2057577_pray-liturgy-hours.html)
- Merton, Thomas. *Praying the Psalms*, The Liturgical Press, 1955.
- (Editor's note: The Liturgy of Hours - second edition will be coming in the middle of the 2020s. New resources will be available at that time.)

## Session 9

# Saint Peter Julian Eymard and Prayer in the Presence of the Eucharist

In a prayer of contemplation and adoration of Christ present in the Eucharist, solemnly exposed or in the tabernacle, we prolong the grace of the mystery celebrated, intensifying our union with Christ so as to become with him and like him bread broken for a new world.

Insofar as we can, we commit ourselves to personal eucharistic adoration, whether monthly, weekly or daily. This prayer is part of our mission and holds an important place in our lives.

The method of prayer taught by Saint Peter Julian Eymard is inspired by the celebration of the Eucharist.

*Rule of Life for Associates 8*

## Saint Peter Julian Eymard and Prayer in the Presence of the Eucharist

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**Opening Song (optional):** Adoramus Te Domine or In the Lord I'll be Ever Thankful

### 1. Opening Prayer (alternate stanzas)

Praise, honor and glory be to you Oh God,  
For you have created all things and you give life to all that lives.

We adore you and offer you our worship with humble hearts,  
Fill us with your blessings and set our hearts on fire with your love.

You are bountiful in your many gifts,  
And all that we have comes from your gracious hand.

In all things may we never fail to give you thanks,  
And generously share our blessings with others in their need.

You are merciful and forgiving,  
And we have sinned through our human weakness.

With humble contrite hearts bestow your mercy on us,  
Make us one in mind and heart with you.

We look to you, our God, for you answer all our needs.  
When we call upon you, you are there to help us.

Whatever we ask for in your name, you will grant us.  
Bestow your Spirit on us, the greatest of all your gifts.

*(Note: the Closing Prayer of this session should be done in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Be sure to allot the time for an extended prayer experience with the Eucharist.)*

### 2. Introduction to the Theme

Father Eymard was clearly a very active man: preacher, organizer, catechist and priest to the “rag-picker” children, and provincial and founder of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. Yet it was prayer that gave him a place to discover the will of God; prayer that provided a place of rest and retreat, where he heard his Master urging him to “talk to me about yourself, speak your heart out to me, your wishes, your sorrows,” where he discovered the love of Jesus.

Father Paul Bernier, SSS reminds us that in the nineteenth century there was a great emphasis on the idea of reparation in the practice of adoration. “He (Eymard) sensed that fully eucharistic prayer required more than this. What he suggested to us is that our prayer should proceed according to what he called ‘the four ends of the sacrifice of the Mass’” (364). And so, Eymard’s contribution to the theological thinking on prayer before the Blessed Sacrament was to organize the

adoration experience around the four great movements or aspects of prayer during the Eucharistic liturgy: Adoration, Reparation, Thanksgiving, Entreaty – or, as Father Bernier suggests, “adoration, gratitude, reparation and intercession or petition.”

Father Eymard was convinced of the power of prayer in the mission of his congregation. He believed that prayer nourishes our faith, orients our commitment and directs our apostolic activity toward the “greater service and reign of the sacramental Jesus Christ.”

### 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

But alas! How have I acquitted myself of my service? I have been an agent of our Lord, his doorman, his military orderly rather than his personal servant. I spoke much about him but little to him personally. I was busy about many things like Martha, whereas this good Master wanted me at his feet; and when I was in adoration, I spent my time having him adored by others rather than adoring him myself, talking to him about others, and studying for the benefit of others, and all the while it was *me* this good Master wanted. He kept telling me, ‘Talk to me about yourself, speak your heart out to me, your wishes, your sorrows.’ But like the clouds that are blown away by the wind, like the wind that whistles and is gone, I busied myself excitedly with irrelevant tasks, useless and even harmful since they were depriving me of the grace of my action and were displeasing to our Lord. How stupid can one be to tire oneself uselessly by doing what our Lord does not will at the given moment!

Meditation, Volume V, 302–303  
February 21, 1865

The adorers shall apply themselves during their adoration to honor the four ends of sacrifice: namely, to offer perpetually to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ a homage of praise and honor, of love and thanksgiving, of reparation and petition, for the greater service and reign of the sacramental Jesus Christ; and finally that all may come to love our Lord Jesus Christ and come eagerly to his sacrament of life.

RR 78: 4 Chapter IV. How our religious should make adoration  
Volume VII, 617

Dear friend, find God in the calm and peace of solitude. It is easier to find him there. Enjoy God in his goodness to you and follow the path of his divine Providence which has so sweetly and powerfully led you to where you are now. Reflect diligently on our Lord in his divine Sacrament and you will be as happy as one can be on this road to heaven.

Letter to Father Paul Marie Marechal, SSS  
November 29, 1867

### 4. Bible Text: Matthew 6:5-8

## 5. Conversation – share your story

- Call to mind experiences of prayer you have had in your life – moments of solitude, meditation or prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Can you give a witness to the power of prayer in your life?
- Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament *Rule of Life*, 29 states, “This prayer [in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament] forms part of the mission of the Congregation.” What does this mean to you, and how do you realize it in your own spiritual journey?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

- Anthony McSweeney. “Commentary on the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament *Rule of Life* 30,” *The Vineyard*. Sydney: Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, September 2010. [www.stpeterjulianhaymarket.org.au](http://www.stpeterjulianhaymarket.org.au)

## Saint Peter Julian Eymard and Prayer in the Presence of the Eucharist – Key Points

- Father Eymard centered his prayer on the person of Jesus Christ present in and through the Eucharist, emptying himself entirely out of love and for the glorification of God the Father (Philippians 2: 5-11). This paschal mystery signifies the love of the Trinity to impart the Holy Spirit into our lives for our sanctification and the transformation of the world.



- The Eucharist is the body of Christ at prayer. It is always ecclesial and must never be reduced to a private devotion for oneself. It is a gift given by God to the church for the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God. The Eucharist draws us into the prayer of Christ who intercedes for the needs of all humanity.
- The Eucharist is a “*dynamic*” prayer that works on multiple levels: external ritual with movement, gestures, participation using all the bodily senses; internal acts lifting the mind and heart to God in acts of worship and praise, gratitude and contrition, self-offering and quiet intimacy; spiritual level of the divine action of the Holy Spirit who prays in us bringing about the work of salvation being accomplished by Christ in the church.
- There are various methods of prayer available when praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Father Eymard gave priority to the “*four ends of the sacrifice of the Mass*,” namely, a prayer of adoration, of praise and thanksgiving, of reconciliation and intercession. These elements comprise the Mass prayers and are used to extend the fruits of the Mass during periods of eucharistic prayer.

## Reading

### Commentary on No. 30 of The Rule of Life by Father Anthony McSweeney, SSS

*Our response to this presence of Christ is to enter into the dynamism of the Eucharist with a prayer of adoration, of praise and thanksgiving, of reconciliation and intercession as church and for the world.*

## To Pray “As Church”

Father Eymard had an acute awareness of this ecclesial dimension of the sacrament. He wanted “adorers” to be deeply conscious that, choosing to pray in the presence of the sanctified bread, they no longer acted simply in their own name. That which concerns the Eucharist can never be appropriated by us as something private, to use as we wish; it cannot be made the object of our purely subjective “devotions” based on personal tastes or whims.

The Eucharist is God’s gift *to the church* and always retains its essentially ecclesial character. In consequence, Eymard called his religious to transcend purely personal interests and to take on the concerns of the whole church as it makes its laborious way through time. He knew very well that when the church celebrates the Eucharist its interest is not just for itself, but “for the world,” according to the intention of Jesus who described himself as “the bread of life... for the life of the world” (Jn 6:33,51).

For this reason, the criteria that guide our mode of praying must transcend purely personal and subjective goals or even narrowly confessional concerns. It was this awareness that led our founder to propose the Good Friday Solemn Intercessions as a guide. In a word, our prayer must be shaped by the nature of the sacrament as the church understands it.

This same awareness, furthermore, led him to see that prayer made in the presence of the sacrament had to be determined in its form and content by the directives of the church intended to protect the character of the sacrament and order behavior towards it accordingly. He wanted our every approach to the sacrament to be respectful of the church’s directives and laws, in regard, for example, to behavior, dress, and attitudes. He opposed exaggerated forms of pomp (such as the multiplication of candles) and singularities of personal behavior, because they denoted the intrusion of personal emotion and tastes; he wished to abide by the simplicity and dignity of the liturgical directives.

Our Rule picks up this same concern of our founder when it describes our “response to this presence” as one of entering into what it calls “the dynamism of the Eucharist.”

### The “Dynamism” of Prayer and its Fundamental Attitudes

In speaking of the “dynamism” of the sacrament, the *Rule of Life* situates our prayer in relation to the “action” that is constituted by this sacrament. It is worth noting that one of the early terms for the Eucharistic Prayer was precisely this: the “*actio eucharistiae*.” Such action takes place on different levels:

- On the *ritual* or *liturgical* level, it is constituted by the movements, postures, gestures, and the words of the assembly, representative of the church gathered in this place and time under the leadership of its liturgical minister, to celebrate its hope in obedience to the Lord’s command to “*do this in memory of me.*”
- A second level of the action is constituted by the succession of *internal acts* expressive of spiritual attitudes corresponding to the words of the prayers and the bodily postures and movements – specifically, of thanksgiving with praise, of confession and adoration, of invocation and offering, of intercession and doxology.
- On a more profound level, that is strictly inaccessible to our scrutiny yet no less real for all that, there is the *divine action* of Christ realizing the memorial in the power of the Spirit and in union with his church, and directing it all to the Father as worship and to us as sanctification.

These three levels are obviously interconnected; yet the movement of the *actio eucharistiae* is a single unitary and coherent one, even though the first two levels are obviously going to be subject to the variations and inadequacies to which the human actors are necessarily prone.

Our concern is with the second level, namely with the set of spiritual attitudes and acts and their succession embodied in the liturgical prayers. These are described in terms which the founder drew from the Council of Trent, known as “the four ends of sacrifice,” namely, “a prayer of adoration, of praise and thanksgiving, of reconciliation and intercession.” In this, the Rule is simply repeating the teaching of the Founder:

Since the form of our prayer becomes a rule of life, our religious shall pray in this manner. They shall studiously apply the Four Ends of Sacrifice in their adorations, in preparing for and in thanksgiving after Holy Communion, in confession, in the hearing of Mass and in mental prayer, each according to his own personality, the ministry in which he is engaged and the inspiration of grace... They shall recommend this form of the church’s prayer to all, explaining its meaning and its efficacy, such that its integrating power and its ability to bring about holiness is uncovered. (*Notes personnelles*, Saint Bonnet, A.P.S.S. O.6, pp. 49-50. Translation from Donald Cave, *An Eymardian Spirituality*. Rome: Blessed Sacrament Fathers, 1995, p. 38.)

In reminding us of this part of our heritage, the *Rule* is affirming the continuing validity of Eymard’s insights. This may surprise some religious, who may perhaps have concluded that, in the light of the conciliar vision and reform, the idea of “the four ends” had by now lost its actuality. This point perhaps needs to be nuanced. What matters most here is not so much the formula as such as what it represented. It was the best – because guaranteed by church teaching – means by which the Founder in his time could focus the attention of his congregation on the *integral vision* of the Eucharist. He did not want a partial approach to the mystery such as that adopted in the reparation movement, and he was perfectly explicit about the matter.

The purpose which we are setting for our little Society, is to honor our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament by the four ends of the Sacrifice: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition — or a perpetual mission of

prayer. We take the whole Eucharist. That is why I cannot accept the idea of mere reparation .. nor an exclusively contemplative life. (Letter to Mme. d'Andigne, August 24, 1857, 85. In his refusal "I cannot accept..." he alludes to the suggestions of Mother Dubouché and of Father Hermann Cohen.)

For Eymard, then, the value of the formula was as a means of guaranteeing a comprehensive approach to the sacrament within the parameters of the theology of his time. The recalling of it in the *Rule* is a reminder to us but it does not bind us to the formula as such.

To understand correctly what the *Rule of Life* is proposing we must also establish a clear distinction between the *insight* of the Founder into the principles that guarantee an integral view of the Eucharist on which to found adoration, on the other hand, and the various *methods* by which that insight might be translated in practice, on the other. For it is precisely this distinction that stands behind the phrase that follows: "Though our prayer finds its inspiration in the celebration, it is not limited to any one form" (the word *form* is being used here in the sense of *method*); his insight, in other words, can find expression in a variety of methods of prayer.

### A Variety of Possible Methods

In regard to the way we seek to structure our prayer, a person may well, indeed, choose to divide the hour of prayer into four fifteen minute segments, dedicating each segment in turn to the corresponding attitude. Though some may find this approach congenial and helpful, to others it may seem altogether too artificial and mechanical.

Another person might prefer a quite different approach altogether, for example, to follow the pattern that we find in the church's Eucharistic Prayers. These prayers do indeed enshrine these self-same four attitudes, but they do so in conformity with their own dynamics and unfolding. The advantage of such an approach would be that of substituting, for the more abstract and static schema just mentioned, a pattern nearer to life and one that corresponds more closely to the flow of the Eucharist itself.

Still another approach might be to pray in a more spontaneous fashion, starting perhaps from a scripture passage or an event of life, and seeking to draw out one's responses in a freer way that, in some manner, leads the person to incorporate the four fundamental attitudes mentioned, but according as the Spirit guides the person.

Numerous other methods could be used or adapted, provided they are at the service of the needs of the praying person and of the goal of adoration, namely to draw the one praying more deeply into the eucharistic mystery. For example, the classical method of the *lectio divina*, with its four stages: *lectio* (reading or study), *meditatio* (reflection), *oratio* (prayerful dialogue with the Lord) and *contemplatio* (silent presence of love), is easily adapted to the setting of eucharistic adoration.

In the end, methods are relative; they are no more than guides or props to help us enter into relation with the Lord. Many of us may find that, over the years, we use a method that helps us for a time but then look for another more adapted to our changing needs. Some methods are well suited to the needs of beginners while others are better adapted to persons who have gained a certain proficiency in praying. In any case, as one grows spiritually, prayer usually becomes more contemplative and hence simpler.

## 7. Closing Prayer

**Closing Prayer** (if possible - in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament):

**Opening Song (optional):** Here I Am, Lord or Your Words Are Spirit & Life

Let us Pray:

I pray to you, O Lord, I call to you,  
and at times I do not even find the right words  
to speak to you about myself, about you,  
about everything and everyone.

My words fail me, but I still feel attracted to you,  
to reflect on my life in your presence.  
May this always continue, Lord!

And may the example of Saint Peter Julian Eymard  
encourage me to make my life of prayer  
a breath of my soul, breathing you,  
a constant inhaling of your Spirit,  
a source of life and love.  
Amen.

Psalm 63

O God, you are my God – for you I long!  
For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts.

I look to you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory.  
For your love is better than life; my lips offer you worship!

I bless you all my life long;  
I lift up my hands calling on your name.

My soul delights in the rich banquet of praise,  
with joyful lips my mouth glorifies you!

My soul clings fast to you;  
your right hand holds me fast.

*Period of Silence*

**Gospel Reading:** John 15:9 17

*(Optional incensing of the Blessed Sacrament & the assembly)*

**Closing Song (optional):** I Am the Bread of Life or On Eagles' Wings

## Prayer

Good and gracious Lord, your Spirit changes our hearts  
and calls us to a deeper sense of the Paschal mystery.

May this eucharistic prayer hold an active part in our lives.  
May we go forth renewed in the hope of your promise.  
Your Son suffered, died and rose from the dead to bring us new life.

Grant us a portion in the fullness of life in your kingdom  
Where you live and reign with the Holy Spirit,  
God, forever and ever. Amen.

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Fickel, William, SSS. "In a Profound Atmosphere of Prayer." *Manna I*. In the first edition of 1997 and the second of 2023, Published by the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing, Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Falardeau, Ernest, SSS. "Eucharistic Contemplation 15 - The Eymardian Way." *Emmanuel*, June 2002.
- Falardeau, Ernest SSS. "Lectio Divina." *Emmanuel*, July/August 2001.
- Bernier, Paul. SSS. "Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament." *Emmanuel*, September/October 2003.
- Wiseman, James A., OSB. "The Eucharist: the Greatest of All Prayers." *Emmanuel*, July/August 2010





## Session 10

# Historical Development of the Congregation and the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament

The same spirituality and same ideal unites consecrated and lay members of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation as one spiritual family.

Where there is a community of the Religious of the Blessed Sacrament, the [associate] members share with them social and prayer times, mission, gatherings and formation initiatives. As associates, they are part of the extended Eymardian family which finds its identity in the spirit and mission of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

*Rule of Life for Associates 22 a, b*

## Historical Development of the Congregation and the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament

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### 1. Opening Prayer

Leader: Saint Peter Julian Eymard left us these inspiring words as a reflection for all who seek to follow this saint who founded two congregations, one for men, the other for women, as well as an Aggregation of lay people and clerics. He was also the initiator of many other apostolates, aptly chosen to arouse love for the Holy Eucharist among the faithful. Let us listen to his words.

Reader 1: From the writings of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the Office of Readings for his solemnity, August 2:

The Eucharist is the life of the people. The Eucharist gives them a center of life. All can come together without the barriers of race or language in order to celebrate the feast days of the Church. It gives them a law of life, that of charity, of which it is the source; thus it forges between them a common bond, a Christian kinship. All eat the same bread, all are table companions of Jesus Christ who supernaturally creates among them a feeling of togetherness. Read the Acts of the Apostles. It states that the whole community of the first Christians, converted Jews and baptized pagans, belonging to different regions, “had but one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32). Why? Because they were attentive to the teaching of the apostles and faithful in sharing in the breaking of the bread (Acts 2:42).

Reader 2: Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. This is the bread which came down from heaven.

All: **The Lord has nourished us with this rich food. This is the bread.**

Leader: Let us pray:

All: **O God, who adorned Saint Peter Julian Eymard  
with a wonderful love for the sacred mysteries  
of the Body and Blood of your Son,  
graciously grant  
that we, too, may be worthy to receive  
the delights he drew from this divine banquet.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.**

**Opening Song (optional):** One Bread, One Body or Here at This Table



## 2. Introduction to the Theme

On May 13, 1856, Saint Peter Julian Eymard founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. Celebrating this anniversary might seem to have significance only for the Congregations he founded (including the woman's branch). His canonization by Pope Saint John XXIII at the end of the first session of Vatican Council II, declared him the "Apostle of the Eucharist." Pope Saint John Paul II elevated him into the general liturgical calendar of the church for August 2 suggesting that he has something to offer to the entire church.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard's search for God was conditioned by the familial, social and religious context of his day – he was a man of the nineteenth century French church – as well as the graces he received from God. Throughout the history of the Congregation, Peter Julian's life has shone as a kind of beacon for those in and associated with the Congregation as a guidepost for their own search for God and in their personal progress toward becoming ever more authentic witnesses of God's love in the Eucharist.

From the very beginning, the Congregations of the Blessed Sacrament have wanted to share their spirituality and Eucharistic mission with the laity. Father Eymard worked on this project from the very beginning. He left a considerable amount of manuscripts that witness his commitment – which lasted until his death – of defining his proposal of eucharistic life for the laity, giving an organization to answer to the different situations of the people interested. He himself adopted the name, "Agregation du Tres Saint-Sacrement" (Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament).

Anticipating the renewal of the church brought about by Vatican Councils I and II, Saint Eymard had a vision of priests, deacons, sisters, and lay people living lives of total dedication to the spiritual values and apostolic mission that are celebrated and contemplated in the eucharistic liturgy and in prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

## 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

[T]he love of Jesus is really neglected and even humiliated in the Christian world . . . Feed this fire which God has enkindled through you; that is your mission, you can't have a more beautiful one.

To Clotilde Tholin-Bost  
October 8, 1865

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.

To Mme. Antoinette de Grandeville  
July 4, 1859

The inner gift of self is the real gift, because then our Lord becomes our Savior...by giving us his own form of life.

To Countess D'Andigne  
January 20, 1865

## 4. Bible Text: Philippians 2:5–11

## 5. Conversation – share your story

- Religious men and women, lay people and clerics associated with and served by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament have been touched by this gentle saint, Peter Julian Eymard, since 1856. Who are some of the people who have touched and shaped *you* in your own faith journey? How have they done so?
- As you read about the brief history of the Congregation and the development of the associate programs what impressions or conclusions do you draw about this saint and/or the spirit and gift of the Blessed Sacrament Congregations?

[illegible]

## 6. Teaching

- *Historical Development of the Congregation and the Aggregation* by Jim Brown

## Historical Development of the Congregation and the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament – Key Points

- Today we notice a resurgence of movements and church groups that bring to the church a new dynamism of life and activity. Some of them are new, because the Holy Spirit is constantly stirring initiatives corresponding to the needs of our times. Other movements are grafted on the trunk of spiritualities and institutions that have existed for

centuries. Among these latter ones, the “aggregations” linked to the spiritual tradition of religious congregations have an important place. The word “aggregation” expresses precisely the link that exists between an association of lay people, clerics and a religious congregation, by reason of its “association” with this religious community from which it draws its inspiration and often even its organization. The Province of Saint Ann opted to use the word “Associates” as an English translation of the French word *agrégation*.

- Father Eymard used the word “Agrégation” when founding this separate branch of service for the Eucharistic mission. It is also a canonical term used to describe “lay and cleric associates” because of the meaning of the word: a group, body or mass composed of individuals; from Paul’s theology of the Body of Christ, with each member having a distinct part to play in the Body of Christ.
- It is of primary importance that an aggregation – or association – whose existence goes back to the founder of a religious congregation, rediscover the precious insight of its charism, that is, the inspiration that led the man of God to desire to associate laypeople to the life and mission of the religious congregation. Equally important is to discover and interpret the transformations that the associate programs experienced in the course of its history. Finally, it would always be important to renew its spirit within the context of the church and today’s society while finding new forms for its realization.
- It should also be remembered that the Second Vatican Council inaugurated a new period regarding the role of the laity in the life of the church. The establishment of the associates program is an integral part of the eucharistic renewal taking place within the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament and also a part of a broader movement in the postconciliar church where religious communities have actively sought ways to involve committed lay persons and clerics (deacons and diocesan priests) meaningfully in their life and mission.

## Reading

### ***Historical Development of the Congregation and the Aggregation***

**Original text by Jim Brown, Associate of the Blessed Sacrament**

**and additional history by Sr. Catherine Marie Caron, SSS and Rev. John Thomas Lane, SSS**

## **The History**

Saint Peter Julian Eymard was born February 4, 1811, in La Mure, France. He was ordained a priest for the diocese of Grenoble on July 20, 1834. Feeling the call to religious life, he was welcomed into the Society of Mary (the Marists) on August 20, 1839. He remained a Marist priest for 17 years. He held many important positions in the order, including provincial superior and assistant to the founder and superior general, Father Claude Colin, SM. In December 1845, he was named the director of the Third Order of Mary, a group of lay men and women eager to lead a Christian life in union with the Society of Mary. He was asked to revitalize the group; he wrote their *Rule* and eventually secured approbation from Rome.

During these years as a Marist, Father Eymard developed a love and appreciation for Christ in the Eucharist. (He already had a reputation as the “Marist priest with a eucharistic inspiration.”) By 1856, Father Eymard was increasingly moving toward founding a religious congregation dedicated to promoting perpetual adoration and a eucharistic apostolate. When Father Eymard presented his idea for a new foundation to the archbishop of Paris, Archbishop Sibour, he initially rejected the proposal because in his mind the idea of a religious community dedicated only to adoration was “too contemplative.” Father Eymard assured the archbishop that in addition to promoting adoration, his new community would also dedicate itself to the ministry of catechesis for First Communion for adults. The archbishop was won over and approved of Father Eymard founding a new religious community. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament was born.

By 1856, seeing how many lay men and women were committed to perpetual adoration, Father Eymard thought of the idea of an Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, a group of laity he wanted to associate with his work, who wanted to make the Eucharist the source of their whole life. It should be noted that also committed diocesan priests, and later, diocesan deacons, would also be members of the Aggregation as they are today. The Aggregation was inaugurated in Marseilles and quickly spread throughout France. They were dedicated to promoting the knowledge and worship of the Eucharist as the source of spiritual renewal in the church and society. The laity, as associates, thus formed the third branch of the bigger Eymardian family. In 1859, the Aggregation received its official canonical status.

### The Development of the Aggregation

As indicated in our Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament Formation Program Session 2, by the time Father Eymard founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, he believed that Catholic lay women and men should have fuller access to spiritual writings and should be involved in Eucharist centered catechesis. In other words, he believed that his Aggregation, while centered in adoration, should have an apostolic expression and through an intense Eucharistic spirituality he aimed at the formation of *the entire life* of the Associate.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard founded the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament on November 1, 1859. The women and men religious continued to the word and development of eucharistic associations after his death, even with a former sister Servant of the Blessed Sacrament, Marie-Marthe-Baptistine Tamisier taking the idea of Father Eymard and his inspiration to work toward the first International Eucharistic Congress in Lille, France in 1881.

On July 12, 1872, the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament first received the official recognition from Rome for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament established by Mother Marguerite Guillot in Angers, France. In 1875 the Blessed Sacrament Fathers received their official recognition or approbation for the Aggregation in Marseilles and Angers France and Brussels, Belgium by Pope Pius IX. These two groups (formed by the women and men religious) were united in 1923 as the “Archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament” at the church of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers at San Claudio in Rome. (The Generalate for the Blessed Sacrament Congregation was at this parish during the time.) This partially occurred because Canon Law had been codified and revised for the church in 1917 and all religious organizations, especially international ones tied to religious orders, needed to apply for recognition by the church.

After the SSS men’s General Chapter in 2005, Congregational leadership in Rome and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in Sherbrooke, Quebec, reconstituted a Rule of Life for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament founded by Father Eymard. For a moment, let us return to some history of the Aggregation through the years as researched and shared by Catherine Marie Caron, SSS, former Superior General of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, who with Fiorenzo Salvi, SSS, former General Superior of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament worked together as superiors general to gather the different lay groups (with cleric members too) of the Peoples’ Eucharistic League, Guards of Honor, Eucharistic Associations that were in various forms across the countries. This document was tested at the Amplified General Chapters of both religious orders, but for the men in 2008 it was agreed upon unanimously. In March 2008, the official first test of the *Rule of Life for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament – The Project of Life* was implemented by both religious men and women Congregations as a gift to unite and lead the Associates tied to the Eymardian Family. For the Province of Saint Ann, the Provincial Council asked Paul Bernier, SSS to edit and update an edition for the American Province. The *Rule of Life for Associates* (ROLA) was published in October 2010 for the Province of Saint Ann (USA).

With the second publication of the *Rule of Life for Associates* (ROLA) in 2012, Bill Fickel, SSS began to organize a twelve-session, yearlong initial formation program for prospective Associates. And with Jim Brown’s assistance, together they wrote and published the first set of booklets to guide the process. Three revisions later, there were twelve

burgundy booklets and the small ROLA published in 2014.

As a result of the Second Vatican Council's mandate to re-examine the charism and mission of their founder, the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament set out on a program to:

1. Return to their sources and to the initial inspirations of their founder. This resulted in an increased interest in studying the writings of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, facilitated by Blessed Sacrament scholars who through their writings guided the congregation through a rediscovery of the "authentic Eymard."
2. Deepen their understanding of the theology of the Eucharist as expressed in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, and to update the congregation in line with the church's own *aggiornamento*.
3. Expand their appreciation and understanding from the Second Vatican Council of the laity's baptismal and vocational call to serve the church and the world.
4. Study the teachings on evangelization by Pope Saint Paul VI (and later Pope Saint John Paul II) as expressed in *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*).
5. Welcome a growing number of clerics, lay women and men to join with Blessed Sacrament religious in eucharistic evangelizing, especially in their participation and leadership in *Life in the Eucharist* programs and the founding of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing in the United States. This also led to other centers across the globe where vowed religious have and had foundations.

Increasingly, these lay women and men involved in the *Life in the Eucharist* ministry, welcomed an invitation by the religious of the Congregation to see themselves as "Associates" of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. *Life in the Eucharist* teams spread throughout the United States and into countries where the Blessed Sacrament religious had foundations. Lay parishioners in the various Blessed Sacrament parishes began to join the religious for the Liturgy of the Hours and adoration, many of whom saw themselves as responding to the call of Saint Peter Julian Eymard to foster a eucharistic piety in their own lives and engage in the mission of making known the love of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and drawing others to the sacrament.

The idea among the Blessed Sacrament religious of sharing their life and the mission of the Congregation with the laity was seen as being connected with a broader movement in the postconciliar church where religious communities have actively sought ways to involve committed lay persons meaningfully in their life and mission.

An authoritative set of guidelines was formulated in 2008 for the Aggregation to express a renewed vision of associative life for the laity that takes into consideration the *Rule of Life* of the Congregation. The document was called *Living a Eucharistic Life*. This document was proposed by the Superior General for the Congregation, at the time, Father Fiorenzo Salvi, SSS on the First Sunday of Advent, November 30, 2008. Based on some initial feedback, especially since the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament also had their own Associates across the globe, both Father Salvi and the Superior General of the Servants, Sister Catherine Marie Caron, SSS, produced a second edition for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament. The title for this document, published March 26, 2010, is *Project of Life*. As mentioned above, the Province of Saint Ann (USA) adapted this *Project of Life* and called it the *Rule of Life for Associates* in October 2010.

Meanwhile, based on universal feedback, the two superior generals updated and produced a second edition of the *Project of Life* and published this in 2010 from both generalates in Rome and Sherbrooke, Quebec in 2010. The Province of Saint Ann produced a second edition in 2013, edited by our former Provincial Superior Father Anthony Schueller, SSS.

*The Rule of Life for Associates* or *ROLA* stems from the long tradition of our religious family which, starting from Father Eymard, gave life to a “public association of lay faithful” called Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, in order to share the eucharistic mission with the laity.

## Conclusion

As Associates’ programs are developing in Blessed Sacrament and other parishes throughout the United States, the leadership of the Congregation and their lay colleagues see the challenges and opportunities before them to follow in the footsteps of their founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard. Father Eymard himself knew how to use the very different starting points to realize his mission inspired by the Eucharist: the military prison of Toulon, the slums of Paris, along with the middle class areas of Lyons and the Paris region. The establishment of the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament heralds a renewed point for the Eymardian Family of congregations. Like him, the religious of the Blessed Sacrament today are committed to adapting their charism to the energy found in their lay and cleric associates “so that Christ’s reign may come and the glory of God is revealed to the world” (*Rule of Life* 1).

## The Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing: Its History and Mission

The Province of Saint Ann traces its history back to the first foundation in New York City at Eglise Saint Jean Baptiste in 1900. (Most know the church by its English-speaking name, “Saint Jean’s.”) Immediately, lay people associated with charism of the religious order administering the parish. People’s Eucharistic Leagues developed with nocturnal prayer societies and dedicated lay people. This would follow in other SSS foundations in Chicago, IL (1917), Cleveland, OH (1931), Albuquerque, NM (1948) and Highland Heights, OH (1953).

In 1989, Robert Rousseau, a Blessed Sacrament priest at the time in Chicago, created Life in the Eucharist Seminars (LITES), using the best practices and theory of adult religious education to introduce laity and clergy to the essential elements of a comprehensive understanding of the Eucharist and a dynamic eucharistic spirituality. In this, he followed the example of Saint Peter Julian Eymard who sought to bring the eucharistic fire to the ends of the earth and share with the Church of his day a vision of the Eucharist which would renew Christian living and transform society.

As mentioned earlier, in a matter of a few years, hundreds of lay women and men attended LITES programs and many of them chose to be trained to be members of LITES Teams which put on the program in parishes in their dioceses and beyond.

Out of this groundbreaking work, which spread across the United States and to other countries worldwide, grew the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE). The CEE began offering a variety of programs and resources on the Eucharist and Eucharistic spirituality for parishes and dioceses, as well as experienced teams and speakers. In the 1990s four key programs were created, removing the word “seminar” from the initials:

- Life in the Eucharist (LITE): Sacramental Reflections
- Life in the Eucharist (LITE): Scriptural Reflections
- Team Training Program for Life in the Eucharist (LITE)
- Manna: A Three-Volume Series of Topics Related to Eucharistic Spirituality

In 1994 an office was founded for the CEE at the Blessed Sacrament Community parish in Houston, TX, Corpus Christi Church. In 1999 Tom Wiese, SSS, began directing the CEE in Houston. He continued to guide and nurture LITE Teams throughout the Province and set up a board or council of directors from each of the LITE groups across the country. In 2003, William (Bill) Fickel assumed the leadership of the CEE. He continued to build LITE Teams and especially the LITE Scriptural Reflections program. In 2008, Father Fickel moved the CEE to the provincial offices in Highland Heights, OH, where he served as Parochial Vicar of Saint Paschal Baylon Church and directed the CEE. At the same



time, a CEE office at Corpus Christi Church in Houston continued to function under the care of Nancy MacRoberts and Patty Pizzitola, Associates of the Blessed Sacrament.

The SSS General Administration approved a second edition of the *Project of Life* in October 2010 based on further feedback throughout the Congregation. In February 2013, a second edition of the *ROLA* (for the USA) was approved and published. In 2023, the General Council of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament opened discussion to review and renew a future translation of the *ROLA* for a future edition.

With the official publication of the *Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA)* in February 2013 for the Province of Saint Ann, Father Fickel began to organize a twelve-session, yearlong initial formation program for prospective associates. With the assistance of Associate Jim Brown, they wrote and published the first set of booklets to guide the process.

In 2013, Father Fickel was appointed the pastor of Saint Vincent de Paul Church in Holiday, FL. Saint Ann Province leaders then chose Father Anthony Schueller to succeed him as the CEE director. During his tenure, Jim Brown and he published the *Connections* newsletter as a way to connect all our partners in Eucharistic evangelizing. Father Schueller and Jim continued to develop LITE Teams and field requests for parish Eucharistic missions and resources.

In these years associate branches were developed in all of our Blessed Sacrament parishes and two diocesan (non-SSS administered) parishes, Saint Philip Church in Norwalk, CT (moderated by Father Schueller) and Saint Stephen Church in Winter Springs, FL, under the leadership of Blessed Sacrament Father George Dunne (from the SSS Great Britain and Ireland Province). In addition, LITE Teen Teams were developed at Saint Stephen Church, again under Father Dunne's guidance, and at Saint Paschal Baylon Church in Highland Heights, OH, under the leadership of Evamarie Cross, the parish's youth minister.

The Province of Saint Ann elected Father Schueller as Provincial Superior in November 2014. He asked Jim Brown to succeed him as the first lay director of the CEE. In addition to fielding requests for Eucharistic missions, including ones focused on adoration, as well as putting in place a number of LITE traveling Teams, the CEE:

- Developed leadership boards in all of our associate branches (cf. *ROLA* 27).
- Co-sponsored a convocation to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Father Eymard's "Gift of Self" and the Year of Mercy promulgated by Pope Francis in 2016.
- Initiated a Daily Eucharistic Reflection email and web.
- Worked with Aña Camacho, an associate at Saint Philip Church, in developing a Spanish version of the initial formation program.
- Oversaw the development of a number of ongoing formation programs for Associates, including an 18 session Course of Study on Saint Peter Julian Eymard and a program based on the Congregational resource *Counsels for Spiritual Life*.

The CEE shares the mission of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament to "respond to the hungers of the human family with the riches of God's love manifested in the Eucharist" (*Rule of Life* 3). In doing this, we follow in the footsteps of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist. *Rule of Life* 33 states: "Father Eymard's ability to translate his Eucharistic grace into very diverse ministries stimulates us to be creative in our mission." The CEE does this by developing programs, resources, and experiences that foster knowledge and love of the Eucharist and the search for the true meaning and power of the Eucharistic mystery. This is a short history of lengthy, hard work that has brought the CEE and *ROLA* to grow with the Associates.

## 7. Closing Prayer

**Closing Song (optional):** A Living Faith (Faith of Our Fathers) or Christ Be Our Light

### *A Poem in Honor of the Eymardian Charism*

Broken bread we offer, Christ's thanksgiving sign.  
Cup of wine is given, fruit of David's vine.  
Jesus remembered and all he has done,  
sacrificial banquet gathers us as one.

Peter Julian Eymard, him we now proclaim.  
Open to the Spirit, led him to exclaim –  
Jesus is there in eucharistic bread,  
bring all people to him and let them be fed.

Eucharistic mystery seized his mind his heart.  
All this mystery promised he sought to impart.  
His life was centered on this mystery –  
sacrificial presence, lived reality.

Awakened understanding of this covenant  
led to adoration, in acknowledgement.  
Prayer to the Father, in the spirit done,  
for the world's salvation with and through the Son.

Now we remember Eymard's love and zeal,  
we make known this mystery and seek to reveal  
how Jesus daily feeds the poor and weak,  
raises up the fallen, welcomes all who seek.

Let us then faith's mystery joyfully proclaim  
and with Peter Julian constantly remain  
centered on Christ, in eucharistic sign,  
prayer and word in action, Jesus we are thine!

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- *Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Apostle of the Eucharist – His Life, Times and Religious Congregations.* Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (2011).
- Pelletier, Norman, SSS. *Father Eymard in the History of the Congregation.*
- Bernier, Paul, SSS. "150 Years." *Emmanuel*, May/June 2006.
- *Roman Missal*, third edition. New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing, 2021.



## Session 11

# Evangelizing and Mission

We welcome Christ's command to the apostles and like them we proclaim the Gospel and give witness to it with our lives.

We invite all people to that communion with God which we celebrate in the Eucharist.

We collaborate with men and women of good will towards the building of a world of justice and solidarity.

*Rule of Life for Associates 12a*

## Evangelizing and Mission

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**Opening Song (optional):** Here I Am, LORD or The Servant Song

### 1. Opening Prayer

*Take time before saying the prayer to read it over in silence. Take a few minutes to sit with your thoughts and touch your experience. Think of people who are examples of faith. Think also of people who are away from the faith. Ask the Lord to help you grow in living your faith for others. Have one person from the group read the prayer slowly with pauses as others follow along.*

Shaper of the Universe, all that you have created belongs to you,  
and yet the world does not know your loving presence is among us.

Our lives are diminished by a culture of death that breeds hostilities.  
Those denied the necessities of life suffer injustice and oppression.

In Jesus, your Son, you make known your love for the world.  
Called to follow in his footsteps, we witness to his presence among us.

At every celebration of the Eucharist, his word takes root in our lives.  
Touched by the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection,  
we become a community of believers in this sacrifice of praise.

In the breaking of the bread, our hearts encounter the fire of your love.  
We receive the healing power of the Holy Spirit in the communion we share.

As your disciples you send us to “go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”  
We humbly pray you remove all that might hinder us from loving others.

Your servant Peter Julian led people to the Eucharist to satisfy their hungers  
at the banquet of love where all are welcomed.

Be with all who feel separated from you or are indifferent to your love,  
most especially those we now hold in the quiet of this prayer.

#### **Apostles of the Eucharist Prayer**

*Adapted from a few opening prayers in the  
Sacramentary, second edition by Norman Pelletier, SSS*

God of life and of light,  
your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires.  
Renew our resolve to gather as your people  
and to celebrate your faithful love for us  
manifested in Jesus’ gift of the Eucharist.

Feed us at the Table  
 where we long for your presence  
 more than for life itself.  
 May we cherish the gifts of bread and wine  
 and share these blessings with our brothers and sisters.  
 Send us, now, as witnesses of your gospel  
 into a world of fragile peace and broken promises,  
 so that, formed into the likeness of your son, Jesus,  
 we may worship you in Spirit and Truth  
 and proclaim your mighty deeds throughout the world. Amen.  
 Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, pray for us!  
 Saint Joseph, pray for us!  
 Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Apostle of the Eucharist, pray for us!  
 Saint Paschal Baylon, pray for us!

## 2. Introduction to the Theme

Great emphasis is being placed on what is called the “new evangelization” taking place within the church. Traditionally, the work of evangelizing was entrusted to missionaries who were sent to distant lands to preach the Gospel and establish the church. Peter Julian Eymard was born with a missionary spirit and desired to spread the gospel message to the ends of the earth. God did not give him the physical strength required for such a task.

God did plant within his heart, though, the seed that is now coming to full fruition in the efforts underway to bring about a “new evangelization” within the church. As we read earlier (Session 2), Pope Saint John Paul II gave the title “Apostle of the Eucharist” to Saint Peter Julian Eymard. Peter Julian was concerned with the great number of people who were no longer attending Mass or experiencing the vibrancy of the faith in their daily lives.

The *Rule of Life* of the Congregation says of the founder in number 2,

Challenged by the religious ignorance and indifference of his time, Saint Peter Julian Eymard searched for the answer 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.

You don’t have to go very far to find people who may be Catholic in name alone and have little or no relationship to Christ or the church. For too long, the church has been closed in on itself and has become burdened with requirements and regulations that became obstacles to the experience of the love of God made available in the Eucharist.

The evangelizing efforts of the church flow from the Eucharist. The faithful come together to worship. They acknowledge their sins and listen to the word of God in order to bring the message of the Gospel to the world. United with Christ in the sacrifice of praise to the Father, they are nourished with the Lamb of God and sent to be a healing presence of God’s love in an often broken world.

During the festivities of World Youth Day (Brazil, July 2013), Pope Francis set this challenge before them, “We have to become courageous Christians and seek out those who are the flesh of Christ.” Inasmuch as the flesh of Christ includes every human being on the planet, this will require the resources of the Holy Spirit. He goes on to raise the question:

But what if we make mistakes, falling flat on our newly apostolic faces? Well, what of it? Get on with it: if you make a mistake, you get up and go forward: that is the way. Those who do not walk in order not to err, make the more serious mistake.

### 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

May I seek you with a pure intention, and with a pure zeal may I proclaim with your Gospel; may I work for your glory alone, that you may be known in the Blessed Sacrament, that your life may be manifested in my life.

On retreat with diocesan clergy in Grenoble  
September 8, 1837

Now please pray so that I may respond to such a beautiful vocation; that, like the bread of the sacrifice, I may lose my life, my substance, my personality, to be changed into the spirit and life of Jesus, retraining only a human appearance, humiliation, and poverty, so that the virtue of Jesus may dwell in the midst of my infirmities.

To Mme. Clotilde Tholin-Bost  
May 18, 1856

### 4. Bible Text: John 17:18-23

### 5. Conversation – share your story

- Call to mind an experience of sharing your faith with another person. What happened? What was it like for you? What was the impact – for you? For the other person?
- The priest or deacon may say at the end of the Mass, “go in peace glorifying the Lord by your life,” or “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.” What does that mean for you? Give an example of how your response to this commissioning (being sent out) is carried out in the course of a typical week.

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## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

### **Eucharistic Evangelizing: Spread The Eucharistic Fire Everywhere! by William Fickel, SSS**

Former director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing, Father William Fickel has participated in the formation and ministry of laity who become teams of eucharistic evangelizers. They visit parishes to present the *Life in the Eucharist* programs based on scriptural or sacramental themes. The goal of the ministry within parishes is to assist them in forming lay teams of evangelizers who learn to give witness and offer teachings centered on the eucharistic themes of the LITE program. In this article, Father Fickel presents the vision of Saint Peter Julian Eymard to transform society by making known the love of God present in the Eucharist. Popes, cardinals, bishops, and clergy all call forth the laity to live the grace of baptism and confirmation by joining in the new evangelization taking place within the Catholic Church fulfilling the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

### **Evangelizing and Mission – Key Points**

- Mission is what defines the church. The church does not exist for itself; it exists to bring God's grace and salvation to the entire world. That is the task of all the baptized, and the Eucharist nourishes us as members of Christ's body to be a living sign of God's presence serving the needs of the human family and inviting them to share in the work of salvation.
- As the disciples were sent out to proclaim God's word, so, too, are we sent forth in our contemporary world. We are the 72 disciples (Luke 10:1–17) of the twenty-first century who have been commissioned to do our best to proclaim Jesus' message and to create faith communities centered in the Eucharist and serving the needs of the human family.
- The Eucharist, when it is well celebrated with full active participation, shapes the daily life of people in the light of the Gospel. The charity, compassion, and service rendered to others become outward signs of our faith in the mission of Jesus living in the church.
- Saint Peter Julian Eymard was convinced that a life cannot be fully eucharistic unless it is consecrated to both God and our fellow human beings. He wanted his followers to become disciples and apostles of the Eucharist.

### **Reading**

### **Eucharistic Evangelizing: Spread the Eucharistic Fire Everywhere! by William Fickel, SSS**

*In response to our baptismal vocation we seek to witness to Christ's presence at the crossroads of society and, starting from the Eucharist, we strive to influence our world in the light of this mystery, source and summit of all evangelizing. Rule of Life for Associates 2b.*

The spirit and vision of Saint Peter Julian is taking hold throughout the congregation and among the associates of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. Celebrations were held during 2013 (the “Year of Faith”) to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his canonization by Pope Saint John XXIII and the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Called the “Apostle of the Eucharist” the Holy Father said of Saint Peter Julian Eymard:

Yes, honor and celebrate him who was so perfect an adorer of the Blessed Sacrament; after his example, always place at the center of your thoughts, of your affections, the undertakings of your zeal this incomparable source of all grace: the mystery of faith, which hides under the veils the author himself of grace, Jesus the incarnate Word.

The world and church have changed in many ways over these fifty years from the time of the council and the canonization of the priest whose heart was enflamed to make known the love of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament throughout the world. Our founder had a vision that when the Eucharist was experienced as the living presence of God’s love entrusted to us, hearts would be changed and people’s lives would be transformed. A good example is a group of young people from Saint Stephen’s Parish in Winter Springs, Florida, who demonstrate the full measure of this spiritual force working in and through their lives. Though they are typical teens, they live with great eucharistic zeal as a result of going through a Life in the Eucharist program for teens.

In the pastoral letter *Disciples of the Lord / Sharing the Vision* (2010), Cardinal Donald Wuerl challenged people to embrace the new evangelization taking place within the church. The letter states that everything the church is, she has received from Christ. The first and most precious of his gifts is the grace bestowed through the Eucharist, the paschal mystery: Christ’s passion, death, and glorious resurrection. As the people Jesus has freed from the power of sin and saved from death, we are to give witness to the life of Christ that has been entrusted to us. The fruit of our Eucharist, when celebrated with full participation of all the people, is to transmit faithfully the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. The message of this pastoral letter is this: “The church’s primary mission is evangelization.”

The word “evangelization” comes from the Greek word for “gospel,” εὐαγγέλιον or *evangelium*. The gospel announces the “Good News” that Jesus is God’s Son and our Savior. Jesus sent his disciples on mission to preach and to heal as the sign of God’s presence (kingdom) in the world, (Luke 9:1-7). The disciples went out in pairs to preach repentance and drive out demons and cure the sick (Mark 6:12). This “partnership” of being “sent out” to evangelize reflects the communal aspect of the church. Catholics do not evangelize the way other Christians do, that is, with an altar call that invites an individual to come forward and make a public demonstration of faith accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. It is from the celebration of the Eucharist that we are sent out to share the life of Christ received in Holy Communion in living the Gospel message. We seek to bring others into a communion of friendship by inviting them to belong to the body of Christ and take their place at the table of the Lord.

For many Catholics, the idea of evangelizing remains a foreign concept. We tend to be private about our religion. It has taken us years to build up the communal spirit of our worship, and some still desire the more impersonal, private, quiet, or Latin Mass. Saint John Paul II emphasized that Catholic evangelization necessitated catechetical instruction, proclamation of the gospel, the social teaching of the church, and participation in sacramental worship.

A total evangelization will penetrate deeply into the social and cultural reality, including the economic and political order....Such a total evangelization will naturally have its highest point in an intense liturgical life that will make parishes living ecclesial communities (*L’Osservatore Romano*, December 5, 1988).

Among the dramatic developments in modern Catholicism, says Father Avery Dulles, SJ, is the evangelical shift in Catholic teaching and practice under the pontificates of Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. The church needs

to find a model and inspiration to overcome the misunderstanding and resistance among some Catholics to this “new” evangelization. Just as the complaint was made with the changes in the liturgy that we were becoming more Protestant in our worship, so also many Catholics think of the evangelical Protestant churches when Catholics are challenged to become evangelizers.

We think of someone like Tim Tebow (former college and NFL football star) who the *New York Times* called “a preacher in a football body.” There is no mistaking that his entire life including his time on the field gives witness to his faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. He is a man who listens to God speak to him and does what the Lord tells him to do including putting Bible references on black patches under his eyes during a game. He has stirred a lot of controversy among those who want to keep religion out of the public forum. However, a vibrant relationship with Christ breaks out beyond the confines of the churches because we are people who have been sent out to give witness to the love God has for every person regardless of creed or politic.

Former Archbishop José Gomez of San Antonio said in his pastoral letter *You Will Be My Witnesses* (2010) that for the new evangelization to become a reality, laypeople have to step up. “The proclamation of Christ is the duty of every believer,” the archbishop wrote. He asserted evangelization begins “in the heart that has been evangelized, the heart that has heard the Good News and been converted.”

“We cannot be silent about what we have seen and heard and felt,” the archbishop declared. “We cannot help but proclaim and testify to the great difference that Jesus Christ has made in our lives.” Evangelization is a duty of every Catholic, but it is a “duty of delight, a duty we carry out with joy and thanksgiving.” “We want the world, beginning with those nearest to us, to share in what we have been given — the free gift of God’s grace and the joy that comes with knowing the truth that sets us free,” he said.

The duty to proclaim Christ falls upon every member of the church. The archbishop’s pastoral letter is addressed particularly to the laity. “I want to speak especially to you who live out your faith in the midst of the world and all its secular affairs,” he wrote. “As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, lay people are given the ‘duty ... to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by [all] throughout the earth. This duty is all the more pressing when it is only through them that people can hear the Gospel and know Christ.’”

Archbishop Gomez noted how laypeople have been fundamental for the process of evangelization since the very beginning of the church.

The primary apostolate of lay people, since the early church, has always been to spread and defend the faith among their families and neighbors and to bring the teachings of Christ to bear on the issues facing their communities, ...Your first duty remains to heed the commission every one of us receives at the end of every Mass — to go out into the world to love and serve our Lord.

Nourished by the gift of his body and blood, you are called to bear witness to this gift by making your lives a form of worship to God. Your evangelization must always be profoundly ecclesial and intensely eucharistic. You are calling people to Christ and to his church — and to the heart of the church, which is the Eucharist.

Archbishop Gomez urged the faithful to have a renewed awareness of their priestly souls and to:

seek to serve God and your brothers and sisters every day, through all that you do and say, through the way that you live your life.

People respond more to example than to ‘teaching, ...Testify to your faith through your daily habits and

actions. You will find that your witness to the Christian life will be attractive to others and will afford you regular chances to talk about the ‘source’ of your happiness in Jesus Christ and your Catholic faith.

To my mind, the deepest problem we face is the tendency under secularism to reduce religious identity to a kind of ‘cultural Catholicism.

For those who have left the Catholic Church, Archbishop Gomez recommended an active approach.

“Let us talk to our brothers and sisters about what is keeping them from the church,” he said. “Let us talk to them of Christ’s living presence in his church and in his sacraments. The happiness we all seek is found only in communion with Christ in his church. Let us then issue a compassionate call for our lapsed Catholic members to return to the sacrament of reconciliation and welcome them back to the eucharistic table.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard was troubled by the religious indifference and ignorance that challenged the church in his time. People separated themselves from the regular practice of their faith and lost the sense of God’s love for them in the face of the hardships and struggles of daily life. For Peter Julian, the solution to these social problems was to be found in the Blessed Sacrament. He wanted to establish the reign of Christ in the hearts of the people. He was passionate in his conviction that Christ would draw all things to himself and bring about a revitalization of faith within the church.

I want to speak with you about the Most Blessed Sacrament because I would like to see this fire break out from under the ashes and become a blazing fire. I know very well that we must wait for God’s time; but who is telling you that it hasn’t come? As for me, I believe it has and I tell you: Have courage! Get to work! People must be forced to open the tabernacle door. Our Lord must not remain hidden to this indifferent or unbelieving generation. The Sun of the Eucharist must rise to scatter all the shadows of the night, melt frozen souls, and frighten away its enemies, if they aren’t touched by his love. *The Life and Letters of Saint Peter Julian Eymard*, Volume 5, document 1766, page 226).

“People must be forced to open the tabernacle door!” In the mind and heart of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, this is eucharistic evangelizing! It is a call to prayer and a deeper relationship with the presence of God in our lives. We cannot lock God up in a tabernacle. Saint Peter Julian is also saying that we cannot hide our love of God within our hearts. It has to be made known. It has to be shared with others. Faith is not a private matter that can be kept secret. It is public by its very nature of gathering people together in worship. Our reception of Communion is a pledge of our willingness to be in communion with others. We come together and acknowledge that our lives are broken, in needing the healing love and mercy of Jesus so that we can reach out in service to others.

Our secular culture is losing the sense of what it means to belong to a faith community. People like their privacy and personal independence and a certain freedom from obligations. In many places, parishes are experiencing an influx of new immigrants from Asia and Latin America with different cultures and experiences of being church. Some of these people have a different piety and find it difficult to adapt to the local established parish community. At times, there may seem to be two separate Catholic communities using one church building and having nothing to do with each other. The Eucharist calls us to be the one body of Christ with all having a place at the one table of the Lord.

To be captivated by the love of God, was for Saint Peter Julian the distinctive mark of eucharistic evangelizing. Open the doors of your homes and churches and welcome others to table friendship. Warm, loving hospitality is the best way we can give witness of the Christ who taught us to share our food with the hungry and thirsty in our midst. Catholics evangelize in the setting of being a faith community. Whenever we talk to another, whatever we share with another, we are ultimately inviting them to join us around the table of the Lord to eat and drink the Lord with us. This is why Catholic evangelization must revolve around the parish, the local community where the Eucharist is celebrated. We are



representatives of that community, calling people to experience God's presence with us in that community.

We are all evangelizers; it is the primary mission of the church. Evangelization has to do with us, our children, our relatives, our neighbors and friends as communities of believers caring for the human family. We can all think of relatives and friends who are alienated from their faith. We also know people who have no church but express curiosity or have questions about life's meaning. Like it or not, we are always evangelizing. People know we are Catholic. They see us going to church. We have no choice but to evangelize. Our only choice is to evangelize well or to do it poorly.

Christian families are called to welcome, demonstrate, and spread the love and presence of Christ in the world. Pope Benedict XVI said to members of the Pontifical Council for the Family: "The new evangelization is inseparable from the Christian family." The family does so by being a community of lifelong, self-giving love. It is open to welcoming new life, it educates its members in the faith and in charity, and its civic involvement and charitable activity are motivated by faith.

When a Christian family "is able to live love as communion and service, as a mutual gift and openness toward all, it reflects the splendor of Christ and the beauty of the Trinity in the world," the pope said. Pope Benedict said the church needs strong couples involved in its pastoral work, too, especially in educating children, teaching young people about the Christian vision of sexuality, preparing engaged couples for marriage and helping married couples strengthen their relationships.

Pope Benedict invited the young couples "to discover the beauty of existing for and being precious to someone, being able to say to each other, 'You are important to me.'" He told couples that the journey of getting to know each other was a gradual process that should be lived with intensity and truth. "Love requires a process of maturation starting from initial attraction and feeling good with the other to learning to give of oneself, sacrifice for, and respect the other."

As Catholics, we have the greatest gift to share: the faith and grace to assemble around the Lord's table, to hear God's word proclaimed, and to share in the sacred meal. The table is not set for us to keep to ourselves. It is a table meant to be shared, even as it has been shared with us. Indeed, how can it be the Lord's meal unless it is shared? Let us make room around the table, and invite people to our parishes. Let us make our parishes places we're proud to have people visit. And let us love others by offering them the one unbreakable sign of love we have received: the grace of our faith.

I would like to close with the words of Saint Peter Julian Eymard who wrote:

Continue to work for the glory of God; be like a hearth which spreads the eucharistic fire everywhere. Believe in your grace and mission; it is faith which brings about the works of God (*The Life and Letters of Saint Peter Julian Eymard*, Volume 6, document 2035, page 125).

## 7. Closing Prayer

### Prayer of Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance  
everywhere we go.

Flood our souls with your spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly  
that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through us and be so in us  
that every soul we come in contact with  
may feel your presence in our soul.

Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.  
Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine,  
so to shine as to be light to others.

The light, O Jesus, will be all from you.  
None of it will be ours.  
It will be you shining on others through us.

Let us thus praise you in the way you love best by shining on those around us.

Let us preach you without preaching,  
not by words, but by our example;  
by the catching force –  
the sympathetic influence of what we do,  
the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you. Amen

**Closing Song (optional):** Go Make a Difference or City of God

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Dodge, Don Scott. "Liturgy and Mission." *Emmanuel*, March/April 2008.
- Gribble, Richard. "Our Vocation to Proclaim the Gospel." *Emmanuel*, March/April 2008.
- Gomez, Archbishop Jose. *You Will Be My Witnesses: A Pastoral Letter to the People of God of San Antonio on the Christian Mission to Evangelize and Proclaim Jesus Christ*. February 15, 2010. Online: [www.archsa.org/documents/anv\\_en.pdf](http://www.archsa.org/documents/anv_en.pdf).
- LaVerdiere, Eugene, SSS. "Proclaiming the Death of the Lord." *Emmanuel*, September/October 2006
- Morneau, Bishop Robert. "Effective Evangelization." *Emmanuel*, January/February 2008.
- Ramsey, Boniface, OP. "The Eucharist and Mission." *Emmanuel*, September/October 2007.
- Wuerl, Cardinal Donald. *Disciples of the Lord: Sharing the Vision. A Pastoral Letter on the New Evangelization to the Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Archdiocese of Washington*. August 23, 2010. Online: [www.adw.org/pastoral/eletterlink.asp](http://www.adw.org/pastoral/eletterlink.asp).
- Homily of his Holiness Pope Francis, *Called to Promote the Culture of Encounter*. July 28, 2013. Online: [www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa).

## Session 12

# The Covenant Commitment

We are ready to assume lay ministries in liturgy, in sharing of faith and in the pastoral structures of the church.

We receive the inspiration and the strength for our service of charity and our commitment to transform society, from Christ, who offers himself totally to us in the Eucharist.

At the end of the period of preparation and probation, candidates make the Promise to commit themselves to live their baptismal consecration along the evangelical way taught by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, in accordance with the *Rule of Life for Associates* of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

*Rule of Life for Associates* 12c, 17a, 20a

## The Covenant Commitment

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**Opening Song (optional):** The Summons or Here I Am Lord

### 1. Opening Prayer

Leader: God of loving mercy,  
to restore creation and to bring all people to intimacy with you,  
you sent Jesus, your Son, into our world.  
His mission was to reveal your love  
and to build your rule of perfect justice and peace.

All: **As we gather here for this time of reflection and prayer,  
we accept our rightful share in Christ's mission today.  
He has no eyes but ours,  
no ears but ours,  
no hands but ours.  
Use them to touch and heal our world.**

Leader: In your love, you invite us to the table of the Eucharist  
which foretells the banquet of everlasting life and joy  
in your presence one day.  
In your love, you invite us to communion with you  
and one another.  
Bring us to love you and the world so much  
that we will give freely of ourselves for your glory  
and the good of all.

All: **Jesus said, "I have come to light a fire on the earth."  
Kindle in our hearts the fire of the Holy Spirit  
that our words will give you honor  
and our deeds will help to bring about your reign on earth.**

**We make this prayer  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who gave his life out of love for the world  
and lives with you and the Holy Spirit,  
God, forever and ever. Amen.**

### 2. Introduction to the Theme

The Eucharist discloses the many gifts that are given to be used in building up the body of Christ in faith and in service. As Saint Paul says in First Corinthians, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them

for everyone” (12: 4–7).

The *Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA)* invites us to “collaborate with men and women of good will towards the building of a world of justice and solidarity” (12). It states that “we are ready to assume lay ministries” in our parish (especially through the various eucharistic ministries); that “nourished by the Eucharist . . . we wish to promote gospel values in social and political life, in the world of labor and finance, in the defense of family and life, in the field of culture, education, science and arts, in the media, in the search for justice and peace, in the conservation of creation” (13).

And lastly, the *ROLA* states that “we receive the inspiration and the strength for our service of charity . . . of bringing the Good News of Salvation to the least and the marginalized, to those oppressed by poverty, weakness, illness and hardship and to those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice;” (and, to) “take an active part in the actions of our local church to foster solidarity, human dignity, and the holistic development of people” (17).

We have been studying, reflecting on and praying about the *ROLA* and a number of themes related to being a disciple of Saint Peter Julian Eymard. In this concluding session, we prepare ourselves for our Covenant Commitment as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. In this concluding session, we pause to reflect back on our experience of the many months we have been together and solidify our desire to live our baptismal consecration according to the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

### 3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

The Aggregation of the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament is a spiritual fraternity in which a member is inspired by the Eucharistic life of the Society, shares its goals, according to the limits of his duties of state, and becomes an active participant in all its merits and in all its spiritual graces.

After April 8, 1863  
OC VIII, 432

The work of First Communion of adults, as a daughter of the work of Christian doctrine, has as its goal: to reach out in Paris for the adults who did not make their First Communion, to instruct them, and prepare them to receive worthily this great sacrament, as well as that of confirmation.

Early 1860  
OC VIII, 547

### 4. Bible Text: 1 Corinthians 12:7–11

## 5. Conversation – share your story

In these sessions, we have reflected together on the life and vision of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the charism of the Blessed Sacrament congregation, the *ROLA* and what it means to live as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament. As you discern your call to this way of life, we offer the following questions for you to reflect upon in preparation for making the Promise as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament. Please be prepared to share your reflection at our last formation session before the Promise Ceremony.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard’s vision for those called to the Eymardian Family consisted of three primary areas of focus for living a Eucharistic spirituality. They are living the “Gift of Self” in *community* where we find relationships that enable us to share our gifts, our strengths and weaknesses with others who walk our spiritual journey with us; living the “Gift of Self” in a community of *prayer* that opens our hearts and lives to God both individually and as a community; and, living the “gift of Self” in a community of *service* where we choose to share with generosity the gifts and goods the Lord has given us as we commit ourselves more deeply to the mission of the Church. This is a process of discernment.

- Do you feel that God is calling you to make a commitment to the Blessed Sacrament Congregation as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament? If so, why?
- How will you live this commitment in the three areas discussed above: community, prayer, and service? Please be specific in terms of what you plan to do or continue to do.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

- *A Theology of Ministry* by Frank Zalar

### Final Meeting – Key Points

- This session brings to a close the initial formation for aspiring associates and an introduction to the vision and mission of Saint Peter Julian Eymard. Each participant is called upon to complete her or his discernment and step forward to be received as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation.
- The new associate is invited to:
  - a) Actively and joyfully participate in the banquet of the risen Christ on the Lord's Day, on feast days, and whenever possible, even on weekdays. (*ROLA* 7b)
  - b) Insofar as we can, commit ourselves to personal prayer in the Presence of the Eucharist, whether monthly, weekly or daily. (*ROLA* 8b)
  - c) Insofar as we can, share the prayer of the church (the Liturgy of the Hours) . . . giving particular importance to Morning and Evening Prayer. (*ROLA* 9b)
  - d) Joyously celebrate the feasts special to our association: the solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament on May 13, the solemnity of Saint Peter Julian Eymard on August 2, and the day of his baptism on February 5. (*ROLA* 10b)
  - e) Like Mary, let ourselves be guided by the Spirit so that, docile to his action, we may contribute effectively to the coming of the Kingdom. (*ROLA* 11b)
- As associates, we now are ready to bring the insights and perspective gained in this formation program to “*be Eucharist* to others through (our) various ministerial works and most of all through the way in which each of us lives our life and relates to others” (Zalar).

### Reading

#### *A Theology of Ministry* by Frank Zalar

*Frank Zalar is a former member of Saint Paschal Baylon Parish in Highland Heights, Ohio, where he and his wife, Marjorie, were very active, both in parish ministries and the Life in the Eucharist ministry sponsored by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. He and his wife are both Associates of the Congregation.*

In this article, I would like to chronicle some of the important theological, ecclesial and experiential elements which support my on-going ministry of Eucharistic evangelizing. The Eucharist, as the source and summit of my life in the Catholic Church, informs and animates my spirituality and the resultant work I do in the church. The spirituality within which I strive to conform my life – and that I try to model for others – is grounded in the Old and New Testaments, supported by church traditions and (I hope) realistically situated within the American culture. My efforts to live this spirituality consciously, has transformed my life in many ways, and continues to manifest itself in the work I do within my parish community. In response to the affirmation at the end of each eucharistic celebration, “go forth to live the Gospel,” I strive to “be Eucharist” to others through my various ministerial works and most of all through the way in which I live my life and relate to others.

## Eucharistic Spirituality Informs Ministry

A meaningful spirituality is a way of thinking, doing, and living. It impacts all aspects of our lives and animates our ministry. A simple definition which I find most useful is that of Jesuit Father Walter Burghardt: “Spirituality is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.” Spirituality, then, is not just a contemplative inner experience of God for me, but also its outward expression in relationship. It is contemplation in action. Father Burghardt further comments that spirituality must be biblical, ecclesial, and eucharistic.

Spirituality is *biblical*, because it should be based upon God’s self-revelation in his word. The Hebrew and New Testaments reveal the profound meaning of justice, declare God’s preferential option for the poor, and relate justice to God’s judgment in this life and the next. In the Jewish Scriptures, injustice was infidelity; and so, not to execute justice was not to worship God. Jesus’ ministry was founded upon this tradition and when Jesus inaugurated a new covenant, loving one’s neighbor was said to be like loving God (Mt 22:39). Thus, foundational to my ministry, loving God must be synonymous with loving and serving my neighbors in justice.

Spirituality is also *ecclesial*, because it takes place within a distinctive community. Such spirituality is developed in the midst of people, with people, and for people. Such spirituality is not just between Jesus and me, but rather between Jesus and us. In like manner, ministry which emanates from such inner spirituality is performed publicly within a community of people and within a hierarchical church.

Finally and most important, my spirituality is *eucharistic*. I propose that this is the most important aspect, because a broad reflection upon Eucharist includes the biblical and ecclesial aspects mentioned above. Spirituality flows from the Eucharist because “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows.” In Eucharist, we remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a special kind of remembering (*anamnesis*) that makes Jesus truly present to us, and in so doing, transforms our lives. In the Liturgy of the Word, we are called to be part of the story of God’s presence and activity in the universe. We are drawn into the very life of God, into relationship with God, through Jesus Christ in the Spirit.

In the Old Testament, we relive the story of God’s covenant with the Hebrews. Even though it is broken over and over again, God forgives and he himself never breaks the covenant. In the New Testament, Jesus is now the visible embodiment of our covenant relationship with God. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, bread is blessed, broken, and shared so that – through the power of the Holy Spirit – we may experience the all-encompassing love of God through the presence of his Son. And finally, having experienced Eucharist, we are now called upon to be Eucharist to a hungry world.

Thus, the Eucharist energizes my spirituality to minister in the world. It is for this reason that I can say that eucharistic spirituality informs my ministry at all times and in all places. I have performed many tasks, undertaken many projects, and assumed many responsibilities. I have done and will continue these activities as a result of being in relationship with my triune God, framed by my experience of God in Eucharist.

## The Call to Ministry

About ten years ago, my experience of ministry became more intense and a transformation began in my life. I attended a Life in the Eucharist (LITE) retreat. This program, initiated by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, is designed to introduce a parish community to contemporary Eucharistic theology and spirituality. Its primary goal is to draw any parish community into deeper appreciation and understanding of the eucharistic mystery. It provides an opportunity for adult Catholics to share their spirituality and their diverse understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist.



I was deeply moved by what I learned regarding my conscious and active participation in the celebration of the Eucharist. I was also challenged to fully understand and unify my life experiences in light of the Eucharist – the source and summit of Christian Catholic life. I joined a LITE team at my home parish, and soon became an active member. Shortly after, I became a trainer of LITE team members and eventually recruited and trained a new team to present a second LITE program developed by the congregation.

My relationship with the members of the congregation as well as the relationships I have forged with my LITE team members and the people I minister to through LITE also supports [an] integrated, Trinitarian view of ministry (Edward Hahnenberg's *Ministries, A Relational Approach*, 2003). Ministry is not about the “being” of ministry (ontology), and is not about the “doing” of ministry (function). Rather, ministry is about relationship, which combines both being and doing. Ministers come to be who they are in relationships of service; and relationships of service shape a minister. I am a living example of such a model of ministry. I have been shaped by the people I have worked with and those whom I have served.

### Conclusion

I go forward on my journey with a better understanding of my own identity as a gift from God bringing me closer to his kingdom. The service I render to the community and the response of that community to my service is key to the authenticity of my charisms and vocations as gifts from God. My ministry, though done within church structures, is not the totality of the reality which I am experiencing.

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## 7. Closing Prayer

All:       **Saint Peter Julian,  
the Lord has given you,  
as he once did to Jacob, his servant,  
an ever searching faith.  
All your life long you have sought the way  
to deepen your union with God  
and to satisfy the hungers of humanity.  
In the Eucharist you discovered the answer to your searching:  
God's love was there for you and for all humanity.**

**Answering this gift of love  
you made the gift of yourself to God  
and you have given of yourself to the service of his people  
without counting.  
Your life, modeled on that of the Cenacle,  
where Mary and the apostles were united in prayer.  
Their apostolic zeal caused them to build Christian communities,  
where the Eucharist is the center and the source of life.**

**Saint Peter Julian,  
accompany us on our journey of faith.  
May our ardent prayer and our generous service  
help us to contribute to the establishing of a world  
where there is justice and peace.  
May our celebrations of the Eucharist  
proclaim the liberating love of God  
for the renewal of his church  
and the coming of his kingdom.**

**Closing Song (optional):** City of God or Sent Forth By God's Blessing

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Zalar, Frank. "A Theology of Ministry." *Emmanuel*, September/October 2006.

# Appendix A

## Manual for Living the Commitment of an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament

Following in the steps of Father Eymard, we invite all those whom the Spirit directs to the Eucharist, both priests and lay people, to become associated with our family and share in its mission. We offer them our continuing support so that they may find in the Eucharist the inspiration for their whole life and commitments.

*Rule of Life 43*  
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

## Manual for Living the Commitment of an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament

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### 1. Introduction

This *Manual for Living the Commitment of an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament* (hereafter *Manual*) is offered “to all those, who moved by the Holy Spirit, feel themselves as belonging to the one spiritual family which draws inspiration from Saint Peter Julian Eymard.” (*Project of Life*: Rome: Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, November 30, 2008). This *Manual* for Associates of the Blessed Sacrament offers directives to members who under the inspiration of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the guidance of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament pledge themselves to place the Eucharist at the center of their lives. They are an application of the *Rule of Life for Associates* for the Province of St. Ann. The *Manual* is an expression of the sharing of life that takes place among members of the Congregation and the Associates. Associates are an integral part of Saint Ann Province.

The words contained in this *Manual* reflect the lived experience of lay women and men and religious of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation who have grown together in the spirituality of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and over the last 20 years collaborated in the ministry of Eucharistic Evangelizing. The *Manual* is presented to each Associate of the Blessed Sacrament as a guide to membership. Both lay, clergy and professed religious are invited to form Eymardian followers who center their lives in the Eucharist and Blessed Sacrament Community.

### 2. Mission Statement

We share in the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard as lived by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament to make known the love of God present in the Eucharist as Eucharistic evangelizers.

Objective: Leading lives animated by the Eucharist we spread the love of God through...

- Celebration of the Eucharist in public worship and liturgy,
- Contemplation of the abiding presence of God in prayer,
- Communion with all peoples in self-giving service.

### 3. *Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA)*

The subject of sharing our life and mission with the laity has been at the core of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (men’s branch) Provincial and General Chapters as an essential part of the Eucharistic renewal taking place within the Congregation. The report presented to the 33<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter in 2005 recognized the need for an authoritative point of reference in proposing a “Eucharistic life for the laity.” The Congregation needed a clear proposal, at an inspirational and organizational level, for those laity and clergy who were asking to share our charism and mission as members of a publicly recognized associative membership.

A new set of guidelines was formulated for the Aggregation to express a renewed vision of associative life for the laity and dedicated clergy that takes into consideration a reorientation to the *Rule of Life* of the Congregation. This document is called *Project of Life* by the Generalate and has been entitled for the American province *Rule of Life for Associates of the Blessed Sacrament*. This *ROLA* stems from the long tradition of our religious family, which, starting from Father

Eymard, gave expression to a “public association of lay faithful” called Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, to share our Eucharistic mission with the laity.

#### 4. Vocational Call

Blessed Sacrament Associates experience a call to make a formal covenant to spiritual formation in leading lives centered on the Eucharist, the celebration of the Mass, Liturgy of the Hours and prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and in making the love of God known to others in living a Eucharistic style of life. Associates are members of the larger Blessed Sacrament family within the Church through their shared covenant with one another.

- We experience a *call* to witness and live our lives by sharing the mission and charism of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and to form communities centered on the Eucharist.
- We desire to know more about Saint Peter Julian Eymard and his charism and to promote it and live it.
- We feel a deep connection with the Blessed Sacrament family and its Eucharistic spirituality and have been touched by the love and hospitality the community offers.
- We are empowered and trusted to collaborate with them in the ministry of the Congregation.
- We desire to share our time, talent and treasure in a commitment to the ministry of Eucharistic evangelizing.

The Associates share personal experiences of the transformative influence the Eucharist has in their lives. “The bread and wine which becomes the Body and Blood of Christ changes our lives to give witness to the presence of God in the life of the Church” (Confer *ROLA* 12).

#### 5. Inspiration of Founder

The spirit proposed by Saint Peter Julian Eymard is the very same as that which animates the Associates and the religious of the Congregation in our time: “The gift of self to God and to our neighbor out of love, as Jesus has given himself and still gives himself to us in the Eucharist.” (P. Giuseppe Vassalli, SSS). Saint Peter Julian recognized the need to have committed lay people promote the knowledge and worship of the Eucharist, as the source of spiritual renewal in the Church and Society. He wrote on October 8, 1865, to Clotilde Tholin-Bost “...the love of Jesus is really neglected and even humiliated in the Christian world...Feed this fire which God has enkindled through you; that is your mission, you can’t have a more beautiful one” (Letter 1643).

#### 6. Formation

The Eucharist shapes what it means to be church in service to the world. Through regular gatherings Associates make use of a wealth of resources drawn from sacred scripture, Church documents, writings of the saints, along with presentations in Eucharistic theology and spirituality. Each community participates in the formation of its members following the modules provided by the Province of St. Ann. Additional materials are available from the province resource center. Communities gather periodically, usually on a monthly basis, to share prayer and fellowship.

Associates share a Eucharistic way of life by entering into the power of Christ’s death and resurrection as the point of departure for on-going personal growth and spiritual development. Their experience of life is enriched through personal and communal prayer in the presence of the Eucharist. They learn to accept the challenge of responding to the moral and social circumstances of our society today with a conviction of justice and truth the Eucharist requires of us. They are united

in their comprehensive understanding of the Eucharist as **Celebration** (Word and Sacrament), **Contemplation**, (prayer in the presence of the Eucharist), and **Communion**, (being sent in a spirit of solidarity and service to all, especially the poor and suffering).

Formation in:

- Communities of friendship and faith, where we learn, pray together, share life and care for one another.
- A spirit of collegiality and commitment to a shared vocation of Eucharistic evangelizing in the spirit of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.
- Direction and a framework for initial and on-going formation.
- A willingness to help each other grow in understanding and living the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.
- A commitment to on-going formation through prayer, reflection, teaching and table fellowship.

## 7. Discernment

Discernment involves prayer for guidance from the Holy Spirit and is a central part of the candidates' initial formation experience. Discerning the will of God continues in the life of the Associates as they progress in their spiritual development.

Discerning membership:

- Candidates first discern the call to embrace the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and to live a fully Eucharistic lifestyle.
- The community discerns the readiness of the candidate for membership.
- The Associates discern the ways they live their covenant according to the *Rule of Life for Associates*.
- Each year members make a review of life to discern the ways they live their covenant promise.

## 8. Covenant Commitment

At the completion of the period of preparation the candidates make the Promise or Covenant to commit themselves to live their baptismal consecration along the evangelical path traced out by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, in accordance with the *ROLA* as a Blessed Sacrament Companion. Being admitted entails inscription in the Register of Companion members of the Association.

As fitting, the occasion of admission will be marked by a public celebration of welcome, with the giving of a membership cross, and pronouncing of the Covenant of Commitment. This formal commitment is manifested in the form of a *covenant*. The covenant is the focal point of the first year of formation and is renewed annually. The covenant is a special type of commitment. It has meaning and symbolism that resonates with our biblical and spiritual traditions.

**The Covenant:**

- Is made to live as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament, to share in the charism and mission of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the context of one's daily life.
- Is a communal and spiritual bond that is not binding in a legal sense, but freely undertaken to assist one another in living the Eucharistic and Eymardian charism.

The covenant is usually celebrated in each community with some kind of ritual. Family members and friends may be invited. The covenant is formalized by having the member sign a covenant form which is kept on file. The initial covenants are affirmed by the Director, normally the local Superior, and celebrated with community members.

## 9. Elements and Practices

While Associates do not live in community with each other or with vowed Blessed Sacrament religious, they are committed to developing healthy, trusting relationships with each other. Associates show mutual esteem and care for each other, and assist one another to live lives centered in the Eucharist.

The Blessed Sacrament Associates share a spirit of hospitality through regular gatherings to socialize, grow in friendship, and enhance their spiritual lives through prayer, shared study and dialogue. They are invited to participate in Province wide gatherings, retreats, convocations or workshops wherein Associates can meet other Associates from throughout the Province, and grow together in their spiritual lives.

These elements and practices suggest ways of incorporating the vocational charism, values and ideals into the daily life of an Associate as she or he lives out their baptismal call to a Gospel centered life with a Eucharistic focus. They aim to engender a lifestyle, a tone of life, centered on values inspired by Saint Peter Julian's vision and spirituality.

There are five basic elements Associates of the Blessed Sacrament seek to inculcate into their lives:

- The Centrality of Eucharistic Worship
- Hospitality and a Welcoming Spirit
- Community Bond of Belonging to the Body of Christ
- Communal and Personal Prayer
- Ministry of Service

### Practices:

- Develop a Eucharistic attitude toward all of life.
- Participate in the worship life of your parish.
- Practice charity and be generous in the sharing of your gifts with others.
- Promote justice and be involved in outreach to the needy, visits to the sick, comfort of the suffering and seeing the face of Christ in every person.
- Support the parish religious educational programs, and offer leadership in prayer.
- Serve the needs of your family, your primary faith community, so that they may know the love of God alive within you.
- Follow the Spirit's lead in responding to the will of God found in your daily life.
- Participate in the worship life of your parish through the regular celebration of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours (Morning and/or Evening Prayer especially in common), prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament (on one's own or with the community that gathers for holy hours), rosary and other worship events.

## Addendum A

### Sample Enrichment Resource:

#### *The Life of Christ in our Lives – A Series of Scriptural Eucharistic Reflections*

Scriptures are suggested for each of the themes to be prayed in the style of Lectio Divina, the participants are invited to connect the scripture insight to their life experience.

Nourishment.....	Meals With God – Becoming What We Eat
Reconciliation .....	Given for You – That Sins May Be Forgiven
Transformation.....	Make Them Holy – To Become the Body of Christ
Presence .....	Abide in Me – And I In You
Mission .....	Be on Your Way – To Love and Serve
Covenant .....	Promises of Love – New and Everlasting
Sacrifice .....	We Offer You – A Living Sacrifice of Praise
Memorial .....	We Remember – How you Love Us
Blessing .....	Giving Thanks and Praise – Berakah
Prophetic Service ...	Chosen and Anointed – Word of God

## Addendum B

### Reading & Resources List

- *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late* by Norman Pelletier, SSS
- *An Eymardian Spirituality* by Donald Cave, SSS
- *The Eucharist and Saint Peter Julian Eymard* by Bernard Camire, SSS
- *The Breaking of Bread* by Cardinal Cahal Daly
- *Retreat Notes* by Peter Julian Eymard, SSS
- *Letters by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, SSS*, edited by Catherine Marie Caron, SSS
- *The Bread That We Break* by Ernesto Fernandez, SSS
- *Living the Eucharist* by Paul Bernier, SSS
- *Ministry in the Church* by Paul Bernier, SSS
- *One Bread And Cup* by Ernest Falardeau, SSS
- *The Breaking of the Bread* by Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS
- *Dining in the Kingdom of God, Second Edition* by Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS
- *Real Presence* by Nathan Mitchell
- *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples* by Susan Blum Gerding and Frank DeSieno, CSP
- *With Burning Hearts* by Rev. Henri Nouwen
- *The Eucharist* by Basil Pennington, OCSO
- *Emmanuel Magazine*
- Manna Series - Three Volumes



**Appendix B**  
**CEE**  
**Historical Addendum**

## The Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing: A Short History & Mission

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**Originally written by Jim Brown, Associate and CEE Director, for the *Connections Newsletter*, May 31, 2019, Volume 6, Number 5**

**Updated with new historical information Summer 2023 by John Thomas Lane, SSS**

A few months back, I was in a conversation with a group of Associates. I was talking about the CEE and a number of issues and questions we would be facing in the near future as the Association in the United States, now numbering about 280 women and men, continues to evolve and grow. One person in the group, a relatively new associate, blurted out, “What’s the CEE?”

At first, I was dumbfounded. Then I thought, “Oh my! There are probably a lot of recently promised Associates, many of whom have little or no history with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, who don’t know much about the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing or CEE, its history or mission, and what we do.” A little history.

One might say that from its founding by Saint Peter Julian Eymard in 1856, the Congregation has always been about sharing the riches of God’s love manifested in the Eucharist. This mission certainly crystallized following the Second Vatican Council. Following the writings of Popes Paul VI and John Paul II, we began to focus on the idea of Eucharistic evangelizing, sharing the Good News of God’s love in the Eucharist and putting the Eucharist at the center of our life and faith as followers of Jesus Christ.

At Notre Dame de Chicago parish in 1989, Robert Rousseau, a Blessed Sacrament priest at the time, created the Life in the Eucharist Seminars (LITES), using the best practices and theory of adult religious education to introduce laity and clergy to the essential elements of a comprehensive understanding of the Eucharist and a dynamic Eucharistic spirituality. Years later the “S” for seminar would be dropped. In this, he followed the example of Saint Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868), the Apostle of the Eucharist, who sought to bring the Eucharistic fire to the ends of the earth and share with the Church of his day a vision of the Eucharist which would renew Christian living and transform society.

In a matter of a few years, hundreds of lay women and men attended a LITE program and many of them chose to be trained to be members of LITE Teams putting on the program in parishes in their dioceses and beyond. (Many of these people are now Associates of the Blessed Sacrament.)

Out of this groundbreaking work, which spread across the United States and to other countries worldwide, grew the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing, located at first in Houston at our Blessed Sacrament parish Corpus Christi in 1993. The CEE began offering, and still does, a variety of programs and resources on the Eucharist and Eucharistic spirituality for parishes and dioceses, as well as experienced teams and speakers. In the 1990’s Father Rousseau created four key programs.

- Life in the Eucharist (LITE): Sacramental Reflections
- Life in the Eucharist (LITE): Scriptural Reflections
- Team Training Program for Life in the Eucharist (LITE)
- Manna: A Three-Volume Series of Topics Related to Eucharistic Spirituality

Father Rousseau also created International Eucharistic Congresses, gatherings around the Eucharist in a retreat-like weekend. The first was held in Houston, Texas 1994, second in Manila, Philippines 1996, third in Highland Heights (Provincial Center in the Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio) 1998 and the fourth in Madrid, Spain in 2002. The fifth

International Eucharist Congress occurred August 2023, again in Highland Heights at Saint Paschal Baylon, with the theme of “Renewing Our Eucharistic Spirituality” during the USA national Eucharistic revival.

In 1999, Tom Wiese, SSS, took over directing the CEE (in Houston) because Robert Rousseau began to work internationally, developing LITE teams and CEEs in Great Britain and Ireland, Italy, Spain and South America. In 2003, Bill Fickel, SSS, assumed the leadership of the CEE. He continued to build LITE Teams and especially the Scriptural Reflections program. In 2008, Father Fickel moved the CEE to Highland Heights (Cleveland diocese), where he served as Parochial Vicar of Saint Paschal Baylon Church and directed the CEE. At the same time, a CEE office at Corpus Christi Church in Houston continued to function under the amazing care of Nancy MacRoberts, one of our first Associates of the Blessed Sacrament in Houston and also later on Patty Pizzitola, also an Associate in Houston.

The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament General Chapter in 2005 Lyons, France directed the new General Council to codify a new *Rule of Life* for the Associates and bring together the many groups across the world that existed into one specific “Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament.” This was the name of the organization of lay and cleric members associated with the Blessed Sacrament Congregation of women and men religious founded by Saint Peter Julian Eymard on November 1, 1859. For a moment, let us return to some history of the Aggregation through the years as researched and shared by Catherine Marie Caron, SSS, former Superior General of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, who with Fiorenzo Salvi, SSS, former General Superior of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament worked together as superiors general to gather the different lay groups (with cleric members too) of the Peoples’ Eucharistic League, Guards of Honor, Eucharistic Associations that were in various forms across the countries.

On July 12, 1872, the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament first received the official recognition from Rome for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament established by Mother Marguerite Guillot in Angers, France. In 1875 the Blessed Sacrament Fathers received their official recognition or approbation for the Aggregation in Marseilles and Angers France and Brussels, Belgium by Pope Pius IX. These two groups (formed by the women and men religious) were united in 1923 as the “Archconfraternity of the Blessed Sacrament” at the church of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers at San Claudio in Rome. (The Generalate for the Blessed Sacrament Congregation was at this parish during the time.) This partially occurred because Canon Law had been codified and revised for the church in 1917 and all religious organizations, especially international ones tied to religious orders, needed to apply for recognition by the church.

After the SSS men’s General Chapter in 2005, Congregational leadership in Rome and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in Sherbrooke, Quebec, reconstituted a *Rule of Life* for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament founded by Father Eymard. This document was tested at the Amplified General Chapters of both religious orders, but for the men in 2008, it received approval to move forward. In March 2008, the official first test of the *Rule of Life for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament – The Project of Life* was implemented by both religious men and women Congregations as a gift to unite and lead the Associates tied to the Eymardian Family. For the Province of Saint Ann, the Provincial Council asked Paul Bernier, SSS to edit and update an edition for the American Province. This *Rule of Life for Associates* and published this in October 2010.

With the second publication of the *Rule of Life for Associates* (ROLA) in 2012, Father Fickel began to organize a twelve-session, yearlong initial formation program for prospective Associates. And with Jim Brown’s assistance, together they wrote and published the first set of booklets to guide the process. Three revisions later, there were twelve burgundy booklets and the small *ROLA* published in 2014.

In 2013, Father Fickel was appointed the pastor of Saint Vincent de Paul Church in Holiday, Florida, and Anthony Schueller, SSS, after a ten-year appointment as the pastor of Saint Jean Baptiste Church in New York City, succeeded Father Fickel as CEE director. During his tenure, Father Schueller and Jim Brown (Associate from Cincinnati, Ohio and part of the province staff) began to publish the *Connections* newsletter as a way to connect all our partners in Eucharistic

evangelizing, especially our LITE Team members and the growing number of Associates of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the Province. They continued to develop LITE Teams and field requests for parish Eucharistic missions and resources.

In these years Associate branches were developed in all of our Blessed Sacrament parishes and two diocesan parishes, Saint Philip Church in Norwalk, Connecticut, and Saint Stephen Church in Winter Springs, Florida, under the leadership of George Dunne, SSS. In addition, LITE Teen Teams developed at Saint Stephen Church, again under Father Dunne's guidance, and at Saint Paschal Baylon Church in Highland Heights, Ohio, under the leadership of Evamarie Mickol, this parish's youth minister.

In November 2014, Father Schueller was elected as the Provincial of the Province. He asked Jim Brown to succeed him as the first lay director of the CEE. In addition to fielding requests for Eucharistic missions, including ones focused on adoration, as well as putting in place a number of LITE traveling Teams, the CEE through 2020:

- Continued to publish a monthly Connections newsletter.
- Developed leadership boards in all of our associate branches (cf. *ROLA* 27).
- Co-sponsored a Convocation in Cleveland to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Father Eymard's "Gift of Self" and the Year of Mercy promulgated by Pope Francis in 2016.
- Initiated a Daily Eucharistic Reflection that goes email addresses throughout the Province and the United States.
- Worked with Ana Camacho, an Associate at Saint Philip Church, in developing a Spanish version of the twelve-session initial formation program.
- Oversaw the development of a number of ongoing formation programs for Associates, including an 18-session Course of Study on Saint Peter Julian Eymard and a program based on the Congregational resource *Counsels for Spiritual Life*.
- Served as a resource and a support to the growing community of Associates of the Blessed Sacrament throughout the Province.

In August 2023, Mary Muehle and Mona Grigsby-Suarez were chosen to lead the CEE as the new co-directors, making it a first to have women lead this ministry of the Congregation and have one (Mona) bilingual (Spanish and English).

In conclusion, the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE) shares the mission of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, namely, to "respond to the hungers of the human family with the riches of God's love manifested in the Eucharist" (Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament *Rule of Life* 3). In doing this, we follow in the footsteps of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist. The Congregation's *Rule of Life* 33 states: "Father Eymard's ability to translate his Eucharistic grace into very diverse ministries stimulates us to be creative in our mission." The CEE does this by developing programs, resources, and experiences that foster knowledge and love of the Eucharist and the search for the true meaning and power of the Eucharistic mystery.

## Appendix C

# Prayers

*Prayer in Honor of  
Saint Peter Julian Eymard*

Gracious God of our ancestors,  
you led Saint 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 offered  
for the hungers of humanity.

Grant that we may celebrate this mystery worthily,  
adore it profoundly,  
proclaim it prophetically  
for your greater glory.

Through Christ our Lord.

By Reverend Norman Pelletier, SSS

## *Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament*

*Feast Day - May 13*

Mary, mother of Jesus, voice of the poor and the little ones, welcomed the word of God into her heart and let its power rule her life. She prayed with the disciples and faithfully shared her life with them for the coming of the Kingdom.

We shall honor Mary as the poor one of Yahweh and the servant of the Lord with the same love as shown her by our Founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, who also invoked her under the title of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. Meditating on the mysteries of the rosary will help focus our devotion to Mary.

from the *Rule of Life* 14,  
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

## *Apostles of the Eucharist Prayer*

God of life and of light, your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires.

Renew our resolve to gather as your people and to celebrate your faithful love for us manifested in Jesus' gift of the Eucharist.

Feed us at the Table where we long for your presence more than for life itself.

May we cherish the gifts of bread and wine and share these blessings with our brothers and sisters.

Send us, now, as witnesses of your gospel into a world of fragile peace and broken promises, so that, formed into the likeness of your son, Jesus, we may worship you in Spirit and Truth and proclaim your mighty deeds throughout the world.

Amen.

Adapted by John Thomas Lane, SSS from the  
*Rule of Life 2*, Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament



## *Gift of Self - Gift of Mercy*

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 of God –  
Christ, who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.

*Adapted from the  
Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee of Mercy and the  
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament Rule of Life, 2*

## *Cenacle Prayer*

Good and generous God, we give you thanks because,  
following the example of Saint Peter Julian Eymard,  
we, too, have experienced an intense passion for the Eucharist.  
Attentive to the Spirit, we have welcomed the call  
to be disciples and apostles in a challenging world.

Now, O God, your Spirit is calling us once again  
to continue this experience of grace:  
the Risen Lord is gathering us in the Cenacle,  
and we recognize that we are united in the sign of His love.  
From the Cenacle He sends us to proclaim hope to the world  
and again we return to the Cenacle to be nourished by the Bread of Life.

O God, to you praise is given  
because, in the Paschal experience of the gift of ourselves,  
You enable us to participate in the life and mission of the Risen Lord.  
The spread and the decline of Your Presence in various continents  
leads us to acknowledge that we are living a Paschal event.

This is why, O God, with your Christ and the Holy Spirit  
our hymn of praise rises towards you forever.

## *Litany of the Blessed Sacrament*

Leader: O Sacrament Most Holy, O Sacrament Divine,  
All: **All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment thine.**

Leader:	All:
Lord, have mercy.	<b>Lord, have mercy.</b>
Christ, have mercy.	<b>Christ, have mercy.</b>
Lord, have mercy.	<b>Lord, have mercy.</b>

God our Father in heaven,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
God the Son,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Redeemer of the world,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
God the Holy Spirit,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Holy Trinity, one God,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>

Jesus, Eternal High Priest of the Eucharistic Sacrifice,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Jesus, Divine Victim on the Altar for our salvation,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Jesus, hidden under the appearance of bread,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Jesus, dwelling in the tabernacles of the world,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Jesus, really, truly and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Jesus, abiding in your fulness,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Jesus, Bread of Life,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Jesus, Bread of Angels,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Jesus, with us always until the end of the world,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>

Sacred Host, summit and source of all worship and Christian life,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Sign and cause of the unity of the Church,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Adored by countless angels,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Spiritual food	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Sacrament of love,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Bond of charity,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Greatest aid to holiness,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Gift and glory of the priesthood,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Sacred Host, in which the soul is filled with grace,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>
Sacred Host, in which we are given a pledge of future glory,	<b>have mercy on us.</b>

Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, For those who do not believe in your Eucharistic presence, For those who are indifferent to the Sacrament of your love, For those who have offended you in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, That we may show fitting reverence when entering your holy temple, That we may make suitable preparation before approaching the altar, That we may receive you frequently in Holy Communion with real devotion and true humility, That we may never neglect to thank you for so wonderful a blessing, That we may cherish time spent in silent prayer before you, That we may grow in knowledge of this Sacrament of sacraments, That all priests may have a profound love of the Holy Eucharist, That we may be comforted and sanctified with Holy Viaticum at the hour of our death, That we may see you one day face to face in Heaven,	<b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>  <b>we beseech you, hear us.</b>
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,	<b>spare us, O LORD.</b>  <b>graciously hear us, O LORD.</b>  <b>have mercy on us, O LORD.</b>

Leader: Let us pray.  
Most merciful God,  
you continue to draw us to yourself  
through the Eucharistic Mystery.  
Grant us fervent faith in this Sacrament of love,  
in which Christ the Lord himself is contained, offered and received.  
Through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

Attributed from the writings of Saint Julian Peter Eymard -RA 19,3 - RA 20,6 - RA 20,8  
Edited by John Thomas Lane, SSS

## *Vocation Prayer 2023*

Gracious God of our ancestors:

Awaken in us the sense of our Eucharistic mission.

Encourage and affirm future “Apostles of the Eucharist,”  
to be associates, sisters, brothers, deacons and ordained priests  
following in the footsteps of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

May we serve you and the Risen Lord,  
through the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
to make known all the mysteries of the Eucharist.

May your Eucharistic kingdom come! Amen.

By John Thomas Lane, SSS





Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament

