

**PETER-JULIAN EYMARD**

**COUNSELS FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE**

**drawn from his Correspondence**

selected and presented by

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The extracts may be viewed on the website [www.eymard.org](http://www.eymard.org). Each letter has a specific reference number. Click on the index of documents to obtain the letter in its entirety.

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## INTRODUCTION

In getting to know Fr. Eymard and his charism, the writings he has bequeathed to us have little value. This is not the least of paradoxes: if he has left a mass of documents at his death, he published nothing, except the Constitutions of the Religious of the Blessed Sacrament, those of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, and some articles and notices concerning his work. The works published under his name after his death, are from the hand of one of his disciples, Fr. Albert Tesniere. It was necessary to wait over a century for the advent of electronic writing to have access to his complete writings, of which a large number are personally written. They were edited in 2006 on the Web and two years later they were printed. In total there are 17 volumes comprising more than 10,500 pages. In reality it is really only institutes of specialist research, university libraries, seminaries or religious institutes which would avail of this massive documentation. As for access to the electronic edition, though it is free of charge, it often gives only a partial glimpse. On the other hand, if this monumental edition allows access to the totality of Eymardian writings, many have only a historical significance: personal notes, canonical texts, extracts from the Constitutions or Statutes, sermons, transcription of texts etc.

On account of this, it seemed useful to edit the collections which enable his message to be made available to a wider public, anxious to know his thought and to be nourished by his writings. It would be a disservice to Fr. Eymard to confine him to his own era. His message must remain alive. In this context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which marked in France a renewal of the Liturgy, notably the cult of the Eucharist, his intuitions as founder make him an apostle not only of Eucharistic Adoration, but also a precursor of a global approach to the Mystery of the Eucharist, Mass and Communion. Hence the title attributed to him in the decree which included his name in the Liturgical Calendar of the Church, “Remarkable Apostle of the Eucharist”.

This collection contains a selection of texts drawn from his correspondence. This amounts to 2,212 letters, addressed to 251 Correspondents. In the *Oeuvres Complètes* it fills 3 volumes. We have confined ourselves to the letters of spiritual direction, numbering about 850. In the course of his ministry, people, especially women, confided in him and asked him to accompany them in their spiritual life. This ministry developed especially from 1846 onwards, when he was appointed director of the Third Order of Mary at Lyon. He structured the little group of Tertiaries entrusted to him and developed it by his teaching - notably his conferences on the interior life, and Marist spirituality - and by his spiritual accompaniment. After he left Lyon for La Seyne-sur-Mer in 1851, letters replaced the meetings. It was the same when he left the Society of Mary in 1856 to found the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Paris. Other people sought his advice. Father answered their specific questions, which we can only discern through the director's response, because, in the interests of discretion, he destroyed all the correspondence of his directees.

Fr. Eymard's advices are personal. However, some have a general interest and can be addressed beyond the person to whom they were written, to many others who will find in them enlightenment and comfort. They trace both the journey of the directees and also his own personal pathway. In his Marist period, his teaching is focussed especially on the great principles of Christian life as it was perceived at the time: struggle against faults, the practice of Christian virtues, development of personal interior life through prayer, recollection, asceticism, receiving the sacraments, confession, Mass, Communion, devotion to the Virgin Mary. He listens to everyone, discerns in the light of the Holy Spirit, counsels with respect for

the grace and the journey of each person. His direction is based on reciprocal trust, and his spirituality is inspired by love of which the Eucharist is the Sacrament. This note will develop gradually, and to the extent that he discovers, through the grace received at Fourviere in 1851, his mission as founder. From then on, he will consider Christian life only as Eucharistic. The grace of “The gift of personality” received in Rome in 1865, constitutes the summit of his spiritual life. We find echoes of it in his correspondence to some privileged people.

In the Preface to the edition “Letters of Direction to people in the world”, Fr. Edmond Tenaillon, Postulator of the Cause of Beatification of Fr. Eymard, noted in 1901: *All Fr. Eymard’s direction tended towards a single goal: to create in souls the union of life, of thoughts, of sentiments, of judgments, with Jesus Eucharistic*. Then underlining the prudence of this “wise Director” he added: *He consulted the grace of each person, his particular attraction, the special action of the Holy Spirit - Who blows where He wants - ; and full of respect for the freedom of souls, and for the grace of God in them, he directs them skilfully and firmly towards the Blessed Sacrament Which he named “The Centre of All”*.

In this Edition, we re-produce the text of the “Oeuvres Completes”, lightening the presentation somewhat. Each letter carries a title drawn from the body of the letter, and an introduction which situates the document. We have omitted the headings, dates, forms of greeting, conclusions and thus only address the practical points of the subject. The signature is always omitted. Brackets [...] indicate cuts that have been made. At the end of each letter, we indicate in italics, the addressee, the date, and reference in the Complete Edition. Some letters have the text of the edition of reference.

The choice of texts and their presentation is the work of four collaborators: Fr. Fiorenzo Salvi for the period 1828 - 1856, Fr. Giovanni Moretti for 1856 - 1863, Fr. Manuel Barbiero for 1864 - 1866, and myself for 1866 to 1868, the date of Father’s death.

Choice is open to a certain subjectivity: some letters were chosen, others omitted, which were not without interest. It was about a sufficiently representative sample of the thought of Fr. Eymard and of his method in the art of Direction.

I have done both the re-reading of the collection and the establishment of a list of the correspondents with a short biographical note. The Theme Table is the work of Fr. Salvi.

Fr. André GUITTON, SSS

## Counsels for Spiritual Life

### 1 - The joy of Being Baptised

*Fr. Eymard speaks to his sister Marianne, who is also his God-Mother, on the anniversary of his Baptism, "The most beautiful day of my life". He recalls memories linked to his childhood: his convalescence after his attempt at the Novitiate of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate at Marseille, where he threw himself into it with excessive zeal and where his health broke down. It is for us an invitation to call to mind our own Baptism, the day when we became children of God.*

My dear sisters,

Today I cannot resist the joy of writing you a few words. I'm sure that you can guess why I prayed so earnestly to God for you, for our father, our mother and my godfather!

It's such a beautiful day for me. It's the most beautiful day of my life since this is the day when I had the good fortune to be baptized. If I had died then, I would be in heaven now, praying for my godmother [who is] still on earth, weighed down by the cross, on the thorny path to heaven. But the Good Lord did not wish it and has left me until now in this valley of exile, tears and struggles. May he be blessed! All is well, provided we reach our goal at the end. Once we reach it, whether the road was short or long, easy or difficult, everything weighs in the scales only as grace and mercy from God. The essential thing is to reach it [the goal].

Pray that I may attain the goal, as I do for you. If you should reach it first, leave a walking stick behind and an open door. At least, my dear sisters, there will no longer be any distance or separation there. Who would have thought when I was twenty years of age, stretched out in bed and condemned to death by all the doctors, that I would have lived fifteen years more? If at least I had spent them well! It's so true, the Good Lord has given me many great graces. I cannot help but recognize the signs of his mercy and providence in my life -[signs] so great that I would be ungrateful if I didn't love him with all my heart and if I didn't serve him with all my strength.

My dear godmother, I owe you so much for your vigilant care during my youth and for all the religious practices you would suggest to me. Today I remember all those childhood years very clearly and I see them as a great grace. Do you remember when, sitting on my poor bed, close to you, we would sing the hymns of Marseilles to the point of tears, especially the one to Saint Genevieve, Saint Joseph and the Way of the Cross! Then, when I used to accompany you for confession (often at a great distance)? What wonderful times! I loved the Good Lord more then, than [I do] now.

Since then, so many different stages in life, so many different situations! What life is like in this world! How many people I have known and loved have already died! At least you are still with me. May the Good Lord keep you yet awhile. I really don't know whether it is a good and desirable wish, but I find that life is so precious for a heart that is working for heaven, ruled by the love of a crucifying and crucified God. [...]

*To Miss Marianne Eymard - February 5, 1846 - (CO 68 ; II,113))*

## 2 - Let us know how to behave like the saints

*In this letter addressed to Mrs. Josephine Gourd (79 letters), Fr. Eymard gives advice for living everyday life in the presence of the Lord, in prayer and the service of charity. Even sickness can become the providential opportunity which disposes us to listen anew, and more attentively to the Lord. But it is especially prayer that will make us rest at the feet of the Master and represents a moment of grace where we draw the energy necessary to give ourselves to a more active charity. This is how one can live sainthood on a daily basis.*

[...] Sometimes our good Master is the one who isolates us through illness, to be able to speak to our poor soul which continually flees him. Then, a little suffering wonderfully disposes the soul to receive the touch of grace. Madame, I hope that you may often have two hours of rest at the feet of the divine Master, in order to find yourself fully at his feet, be filled with his spirit and love, [to compensate] for the rest of the time when you must be available to others.

Let's learn how to do as the Saints did: to be with God first, and then for others in God's presence. You tell me: "But I don't know how! I don't think about it!" It is so easy to cast a simple glance towards God, who is present in us or around us, an interior act of offering, of petition, of acceptance of everything. Happy is the soul who lives thus with God. What a beautiful friendship! Then heaven is everywhere. Let us bear well with the ups and downs of life, of our interior state, of our heart, by our love for the holy Will of God. When everything seems to irritate and frustrate us, let us take a firm hold on our poor heart, without letting it examine the cause of its frustration, and encourage it with the thought of doing something for the love of God. [...]

*To Mrs. Joséphine Gourd - January 26, 1851 - (CO 239 ; II,275)*

## 3 - To make the holy and loveable will of God your rule

*Rapid changes in our mood make us ill at ease. The temptation is to act according to our feelings, which are not always positive, and which sometimes push us in a direction contrary to the Gospel. Fr. Eymard advises not to allow ourselves to be influenced by them, but to ignore them and to always pursue what is good, whatever the cost. Communion with Christ by participating at the Eucharistic Table, meditation, and prayer in His Sacramental Presence, are all activities that nourish our union of life with Him, and help us to live like Him, and in Him.*

Continue to let the holy and ever-gracious Will of God be your rule, your center and the purpose of all your actions and desires. Our dear Father who is in Heaven keeps his loving glance fixed upon us, and his divine Providence foresees and ordains everything for our greater good.

Don't be surprised by the changeability of your soul. It comes from God who wants us to practice some particular virtue, like gentleness, patience, humble acceptance of ourselves. So, when you feel so sad, or ill humored, don't allow these feelings to enter into your heart; pretend that you do not see it. It is a passing cloud which veils the sun of charity as it passes. Treat it like a rheumatic pain and act the same as usual exteriorly. However, if it should last too long, causing anxiety and a certain frustration, you would do well to mention it to your dear mother, more as a difficulty than as a feeling from the heart.

It would be wise not to mention the apparent reason, for fear of awakening natural hostilities. However, if it torments you, say everything.

Continue to go to Communion because you are weak, and then because we must live in our Lord and receive him in order to do so, because our kind Savior has said: “Whoever eats me will live for me...; the one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him” [Jn 6,56-57].

It is better to go to holy Communion with your weaknesses than to distance yourself from it through fear or humility. Love expresses itself more through surrender than through respect, more through trust than through fear. Receive Communion with the desire to love him ever more; that is the best disposition.

For meditation, I advise you not to do it during the day in order to do it with greater attention. The morning is sufficient and the morning meditation should center on the Tabernacle, or on your Jesus in your heart, using this profound and eternal phrase: “Jesus is my God and my all.” [cf. Im 3, 34: 4] In this effort of love, don’t always speak, but be silent at the feet of Jesus, be happy to see him, look at him, hear him, know that you are at his feet. The true word of love is more interior than exterior.

Please! Have courage on this road to Heaven! Let us continue to walk on the rocks and thorns of life in the desert. [...]

*To Miss Stéphanie Gourd - January 26, 1851 - (CO 240 ; II,276)*

#### **4 - Hold on to the anchor of the will of God**

*What can we do when our soul is in turmoil? Attach ourselves to the anchor of the will of God, Who always wants only our good. The difficulties are a little like Winter, when nature dies, to be reborn with a new vigour. Thus, if the turmoil makes something in us die, it is to make something new be born, flower and bear fruit. This is the surprising dynamic of the Pascal Mystery: life which springs from death.*

[...] Your letter pleased me. You know why, I love to see you magnanimous, strong, in control of all the waves and the frenzy of the storms, generously holding on to the anchor of God’s will: strength comes from sacrifice.

Be assured, Madame, that storms do not last. Winter purifies the weather, kills all the little insects which devour the plants. Your soul seems to be dying in the midst of suffering. That’s true, but it is in order to be reborn from its ashes. A soul which loves God lives through death. So have courage!

[When we are] on the edge of a precipice, we must not look at the bottom, but look determinedly above; otherwise we become dizzy.

Fix your heart on our Lord. Rest assured that he is there within you, contemplating your struggles and preparing to reward them. [...]

*To Mrs. Franchet - March 21, 1851 - (CO 250 ; II,287)*

## 5 - Do not stop half-way along

*The path of sainthood is sometimes strewn with thorns. Love knows how to transform sufferings into authentic tests of trust in God. Just as love drove Christ to the gift of Self, as far as the cross and martyrdom, so love will be the flame which illumines our sacrifices. On this path to sainthood and purification, what is important is to take well the steps which present themselves before us, without looking too far ahead. It is thanks to the strength of sacramental Communion that we can travel this path.*

[...] How many times I asked God to watch over you and to strengthen you in your good desires, to form in you his spirit of love and holiness! You are made for him. Human beings may tease your heart for a moment, distract your mind, but never fill or satisfy them!

This is the sure and necessary way: go to God by self-detachment, by the sacrifice of your whole life. Evangelical Holiness consists only in immolation, a holocaust, death and life joined in love crucified and crucifying. Well Madame, you know that God is calling you to him by this path. It is very steep, sometimes very thorny, very frightening. But how beautiful to the eyes of love, was Jesus in that sad garden, humiliated in Jerusalem, climbing Calvary in pain and letting himself be consumed there in love. Love is always a martyrdom, but the flame of sacrifice is always love.

Courage, my daughter. Let us not stop on the way. Let's not look too far ahead; it's a mystery. Let's not dwell in our crosses and trials, but in Jesus with our crosses. Remember that God asks only for our will, that is his throne. The rest is the battlefield.

My daughter, let me repeat to you once more, a thousand times more! Ignore lightning and thunder; they cannot touch you. Don't give any importance to your interior trials, in a word.

Receive Communion, that is your strength, your victory and your path. You are doing it and you will [continue to] do it. A day without sunshine is like a stormy, dreary night. [...]

You are suffering a great deal, it's true! But I don't dare tell our Lord to take away your sorrows. It seems to me that it would make you barren and sadden Jesus our Master. Divine love always bears its children in sorrow. Perfect union only takes place on the cross and through the cross. So, dear daughter, forgive me if I praise only your sufferings and pray for you and your fidelity. However, ask our Lord to veil its exterior effects and if he wants your heart to be crucified, let your exterior express a gentle charity and the peace of the Holy Spirit. Let it be your secret. Let this thought: God wants this from me, be stronger than anything else. You have never been more pleasing to God than you are now.

Yes, receive Communion, and receive Communion as I have told you. Your heart is better than your head, and God wants the heart. [...]

*To Mrs. Franchet - August 8, 1851 - (CO 267 ; II,302)*

## 6 - His love never sleeps

*Our life is like a little boat on the sea. When we are thrown about by the waves, the Lord, Who seems to be asleep, tests our faith. That is the method He has chosen to make us stronger and to root our life in Him; the tree that is exposed to winds, becomes stronger and more vigorous and it produces tasty fruits. The union of life with the Lord in the Eucharist is our strength and makes our heart beat in unison with the heart of Christ. The Eucharist assures us that Christ's love for us never sleeps.*

I have just received your letter expressing so much sadness and tears. My God! What troubles! When will they be lightened? Poor little boat, how shaken it is! And then, the shore



is still far away and heaven is still in the shadows, and no help [forthcoming]. What a situation! What can be done? Always stay at the steering wheel, throw out the water which is seeping into the little boat, and then surrender to Providence.

Madame, your little boat is safe. It cannot sink or perish. No, no, God is blessing it every moment of the day, but you are not a good passenger yet. You are too afraid. Then, your heart is dying because it can see only the sky and the desert. What can I say? Don't be too upset with it for that reason. It is suffering; it is ill. It seeks relief by complaining a little. But when it wants to go further, you must say: be quiet, my heart, you are misbehaving. You will displease your God and make yourself unhappy. For love of him, you will go no further; and for his love, you will suffer yet a little. Then this heart, which is basically so good, will surrender and return to Jesus' path, following wherever it pleases him to lead it, and it will find peace and freedom once again with strength and love.

Receive Communion, my daughter. The person who is ill needs food. Receive Communion in spite of your faults. They don't destroy the life of divine love. They only test it, purify it. Fruit which grows in a hot-house is always a bit flat and the tree which produces it, very delicate and weak. But the fruit which grows in the high winds, which ripens in its own time, is the best. Receive Communion, and our Lord will be your strength during your great trials. In great temptations we have a need, I would almost say, a real necessity for our Eucharistic Lord. It is the moment of the struggle and if Jesus seems to sleep in the midst of the storm [cfr. Mt 8,23-27], it is only to try our confidence. So then, be content to stay at his feet. His love never sleeps. [...]

The feeling you describe in your letter is nothing. You have given it too much importance, and especially, you have analyzed it too much. In confession say only a passing word about it.

Oh! You live too much in your heart! I wish that your heart would live entirely in the divine heart of our Lord. -"I cannot!"- Suffering is the beginning of this divine life. Fidelity in suffering is its strength and bond. Courage! You will love the Lord Jesus with your whole heart, your whole mind, your whole will, and all your strength [cfr. Mk 12,30]. Both heaven and earth will praise you with me. [...]

*To Mrs. Franchet - August 8, 1851 - (CO 273 ; II,309)*

## **7 - To feed our inner life by its union with God**

*Father Eymard has just been assigned to La Seyne-sur-Mer, near Toulon. He has left the town of Lyon which he loved, also the direction of the Third Order of Mary: for him, it is a sad wrench, but he lives this separation in faith, in serenity and in submission to the will of God. He confides to Mrs. Gourd what he is going through at this delicate moment in his life. Then, in reply to her letter, he gives her useful advice so that she can surmount a certain carelessness in the service of God: how to direct her domestic staff well, to overcome anxiety which prevents her from serene communion.*

[...] Well, Madame, we are now 140 leagues apart, separated forever, perhaps. Such is life! A transitory life of exile!

The consoling thing is that our good Father is between us and his grace, his love, and the same hope unite us in his divine heart.

I must admit to you, Madame, that I thank the Good Lord for being away from Lyons. I believe it's a grace for me. God wanted to force me to live for him alone. In the midst of my occupations in Lyons, I also experienced great consolations from my daughters. He wanted me to make that sacrifice. Oh! May he be blessed a thousand times! Provided they serve and love him wholeheartedly; that is all my joy. As for you, my dear daughter, you will always

love our good Master and have others love him in the midst of your problems and difficulties. Graciously let everyone steal your time, your work, your preferences. But your heart will belong to Jesus and to self-denial through love. I will always be pleased to receive your letters. If I can help you from here, you know how much I want your spiritual good, as my own.

Now about your letter. You blame yourself for negligence in God's service, in your duties towards your servants. You experience sadness about your Communions.

It's true, we must struggle against negligence in God's service, because it quickly produces spiritual weakness, loathing for sacrifice. The soul becomes weak like a plant without sugar. Yes, struggle gently but strongly against spiritual negligence. That is the side from which the devil would attack you. Economize your time, your means, but always find a moment for God alone. Contact with the world, even the pious [world] has this in common: it uses up the interior strength of the soul. Sometimes we must do like our Lord: when our day was spent entirely for our neighbor, we must go up on the mountain, and there, in solitude of heart, converse a little with God alone. So also, my daughter, when our good Master places you in an extraordinary situation of charity towards your neighbor, then you must leave everything for this dear neighbor; but I said "in an extraordinary state", and even then, the more we expend exteriorly, the more we must feed our inner life by its union with God. Oh! If we could be like the guardian angels! They see God continually while at the same time they are always concerned with us. That is because God is their absolute center.

And your distractions! Oh! I don't worry about those. It's like rheumatism that we must bear in this life. It's the poverty of our poor nature. Oh! How humiliating it is for a heart, which should live only in God!

So then, do only one thing, when your soul has forgotten the Good Lord for too long, bring it back gently to his feet, in humility of heart, like a poor sheep which has strayed far away from the Good Shepherd.

As for your duties as Lady of the house. If you have faithful and dedicated servants, depend on them a little. However, always keep an eye on them, and keep yourself informed, at least in general, about your house. Otherwise you will be correcting them too often. Pray a great deal for your household and for all those who serve you.

As for Communions, don't let any pass by through your own fault. You need them. When our Lord is calling you to come toward him in spite of your weakness, it would be very wrong to choose to stay away from his eucharistic table through humility. So then, my daughter, go in spite of your weaknesses. I mean, rather, go with your weaknesses and poverty. This is your admission ticket to our good Master. [...]

*To Mrs Joséphine Gourd - October 18, 1851 - (CO 282 ; II,322)*

## **8 - To draw from our faults, the very remedy which should correct them**

*Having once experienced the goodness of Jesus, one only wants to live for Him. Nevertheless, and this is the case with Stephanie, the young addressee of this letter, when one follows Christ one can have moments of spiritual dryness, feel the restraint imposed by self love, and humility because of one's own limitations. What should be done? One should accept one's own situation and present oneself to God in all truth, with trust and submission; and God will make us discover His love and delight for His frail and poor children.*

[...] You know all the good I desire for your soul and how I would like to see it belong entirely to your divine Spouse.

Oh! Yes, belong entirely to our Lord as he is entirely yours. [Let there be] no reservations in your gift, no sharing in your heart, no other center than his adorable and ever gracious will.

When we really know this dear Jesus, can anything compare to Him? And when we have enjoyed the delights of his love, can we live without Him? Oh! No! Never, we would be too unhappy! How blessed you are, my dear daughter, to belong to our good Master and to desire to be his forever! This choice is worth more than any crown or any of the world's best possibilities. The one for whom Jesus is everything is very rich.

However, you are not satisfied with yourself, meditation leaves you dry and cold; it seems fruitless. The thought of God is not coming naturally, you are at war with pride. These are great troubles, and these troubles will accompany you throughout the desert of life. - What can be done?

Correct what is imperfect and humbly bear the effects of humiliation. Know and admit to God and yourself that you are full of pride, that this is your nature, that you love the Good Lord very little, that you are not very fervent in his holy service. Cover yourself with these rags as proofs of your poverty and present yourself as such to God with full confidence. Then you will change evil into good and you will find grace in the presence of the God of kindness. He rests his indulgent glance on this poor weak child and wants to lift her up to his privileged love.

My dear daughter, let us learn how to draw out of our very faults the remedy which will correct them. We must not live with them peacefully, but live in peace in humility; "Learn from me," says our good Savior, "that I am meek and humble of heart" [Mt 11,29].

If you notice that your meditation is always vague and that it never captures your attention, change your topic. At ordinary times, usually make your meditation on the Imitation; but prepare yourself at least by choosing the chapter or the verse.

If you are in an exceptional state, choose a subject which suits your condition. So, in desolation, Chapter 21 of the first book; Chapters 9, 11, 12 of the second book. When you feel a resistance to sacrifice, the chapters on love, the three on Heaven: 47, 48 49. When you feel scattered, the 1st chapter of the second book, the first chapters of the third book.

In these states we mustn't treat our soul like a sick person who is disgusted with everything. The main resolution to take is to accomplish promptly and through love the sacrifices of self-denial which God will ask of us during the day as soon as he lets us see them.

So then, there is only one thing for us to do. Remain vigilant for the time of sacrifice, or better, always be prepared to say to God: My heart is ready, oh my God, to accomplish your holy Will in everything. But this vigilance must be free, without bondage, without stress. It is the vigil of love, and love doesn't tire. It watches while it sleeps, it watches while it works. [...]

*To Miss Stéphanie Gourd - Octobre 19, 1851 - (CO 283 ; II,324)*

## **9 - "Who can separate me from the love of Jesus Christ? No one"**

*If we want to love God and live for Him, we should ask ourselves at every moment what could be His will, putting it before listening to our own heart and our own reasons. In consolation and in desolation, in joy and in sorrow, here is the advice given by Fr. Eymard: we must love and always do the holy will of God. In acting thus, nothing will separate us from the love of Jesus Christ.*

[...] What I would like to ask God for you is unchanging fidelity in the love of his ever holy and gracious Will, especially upon you. Whether it be consolation or desolation, joy or sorrow, the presence or absence of human beings, let these not change your interior life. Place your soul above the realm of storms and atmospheric changes; on the contrary, may events only produce outward changes, leaving your will always united to the holy Will of God. Oh blessed, a thousand times blessed is the soul that lives in this divine life! Then, it understands the burning words of St. Paul: "Who will separate me from the love of Jesus Christ? Nothing" [Rm 8,35].

The fruit of this divine conformity is first of all patience, an even tempered disposition, and inner peace, followed by strong and generous action. A soul that wants to live in God begins by consulting his holy Will; it hesitates to begin by consulting its own heart or its own judgment. It mistrusts them. For this soul the known will of God is its supreme law, its unchangeable rule and its first science. Madame, ask the Good Lord to give me this queen of virtues. It would be the greatest grace you could give me.

You want me to speak about myself; my life passes and flows like running streams, hurriedly, noisily, and tumultuously. A house of education has so many events, changes, visits! May the Good Lord be praised for it! There is certainly enough material for a constant abnegation of my own will.

On the other hand, the climate here is very pleasant, the sky is very beautiful, nature is very plush, always green. We might think it was a perpetual springtime. I won't say anything about the customs of the South; I don't know them well. The Good Lord has beautiful and very generous souls here. We can admire the power of grace here, more than in our region because these Southerners, with their fiery minds, their light spirit, their sensitive hearts, become saints and great saints. However, for us Northerners, it's hard for us to adjust to them, but when the Good Lord sends us here, we have a grace of state. [...]

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - January 22, 1852 - (CO 317 ; II,368)*

## **10 - To save souls through the divine Eucharist**

*Mrs. Tholin-Bost is a Eucharistic soul: she is engaged in promoting adoration at home. Fr. Eymard encourages her in her mission. He shares with her, her conviction of the urgency of the mission: that the Eucharist should be placed anew at the centre of Christian spirituality. He tells her about his mission with the sailors and convicts in Toulon. In confirming her in Eucharistic grace, he invites her to compose meditations on the love of Christ in the Eucharist, to help the people around her.*

I was filled with joy to learn that the initial idea of home adoration to our eucharistic Lord had been welcomed by His Eminence who blessed and approved it. Now we must quickly get to work to save souls by the divine Eucharist, to awaken France and Europe numbed in dormant apathy because they don't know the gift of God, Jesus, the eucharistic Emmanuel. This is the torch of love which we must carry to tepid souls who think they are devout, and are not, because they haven't made Jesus in the holy Tabernacle their center and their life. Any devotion which doesn't set up one tent on Calvary, and one near the Tabernacle, is not a solid piety and will never do anything great. I fear that people are wandering too far from the holy Eucharist, that this mystery of love par excellence is not sufficiently proclaimed. So souls are suffering, becoming more sensual and materialistic in their devotional life and inordinately attached to human beings. It is because they don't know how to find their consolation and strength in our Lord.

Adoration is on the increase in Toulon. If you could send me a few leaflets, I would distribute them among our fervent sailors and even in the jail, where four thousand convicts could become good adorers, because there are some beautiful souls in chains.

One thought kept coming back to me about you during these past few days. It is this: since our Lord has inspired you with the idea of home adoration to Jesus Eucharistic, you would do well to compose a few meditations on eucharistic love for your friends in order to help them sanctify this holy hour, and sub-divide eucharistic love into specific virtues and special practices. I am suggesting this idea to you. Consequently, I really approve and bless what you've done for your friends. Remember that when we have put a eucharistic spark into a soul, we have planted a divine seed of life and all virtues in its heart which, so to speak, will be sufficient unto itself.

I've been comforted by your news about your dear sister. Oh! Her ardent heart has such a need for our Lord! How fortunate she is to be unknown by the world, that she didn't fall into worldly hands. Madame, I'm very happy to pray for your dear husband, your dear children, and especially for you. Don't forget me in your prayers. I have great duties to fulfill and I can feel the burden of my weakness and faults. You would do well to go see His Eminence; that is the way to spread the Work. I would almost advise you to write and thank him for his approbation. - I sympathize with the great cross suffered by Mr. Lagoutte and his children. Our Lord wants them all for himself. [...]

*To Mrs. Tholin-Bost - February 11, 1852 - (CO 325 ; II,378)*

## **11 - How happy you are to have chosen this divine Spouse**

*Antonia Bost, sister of Mrs. Tholin-Bost, is drawn to consecrating her life to God in celibacy, while remaining in the world. Fr. Eymard encourages her to follow this grace and to respond generously to her vocation. Antonia will be happy to have chosen Christ as her divine Spouse, Who will reward her poverty, and in communion, warm her heart. But this has one condition: to love Him without too much calculation and reasoning, without complaining and in accepting joyfully all the sacrifices. Antonia will be faithful to this call her whole life long.*

I received your note with joy and thanksgiving, dear daughter. I thanked our Lord for receiving you and for drawing you more and more to his service and love, for putting in your soul a great desire to belong entirely to him.

Oh! Poor daughter, whom could you belong to, who would be more tender, more loving, more gentle than Jesus? How blessed you are to have chosen this divine Spouse, or rather, for having been chosen in preference to so many others! Yes! In Heaven, you will know all the wealth, the greatness of this grace!

A bride needs a dowry: the one which our Lord wants from you is interior poverty. To enrich a soul, our Lord creates a void. He wants to reign alone; it is toward this purpose that he directs all his arrows. Let yourself be wounded: life follows death, love enters through suffering.

But, notice what I say: let yourself be wounded. That is: let the Good Lord act, let him turn you this way and that, speak or be silent, visit you or hide from you, test you by means of his creatures or by himself. What does it matter to you! Provided that you love and are loved by this good Savior. Well, he loves you with infinite love.

Dear daughter, don't put aside holy Communion because your heart is cold or your weaknesses are great. Oh! That would hurt him. No, take your heart with both hands and cast it before your good Master. Oh! What a wonderful thought!

Love gives without counting.  
 Love gives itself without reasoning.  
 Love suffers without complaining.  
 Love finds joy and development through sacrifice.

My dear daughter, I hope that is your story. But remember that our natural feelings don't like suffering, they fear God's reign in us. If they cry out, if they are afraid, don't be surprised. Don't rebuke them too much, but say with the royal Prophet: "My soul, why are you sad? Why this distress? Hope in your God, he is so good!" [cfr. Ps 41,6]. [...]

*To Miss Antonia Bost - February 11, 1852 - (CO 326 ; II,379)*

## **12 - Like a little child in the small boat which the good God controls**

*The way of discipleship also involves moments of spiritual dryness and lukewarmness. They are, as a desert, the providential pathway and necessary in order to arrive, when and how God would wish, in the promised land. Fr. Eymard encourages Stephanie, she should not be surprised at the aridity she is going through; she should persevere with certainty that God, one day, will free her from the desert and transform clouds into rain. He offers her a very nice image: that she lives like a little child in a small boat that God is steering.*

My dear daughter, I am writing to answer your letter briefly. Thank you very much for your spiritual wishes for me. I do need to have my daughters pray for my needs; they are great, very great!

Pray that I may have a little more love for God and his beloved Cross.

My daughter, continue to serve God for God alone; may his service pass ahead of our preferences. May fidelity in fulfilling his holy Will be our primary virtue, the principal deed of our love for God. Never forget that the love shown in the Garden of Olives and on Calvary is greater than the glory of Tabor. To remain faithful to Jesus who is sad, alone, forsaken is proper to perfect souls: the Blessed Virgin, St. John and Mary Magdalene. Don't be surprised by your dryness and spiritual aridity. It's the desert of the promised land. It's the furnace of purification. Then, we love the Good Lord more than ourselves. However, you are upset because your meditations are often dry and find you sleeping; your Communions are cold.

You must still continue. The day will come when our Lord, who is pleased with your patient waiting for him, will change these clouds into a beneficial rain.

When you find yourself in these states of powerlessness, rather than trying to reflect and meditate on truths, produce acts of the virtues of faith, trust, humility and love, as if you were very content. The more these acts seem cold and dry, the more perfect they will be, because at least they will be free from all considerations of pride.

In these periods of sterility you might do well to choose a chapter from the Imitation parallel to your current dispositions and read it quietly in order to let it gently penetrate your soul. Try this during your meditation.

For holy Communion, use the formulas when you cannot do better. My daughter, never strain your mind, or force your heart. That would only trouble and wear out your soul, draw it away from the state of peace and recollection which is more valuable than anything else.

Continue to be like a little child in a boat which God is navigating. Leave the care of the future to the Good Lord; yours is to be ready to fulfill his holy Will.

Goodbye, dear daughter; may our Lord always be your center, your joy, your Spouse. [...]

*To Miss Stéphanie Gourd - February 13, 1852 - (CO 330, II,385)*

### 13 - Serve God through *fidelity of love*

*Mrs. Franchet is going through what all who have a deep spiritual experience go through, living and desiring, sometimes over excessively, that their love for God may be accompanied, or crowned with positive feeling, with rest and interior peace of soul. When this doesn't happen, they complain and they remain prisoners of a type of "spiritual sensuality". In this letter Fr. Eymard unveils the love which is self-seeking, and shows the way to advance: to serve God with a faithful love and not for peace or rest of the soul which may flow from it.*

[...] Your last letter pleased me immensely, it's easily the best you've written to me, also I want mine to bring you what I want.

So what was it about your last letter? It admirably paints you agonising suffering soul, its desires, its needs. Then the work of grace in you; the divine attraction shows itself there through light clouds. This is what I felt: the good God want to free you, not from the world, you are already freed, but from yourself; from this spiritual sensuality which devours your good desires and makes your immense graces sterile.

The heart suffers, it does not say so enough to God alone; and in saying it too often outside of God it increases the wound, only makes God more absent. Your heart does not yet know how to love sufficiently in suffering alone with God alone, and this, nevertheless, is what our Lord wants from you.

You love God, the fear of not loving Him makes you demand too much of creatures if you love them and they are the means of loving Him more; basically, this is a love which is self-seeking. You have a strong soul, tending towards great things; you would want to bring these needs of your heart to the service of God; and the Good God does not want the outbursts, the violences, the generous sentiments of your heart, He want its weakness, isolation, suffering, in a word, death and life.

The trouble with you is not in the spirit, in the imagination, in exterior difficulties, in the difficulties of neighbours, no no .... the trouble is in the heart, which would like to sacrifice all the rest, except this very sweet, and subtle sentiment of divine love.

Come on! My dear sister, give to our Lord the *heart* of the Square, He is already Master of the ramparts. You must submit yourself to restraint; and the conditions of the conqueror will be hard in appearance, but magnificent and sweet to the soul .....

Here is the practical conclusion: serve God through *fidelity of love* and not through the peace and restfulness of love. Serve God against yourself, and let your greatest pleasure, your greatest consolation, your most lively desire be to please Him in a situation of trial; and you know, the soldier is greater than the battlefield, self-immolating love stronger than contemplative love.

Remember that our Lord paralyses people in your regard, to force you to go to Him alone; don't mind these poor *nothings* but rely on God Who wants to be your All.

See my dear sister, your soul must be dear to me for me to dare say all this.

Ah yes, how dear it is! It is at the foot of the cross; but I want it not to be overwhelmed, not beaten down, but standing with the Holy Virgin (Jn.19:25) in order to be drawn ever nearer to her divine Son. [...]

*To Mrs. Franchet - 16 May 1852 (CO 357; II,415)*

#### 14 - Blessed to have been called to follow the spotless Lamb

*Stephanie tells Fr. Eymard of her decision to live for Christ, with an undivided heart, like a sole spouse. Father rejoices in this: she has chosen "the better part". She follows the footsteps and example of many virgins who have given their lives for Christ from the foundation of the Church. Jesus, Fr. Eymard tells her, will make her taste the sweetness of His love as He did with St. Catherine of Sienna. The virtues which should guide her, in this new way of life, will be fidelity and meekness.*

I have just read your letter, my dear daughter. It made up for such a long silence. I was thinking: "Either my daughters are forgetting me or they have some great sorrow," and I could only pray. Therefore it is so comforting for me to learn that they love God and serve him with their whole heart, especially you, my dear daughter!

It is said that the chaste lover of our Savior had chosen the better part. You also, you have the better part [cfr. Lk 10,42], the most noble, most perfect and most gracious Spouse. Do keep him and always be faithful to him. It is the most beautiful tribute you can offer him, the greatest proof of love you can give him. The wealthier you are according to the world, the more attractive partners you could have, the more you can say to our Lord: I love you more than all that, my heart will never have another Master, another Spouse, another King than you.

Think of the heroic struggles of the Virgins of the first centuries of the Church, of the magnanimous Roman Virgins who let themselves be stripped of all their possessions, of their titles, and of life itself rather than lose the halo of virginity. Don't let yourself be moved, dear daughter, by tenderness and tears. No one can ask such a sacrifice from you, and no position in life can oblige you to take that step. Don't let yourself be disturbed by the apparent or real good you could accomplish in such a situation. The greatest good you can do is to follow Jesus, and you are blessed that you have been called to follow the Lamb without stain and one day to sing the mysterious canticle [cfr. Ap 14,3-4].

You are a little like St. Catherine of Siena. Make a sanctuary in your heart and Jesus will let you find the delights of his love there ever more graciously. You are so poor! Praise God for it: the poor person who wants to give and give from his own need has both rewards. However, when divine Providence gifts you, receive with gratitude, *fidelity and meekness*. These are your two beautiful gracious virtues.

Fidelity to God, to his divine inspiration, readiness to say with Samuel: "Here I am Lord" [1 Sam 3,4]; with St. Paul: "Lord, what do you want me to do?" [cf. At 9,6]; With our Lord: "My heart is ready, oh my God, to fulfill your Will" [cf. Ps 40,8-9]. Fidelity in accepting interior sacrifices promptly, then begin by accepting frustrations, and do so for the love of God. Fidelity to your spiritual practices. Prefer to do them together with your mother, it is even better. However, keep your heart in continual thanksgiving. This way of praising God will make you respond more spontaneously and graciously to sacrifice, because you will consider it as a brilliant opportunity to show God your love.

Meekness, but not weakness, a daughter's meekness. You have full power over their hearts.

You are loved. But when the question comes up, give a decisive answer, and say it hurts you. For the rest, be kind, thoughtful, gracious. One day you will need to use the power your love gives you to speak about God and salvation. If the Good Lord is making you wait for this miracle, it is because he wants it to be a great one, and to make you earn it generously. [...]

*To Miss Stéphanie Gourd - July 18, 1852 - (CO 366 ; II,428)*



## 15 - I live in Jesus and Jesus lives in me

*The Eucharist was the great passion of the life of Fr. Eymard. God gave him the gift of penetrating the depth of this Mystery, to understand its transforming power and to reveal it to his contemporaries. In this letter, he reveals with what intensity and what faith he lives the moment of the celebration of the Eucharist, which transforms him progressively in Christ: "It is no longer I who live, Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). He shares his faith with Mrs. Tholin-Bost, who is also strongly drawn by this special love for the mystery of the Eucharist.*

My dear daughter,

I am also writing to tell you my wishes and hopes at the feet of our Divine Master, the offering which I renew every day at 7:00, when it is my honor and happiness to serve as a priest at the altar of love, on the mystical Calvary. Therefore, I ask that Jesus may rule and live in you in the fullness of his spirit and love. Oh! How joyful Heaven must be, how pleased the Blessed Trinity must be to listen when a Christian soul cries out: "No, it is not I who lives within, it is Jesus who lives in me!" [Gal 2,20]. His truth, whether veiled or luminous, lives in my mind, the reflection of his virtues and sufferings come alive in my imagination; his heart crowned with thorns, opened by the lance, burning with love, his divine heart absorbs, penetrates, enlivens my heart; the sacred wounds of his body impress themselves on my body like a divine seal of his eternal covenant with me. His will is the rule, the life, the instinct of my will. I abide in Jesus and Jesus abides in me [cfr. Jn 15,4].

As long as there is a single suffering, feeling, desire, or affection to sacrifice to you, oh my God, leave me on the Calvary of life. I will have time later for joy, now I want to suffer with you, not to say, because of you; but then! Yes, because of you, oh devouring and consuming fire!

This, my daughter, is what we ask our Lord to become through his grace and love; ask it for me. Oh I need it so! I would need to sleep very few hours, in order to be able to renew my strength at night, for the losses of the day. The soul suffers and loses touch with itself when it is involved in a way of life which is too externalized. [...]

*To Mrs. Tholin-Bost - February 9, 1853 - (CO 400 ; II,464)*

## 16 - Keep your soul firmly in God's hands

*Fr. Eymard takes the waters at the thermal spring of Mont Dore for his health's sake. He continues to receive his mail and to respond to it. Mrs Josephine Gourd has written about a difficult time which she is enduring both physically and spiritually. Fr. Eymard showing a great capacity to understand situations, great wisdom and balance, gives her advice: she needs rest to recuperate both physically and spiritually, she must welcome Jesus as a friend and as a spouse; He will show what is necessary to surmount this difficult time.*

[...] Now about you my dear daughter. Your insomnia, your burdened spirit, your lack of memory, all show that your health is weakening. So, as much as you can, through obedience, take more sleep. It is essential to our physical life. Do it as a good work; organize things to be more faithful.

Holy Mass, the Way of the Cross, the rosary are enough vocal prayers. However, try to keep your soul in God's hands like a child at the loving disposition of its good Father seeking to please him in everything.

Be detached from all things and love only those which God loves. Choose only those which stem from his good pleasure.

You are very poor, that's true, very weak. What can you do? It's your condition, like a poor person who must beg and suffer and especially make peace with his rags and be at peace with himself. Do the same, and in the midst of this poor retinue, also keep your soul calm and joyful. See how our Lord loves you. He wants to dwell with you, not as he did with Zaccheus, but as he did with Mary, his divine mother. Be as attentive to our good Master as you would to a perfect friend who would come see you. That isn't enough, attend to Jesus as the divine Bridegroom of your heart, and this thought will inspire you with everything you ought to do. [...]

*To Mrs. Joséphine Gourd - August 26, 1855 - (CO 525 ; II,584)*

### **17 - To prepare yourself for this holy state (marriage) like a good Christian**

*Fr. Eymard is linked in a very deep friendship with the Jordan family, especially with Natalie Jordan. Her daughter Mathilde has just told Fr. Eymard that she is engaged to Paul Giraud. According to the designs of Providence, writes Fr. Eymard to her, this meeting manifests the will of God, Who thus traces the path which awaits her to the exclusion of other possible paths. He invites her to prepare for this great step and to fit herself to live marriage like a path to holiness thought up by God for them.*

I received your charming letter only yesterday. I praised God for it. His divine Providence has directed everything for your greater good and the good of everyone. Things happened as I expected ever since the day when I had the honor of seeing you all at Uriage. I was praying to God to manifest his will in this relationship. That is what happened. May he be praised!

For your part, Mademoiselle, you don't have to study the matter any further, but to prepare yourself for this holy state as a good Christian woman, praying to the Blessed Virgin, your good Mother, to prepare you for it, and to prepare the heart of the one Heaven has chosen for you; to St. Joseph, the Protector and model of Christian families, and especially to the Archangel Raphael whose mission you know to Tobias and Sarah.

As for interior sadness, spiritual desires for the religious life, it's only a natural sadness; it honors your state.

Later, I will give you some advice which might be helpful and will make you even happier. May God pour out his blessings upon you!

*To Miss Mathilde Jordan - November 5, 1855 - (CO 533 ; II,590)*

## 18 - A wife has three duties to fulfil

*Fr. Eymard had promised Mathilde to give her some reflections and advices for living her Christian marriage. Conjugal love is blessed by God and many husbands and wives have become saints and models of holiness for the whole Church. He recalls the three principal duties of a wife: love of God, love of her husband, and love of her own home. Fr. Eymard does not forget to give some suggestions for the good running of the house, he unites wisdom of the Gospel and that which comes from experience.*

You honored me by informing me about your wedding with your cousin. I praise God with all my heart. Ever since Uriage, I felt that God wanted it, and my confidence was that his divine Providence would arrange everything.

Therefore, Mademoiselle, you will be entering into this holy state of matrimony. Enter into it with the thought that this is where God wants you, confident that you will find your salvation there in a holy manner. It is holiness that makes a particular state sublime. Well, how many great Saints were given to heaven in the holy state of matrimony? What great and noble virtues beautified their beautiful lives! Take them as your models and you will resemble them. Imitate your devout Mother. Copy her virtues and you will have taken a step in the perfection of this great state in the sight of God and the Church.

The trust that you have always shown me, and the affection I have always had for your dear family permit me to give you some advice, the advice I had promised you.

A spouse has three duties to fulfill: her heavenly crown must have these three flowers.

The first duty is toward God and holy Church. From the onset of your new position you must determine your duties of Christian piety, fidelity to prayer and the Sacraments. When a small bush is transplanted into a new garden, it needs to be watered...

No doubt your piety cannot be the same as that of a young person who is free to dispose her means and is still fed by the milk of devotion. Hers must be a strong and enlightened piety, a virtuous piety. Its purpose is to make her duties of state holy and must be regulated by them.

For the Sacraments, you won't be able to approach them often at the beginning, with all the work of a new household, returning visits, and extraordinary events. But when everything becomes calm and you have an ordinary routine, then, come closer to the God of goodness, who is the gentleness and strength of virtue, the life and happiness of a Christian soul.

Your second duty, the first after God, is toward the spouse whom God has given you. Surround him with respect, affection, and generosity: that is the sacred duty of a Christian spouse. If you wish this friendship to be a happy and lasting one, then respect and esteem, gentleness and attentiveness, as a matter of conscience, need to be its blessed flowers. Make it your rule never to allow anyone to lack respect and charity towards your spouse, for he must be your glory and honor. Never believe the evil that a satanic tongue could tell you about him.

The third duty relates to your family life, your household and, if God gives you children, to bring them up yourself under your own eyes. Keep watch over your household, guide your servants, let them not govern you. Show them a heartfelt trust, but never one that is blind and total. Watch over their duties with the intention of showing them what is right and what is wrong, so that they may serve you with affection and conscientiousness. You must especially keep watch over the expenses of the household; have them give you an account. It's a misfortune when servants become the treasurers of a household. But I am wrong to enter into these details. Your mother will be more skillful than I.

You will receive and make visits: that is right. But don't obligate yourself right away. Politeness, propriety, ordinary kindness: that's enough at first. Love your home and you will be happy there. A spouse has only one friend, her husband.

Let me stop here, Mademoiselle. I promise you that I will pray a great deal for you and your husband, whom I really would like to meet, and whom I already love because of all the good things said about him, and whom I already include in the one circle of affection for your family.

May God shower you with his blessings! And may Heaven ratify all those I desire for you in Jesus and Mary.

*To Miss Mathilde Jordan - December 3, 1855 - (CO 536 ; II,593)*

### **19 - The sun of truth and love will shine on us again**

*Mrs. Franchet is going through some interior trials: she believes she has lost the love of God. In truth, trials and sufferings make the search for God even stronger, even if she is terrified by these feelings. "The sun of truth and love will shine on you again" Fr. Eymard replies. It is an invitation, for us also, to recognise the presence of God, even in doubts and dryness. The tiredness of the journey obliges us to ask ourselves important questions and to find answers. If we fear losing the love of God for us and in us, this shows that His love lives in us and God is making a new creature be born in us.*

[...] You see yourself in the midst of a frightening sea, abandoned, alone and afraid, and your little ship is tossed about. Then the devil and your weakness [both] say: you cannot escape, everything is lost! Oh! No! Nothing is lost. You will not perish. None of your interior struggles and storms have destroyed your need to love God. On the contrary, they reveal it, but they frighten you. You love God, that is sure. The good Lord loves you as his child, you cannot doubt it. However, he is leaving you in the desert a while in order that you may expiate your former loves of Egypt; - and have a more spiritual longing for the true promised land. But I know your great sorrow is that you are not able to love God as he wills and you are tempting him. So many interior reproaches are killing you, the world attracts and disgusts you, - everything you hear, read and meditate is insufficient for your suffering and agonizing heart. - Well! A little retreat will restore peace and order.

Courage Madame, it would be a shame to halt on such a beautiful path. So first of all, get a grip on your heart - humbly bring our Lord to mind - bear patiently with his apparent strictness toward you.

The sun of truth and love will shine again for you and you will appreciate it even more. [...]

*To Mrs. Franchet - June 22 (23), 1856 - (CO 596 ; III,40)*

## 20 - Leave the past to His goodness and sanctify the present

*The addressee of this letter complains because a sickness, which has lasted a long time, leaves her without bodily or spiritual feelings; Fr. Eymard suggests that she adore daily crosses, big or small, these are the opportunity which God offers her to strengthen her and to make her grow in love. She must leave tears and sadness in the past and sanctify the present moment. In every situation she must see the divine Providence which takes care of us and nourishes us with the hands of charity.*

I am responding to your letter immediately, my dear daughter. It afflicts me to know that you are still ill, but since God wants it, adore this little cross or this great cross, which his love offers you, in order to make you greater in his love and in heaven.

See divine Providence in everything, loving and feeding you with the hands of divine love. I can understand that it is naturally difficult to receive charity, but your devotion and love for God will make this apparent humiliation seem glorious and pleasant. And so, my dear daughter, no more tears or sadness. God wants you this way, and you are pleasing in his eyes. Leave the past to his goodness and sanctify the present. Life passes quickly and when it is spent for God, the present is very sweet and the future very beautiful. Therefore, have courage and confidence.

Continue to pray for me. I am very grateful to you for it, because I really need it.

May God bless, comfort and strengthen you.

*To Miss Giguet - July 20, 1856 - (CO 610 ; III,57)*

## 21 - May divine goodness perfect in you what it has started so well

*Stephanie had a delicate moment in the discernment of her vocation; Fr. Eymard urges her to interpret her own feelings well and those of people, apparently good people, who can influence the freedom of her choices. This young woman has resolved her interior dilemma and has preferred her love of Jesus to the advances of a man and to self-love. Fr. Eymard reminds her of the prayer which St. Paul had addressed to the Philippians: May the Lord fill her with joy and may He perfect in her the work which he had begun. Having been given fragile health, he invites her to find a good balance between work, prayer and rest. It is for us an encouragement to live the truth within ourselves without losing sight of God's love.*

May God be ever praised and glorified, dear daughter, for the victory he has granted you in his divine mercy. This day was beautiful in Heaven, pleasing to Jesus, your divine Spouse. You are preparing your dowry for his heart, and as I was telling you, the soul is pleasing when it can say to Jesus: I have loved you and I do love you more than any human being, more than myself!

The grace which our Lord has given you filled me with joy and consolation. May his divine goodness perfect what it has begun so well in you.

Reject any afterthought, flee any self-scrutiny, even in your prayers abstain from reflecting about this person. Include him with everyone, and forget him, if possible. God will remember him if you surrender him to him in order to think only about God.

What is done is done. Leave it to God. But, dear daughter, let me tell you in all simplicity:

Have a high regard for the graces and virtues of Jesus Christ in others, but without letting your natural heart contemplate them and even less from attaching itself to them.

Be on guard toward devout men who may have a specific purpose or a personal interest. Politeness, obliging services, even piety can be means of gaining esteem, trust, or more, as you saw it happen.

Place this great maxim in your soul: that a Christian virgin ought not to try to make an outsider happy; she must without pity let earthly hearts suffer when they try to enslave her or take away her crown. Alas! Dear daughter, I have seen so many people with sensitive hearts, high intelligence, a generous will, who became slaves without realizing it and, for fear of hurting anyone, became guilty, first in a passive manner, and then, freely and willingly!

As for you, dear daughter, be jealous and proud of your heart. God wants it and he wants it for himself alone entirely.

As to your health, take the sleep you need. Be vigilant during the day to fulfill all your exercises and duties, so that when the time comes for your night's rest, you will be free.

You can do less on a given day; ordinarily it is better to supplement what you missed, but when rest or meditation has to be weighed, which should you choose? If your body is tired and your soul exhausted, give preference to sleep. If it is only a little fatigue which action can easily dissipate, then try for the action.

Put up with yourself as weak, poor and dry; that is your condition. However, belong and give yourself constantly and totally to God, that is your wealth.

Accomplish your practices of devotion to please God, that's all.

Goodbye, dear daughter. Continue to pray for the little mustard seed which [has been] planted in the ground so that it may develop with a heavenly blessing, and believe me ever in our Lord,

All yours.

*To Miss Stéphanie Gourd - August 5, 1856 - (CO 613 ; III,60)*

## **22 - How good it is to be rooted in God and only on God!**

*In friendship, it is important to know how to communicate the fruits which faith produces in us. With Mrs. Jordan, which whom he has a great bond of friendship and whose spiritual director he also is, Fr. Eymard shares the challenges which confront him. First and foremost, he considers the challenges and deceptions as positive for God's work, because they oblige us to base our actions solely on God. He sees the intervention of the Lord in the difficulties confronting the little Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament which has just been born. He sees it as the grain of wheat buried with Jesus in the tomb. He doesn't know how or when the Lord will make the grain grow, but it is certain that God will make it fruitful and bless it.*

True friendship isn't bound by the form or circumstances of life; it is one and always the same in God and for God. That is why it never occurred to me to classify yours among the indifferent.

Trials and deceptions are a blessing for God's works. The glory of God is then at stake. Human beings are seen only in their poverty, failings and nothingness. How good it is to make a foundation based only in God and on God! We weren't worthy of such a favor because we found understanding and holy souls whom divine Providence used to help us. Those who were a trial to us blessed us with light, holy freedom, greater trust in God.

Saint Paul told the first Christians under persecution, "You haven't yet struggled to the point of blood" [Heb 12,4]. How far we are from the Apostles, those great souls of Jesus Christ!

However, our Lord is granting us a great grace: to love our solitude, our life hidden underground, like Jesus in the tomb, like the grain of wheat [cfr. Jn 12,24].

St. Francis de Sales would say to St. Jeanne de Chantal, when she decided to establish the Congregation of the Visitation, "I don't see the light on that, but I am sure that God will do it." I can say the same thing: I do not know when this little seed will germinate and be fruitful, when good vocations will come, but what I believe is that one day God will bless it.

Continue to pray a lot for us, dear sister; we do so for you and with joy, in order that you may belong fully to the glory of God and charity toward your neighbor. I'm very happy to learn that your husband is better and that you have taken very strong resolutions to take more time for yourself. Yes, serve the world through charity and politeness, but give the rest to your family life, your interior life. Try to love this interior life and find your happiness there.

So, we will pray for your dear daughter so that God may grant her just desires and give her saints; children, who are the fruit of prayer, ordinarily become the glory and joy of their parents.

We have already had a few encouraging ceremonies: 2 baptisms of adults, first Communions. Every day, we take one more step toward the goal; so, praise God for it. [...]

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - November 28, 1856 - (CO 641 ; III,89)*

## **23 - God wants to make you to go to Him through the desert**

*Fr. Eymard gives this practical and spiritual advice to Stephanie, who has chosen to consecrate herself to the Lord while remaining with her family. She should be especially charitable towards her elderly mother. He exhorts her to accept serenely her own human frailty and always to look ahead, because the Lord draws us to Himself and steers us through the desert of our frailties. Understanding and charity with elderly people, but also good care of oneself.*

[...] Be a guardian Angel to your dear mother, her sister of charity, her doctor, also her friend, her loving daughter. Be constant and firm for the care she needs. Your dear mother must obey you on this point. When bedtime comes, stop everything rather than begin anything, cut off any business or visits, if possible. Your mother comes first. Let this be done in a very gracious, thoughtful, pleasant manner. That is the flower of charity and the unction of true virtue.

Regarding the neighborly visits, it's nothing. You are healed; you can see, analyze, form your opinion. Then you will thank our good Jesus for having kept you in his gracious service.

When charity requires that you should be with your parents, Jesus Christ prefers that you should be there, remain there content. But since your heart and thoughts are your own, direct them toward the divine Tabernacle from time to time, even often.

As for your distractions, dryness, etc..., consider them as a natural weakness, and encourage yourself to move forward. The good Lord is the one who, by this means, wants to force you to go to him through the desert and sacrifice. It is the right road.

As for the singing, you would be better without it because of your throat; but if it is relaxing, it's a recreation.

Thank you for your Christian and eucharistic wishes.

May you always be totally God's. Give him all for all; do so in general and detail. These are my [thoughts], dear daughter.

All yours.

*To Miss Stephanie Gourd - January 25, 1857 - (CO 649 ; III,100)*

## 24 - This beautiful day will come for you also

*With great gentleness, Fr. Eymard explains to Mrs. Tholin-Bost, his sympathy on the occasion of her mother's death. They were very close. Her mother died in the Lord, now it is for us to prepare ourselves for meeting the Lord. The memory of our deceased is clarified by the hope and certainty that we will see them again and meet them in God. Like Christ, we also are called to pass from Calvary to the Resurrection.*

You are once again upon a new Calvary, dear sister: a very painful, very sad Calvary. Your dear mother died in your arms: your tender mother whom you loved so much and who deserved that love in so many ways. She died as a good Christian, in the grace and love of her God, assisted by her good daughters, with all the blessings of religion. She died in peace, in the joy of the Lord. What consolation! What gentle hope! From Calvary we go to the Resurrection, to the Ascension of Jesus. Poor daughter, your soul accompanied your good mother on the paths of love; you wanted to follow her and you gave each other a heavenly rendezvous. This beautiful day will also come for you, dear sister, when earth reclaims earth, death its portion, Jesus will unite you eternally to his glory, his life, himself. But, wait still a little: you must continue to suffer and love, by the sacrifice of yourself, to make Jesus known, loved, and served by the folly of the Cross and of love.

I am united to your prayers for your fine mother, but I beg you to take care of your fragile health or rather, of your weakness. [...]

*To Mrs. Tholin-Bost - February 17, 1857 - (CO 662 ; III,111)*

## 25 - Be strong, be great on the cross, with Our Lord

*Fanny Matagrín is very sad because of the illness of her father, to whom she now dedicates all her energies. Fr. Eymard encourages her to carry her own cross in union with Jesus Christ, and to find consolation in the devotion to her father, for whom she cares at both physical and spiritual level, purely for the glory of God. In these challenges in life, the light comes from participation in the cross of Christ, and the consolation of the fact of living - at the moment of the cross - the same charity and mercy.*

I have just learned that you are very sad; that your dear father is very ill. I immediately recommended you both to our Lord because I understand how heavy and painful this cross must be. Be strong, dear daughter, be generous on the cross, with our Lord. It's the moment to kiss his adorable hand and whatever the future holds, whether trials or consolations.

What a joy for your poor father to have you near him! To receive your spiritual and physical care! Oh! Yes, you will be doubly blessed and rewarded, because you have both saved and cared for your father! Think of his soul, his Paradise. I know that you have done so, but if God should desire this beautiful soul for himself, prepare it, love it for the glory of God. Today we are beginning a novena [to pray] for his healing if it is for the good of his soul, and for you, dear daughter, so that God may support you and comfort you in these days of sorrow and pain. If only I were near you! I would go to help you bear this cross. At least, we will pray very much. [...]

*To Miss Fanny Matagrín - October 29, 1857 - (CO 713 ; III,158)*



## 26 - God is life

*In the family of Mrs. de Grandville there was the death of a child. Death - wrote Fr. Eymard - is contrary to love, but, even at the grave the heavenly light of faith opens up. It is from this consoling certainty that we can live in the Lord a communion of life with all those who are dear to us, and we can find again the children and the friends because God is life, eternal life. In the adorable Eucharist, Jesus is with us and He anticipates on this earth, the Paradise of communion with Him and our dear departed. He guides us on the path towards heaven like the cloud and the pillar of fire guided the Hebrew people in the desert.*

[...] Before leaving Paris I had also received the painful and beautiful news about the little angel's death. God came for him, as a beautiful flower worthy of Paradise, a companion in glory for his courageous and devout father. Yes, tears on a grave are always bitter, because death is such a sad thing, so contrary to love! But Heaven upon a grave is such a heavenly thing, so consoling and so attractive. To live in God's embrace means finding all our children and all our friends there. God is life and the happiness of life. I understand how this death has both broken and lifted up that fine mother. The Blessed Virgin experienced both of these sentiments on Calvary and at the tomb; one becomes the virtue of the other. Oh! If we didn't have the adorable Eucharist here below, Jesus the Emmanuel with us, this earth would be too sad, life too difficult, time too long. We must thank the goodness of God for leaving us a Paradise of love, Jesus veiled, a column of smoke and fire in the desert. [cfr. Ex 13, 21].

It is said that Pope John the XXII once said that the Paradise of just souls is to be near Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to form his court there. So then, your little angel would be in the church of your parish where he died. There, he must be happy near his dear mother and you. What a comforting thought! Please present my prayerful sympathy to his good mother. I am praying for her with all my heart. [...]

*To Mrs. Antoinette de Grandville - June 12, 1859 - (CO 836 ; III,287)*

## 27 - The interior reign of God in man

*Holidays can present a great opportunity to find yourself, to meditate on the Holy Scriptures, and to live more intensely in communion with the Lord. Fr. Eymard traces for Natalie a good spiritual journey. By using biblical references, he presses her to deepen her relationship with God and to let herself be formed better by His love. "Begin to live with God, and with God in you, because Jesus said: If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, We will come to him and make Our home in him (Jn. 14:23)"*

[...] Why are you putting off until after the holidays to tell me the results of your good thoughts, desires, and resolutions? I hope that between now and November, you'll send me a few lovely flowers from that bush!

I like your present state, your outlined plan, the apostolate of example, a more interior virtue, living in God in a more constant studied way; that will work out fine! Begin by living with God, and with God within, for Jesus said: "If someone loves me, he will keep my word; we will come to him and we will dwell in him." [Jn 14,23] And elsewhere: "If anyone loves me, my Father will love him, and I also will love him and I will manifest myself to him." [Jn 14,21]

One day, he said to his apostles who were weary from their apostolate: "Come aside and rest awhile in a high and deserted place." St. Luke says that our Lord would often withdraw alone on the mountain to pray there all night. [cfr. Lk 5,16]

In the psalms, the Holy Spirit says through David: "I will listen within to what the Lord God says." [Ps 84,9]

I am reminding you about all these things, dear daughter, simply to tell you: Dwell within, live in your inner spirit, be in control of yourself, recollect yourself from external things to those within, put the world aside. Your part is to withdraw with Jesus in your heart, where he is inspiring your soul, speaking to it in an interior language which love alone hears and understands. The Holy Spirit prays within us, and groans with ineffable groanings of love. [cfr. Rm 8,26]. The kingdom of God, spoken of so much in the Holy Scriptures, is the interior rule of God within, while he rules over our intelligence through faith, over our heart through love, over our body by the mortification of the passions.

Act toward Jesus within as you would toward a guest who is a friend, beloved, and sovereign; don't leave him alone too long; find a way of speaking a few words to him in the midst of your duties to bring him a little bouquet of love. Then our good Master will be happy to stay with you, he will be waiting for you with joy.

Give yourself generously to all the dear people who go to visit you during the holidays, be gracious and pleasant in giving, pure in sacrifice; that is, without thinking about yourself, and even purer in the friendship you give than the one you receive, in order to take it and direct it toward our good Master. It would be wonderful if you could hold sway over all those good souls by the heart, so that you would have the right to lead them higher.

We continue to live the same life with the same happiness. Since you had the opportunity to share in it, don't you agree that there is nothing more to hope for on earth, except to have hearts which are very pure, very generous and dead to everything which is not God!

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - August 19, 1859 - (CO 861 ; III,313)*

## **28 - To give ourselves to Him Who has given us everything!**

*The Congregation of Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, founded by Fr. Eymard, has just been born. On the occasion of the feast of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary at the Temple, he writes them this letter so that their consecration may become more and more an offering of their very spirit, of their very heart, of their very will, of their very body. The secret of Religious Consecration is found in the total gift to Him who gave Himself first, and Who continues to give Himself in the Eucharist. Christ becomes thus, the Master, King, Spouse of life.*

I presented you to our Lord, in union with the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so that you might become good and faithful Servants of Jesus like your good Mother.

I offered him your mind so that it might become one with the mind of Jesus, meek and humble of heart like his, with the simplicity and directness of his own truth, totally still at his feet like Magdalen, to listen to him, and joyfully receive his divine word. Receive it with respect and gratitude, feeding your souls upon it, as the Virgin Mary herself would do.

I offered him your heart, that he might be its Master, its only King and Spouse, where he finds delight, and reigns supreme.

I offered him your will, to be his willing servant, so that your only desire and happiness would be to serve him well.

I offered him your body, to be a holy and living sacrifice, which is pleasing in his sight, by its modesty and self-control.

That is how your holy Mother offered herself with unlimited devotion and unconditional love. Indeed how pleasing she was to God. She truly became like a sweet-smelling sacrifice in his presence.

Give yourselves completely and truly to Jesus, my dear daughters, then you will be true Servants of the Most Blessed Sacrament. The gift of self is the only proof of true love, that's all that God wants. "My Son, give me your heart" [cfr. Pr 23,26], he says. "You will love the Lord your God with your whole mind, your whole heart, your whole soul and with all your strength" [Dt 6,5]. That is the first and greatest commandment. It is our whole life and purpose in this world and the next.

Could anything be more appropriate than to give oneself to the One who has given us everything! What could be more comforting than to give oneself to Jesus as he gives himself entirely to us!

Oh! Why then are we so inconstant, so greedy, so ungrateful toward this good Master? Nevertheless, he asks us for the total gift of ourselves only in order to make us happy and to be able to give himself to us in the same way!

What else could we desire for our humanity, than to sanctify and divinize it in Jesus? I know very well that while it is easy to give oneself fully to Jesus in a general way, it costs a great deal to immolate oneself each day for his glory, to die at every moment to our will for love of him. It is because it costs a lot that we become true adorers.

Oh! My good daughters, often remember how generous you once were toward your relatives and friends, and even more toward yourselves. So when something costs you, say to yourselves: What! Would I not do for Jesus what I did for the world, for my own satisfaction!

Often reflect on what there is in you that is not yet given to Jesus, is not his. Then immediately return to our good Master what your love had already given him.

Consider yourselves as foolish, as outsiders, or as wanting, until Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament becomes your only possession, your only happiness, your only joy, because you are not yet fully his. He doesn't yet reign as a sovereign master in you. Oh! If we were fully his, he would be the constant thought of our hearts, the only law of our lives! Oh! How beautiful, gentle and strong our life would then be! It would be Jesus' life.

Here, we are trying to set the fire of Jesus, and a great number of associates have already been received.

*To Servants of the Blessed Sacrament - November 21, 1859 - (CO 894 ; III,344)*

## **29 - The book of divine love**

*This letter touches on a theme very dear to Fr. Eymard: the beauty of the mountains and the sky is an invitation to contemplate the nearness of God. The book of nature, written by God, is the book of the love of the Creator for His creature: all other books can be gathered into this unique source. The light of nature gives us the key to interpret creatures, and God Himself.*

[...] I was envying you in those beautiful and beloved mountains, those ladders to Heaven; Heaven is more beautiful from mountain tops; the soul is closer to God.

You have read very fine books. There is an excellent one which is ever new; the one which God has written on every plant, on every grain of sand, and within yourself. It's the book of divine love. So then, honor this beautiful book and add a few pages of praise and gratitude. Read all books in this one, and interpret them all in its light, and you will have the key to the understanding of creatures and God himself.

If you knew how much God loves you! You would be proud, almost prideful. If you really understood your grace, how rich you would be! Have courage, dear daughter! We should not cry or drag along when we follow such a good King as Jesus, the King of love!

To the degree that the prison is falling into ruins, the temporary prisoner rejoices because his seclusion will be over.

Try to wait for me, do not go to the heavenly Father too far ahead of me, but help me because I still have a lot to do. [...]

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - Paris, July 19, 1860 - (CO 971 ; III,416)*

### **30 - May the heart of Jesus be your dwelling!**

*The recipient of this text has just commenced, with the taking of the habit, the way that will lead her to definitively give herself to the service of God and her neighbour in Consecrated life. The Religious Vocation is a grace, a gift which, through perpetual profession, becomes a permanent state in life. Fr. Eymard encourages her to follow the voice of the Lord with trust. He will carry to maturity what he has begun and will introduce it into her heart, where the achievement and the perfection of the love of God will be realised, as also charity towards the neighbour.*

I am really late with you, to thank you for your good letters and rejoice with you for the signal grace of your vocation and clothing day. That pleased me greatly, and it will even more so when you receive the full and perpetual grace, that of religious Profession. Dear Sister, you have the better part, you unite the two lives of Jesus, the two hands of love, the two graces of perfection. May God be praised and thanked a thousand times!

As God always wants to complete nobly what his kindness has begun, trust in the future. Besides, you have nothing more to wish for, you have the Eucharist and the Cenacle, the Apostolate and Love.

Therefore, be faithful to this good beloved grace; grow in humility, in the death of Jesus, to reach the opening to his divine heart. His heart opens only to the extent of our death to self. The spear which will open this heart of love is a spear like the one of St. Theresa, of St. Julienne, which wounds the heart of Jesus and opens it in order to be able to enter into it; may it be your dwelling!

*To Jenny Gaudioz - December 31, 1860 - (CO 1008 ; III,448)*

### **31 - God sustains in this state of war**

*Mrs. Chanuet, a widow whose children are settled (her son Michel entered the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament), thinks now about consecrating herself to the Lord in the Congregation of Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. But questionings and interior resistance about so radical a change, emerge. Fr. Eymard invites her to seek only the will of the Lord. He has known her for many years, he encourages her and he tells her his own experience, his questionings, sufferings, and doubts at the moment when he had to leave the Marists to found the new Congregation. He reminds her that even if vocations are different, they have a common, sole, end: to follow Jesus Christ.*

Finally, I can turn [my attention] to you! How has this happened? I have no idea. One thing is sure, I was not silent about you in the presence of our Lord. The thought of you and

your sacrifice are always present to me. That is what leads me to say that in God's sight it is fine and very fine.

What you are feeling is felt by all those who seek and desire God alone. The attraction to his holy will is strong enough but not clear enough to produce only peace and trust. At certain times of grace, everything is radiant, beautiful, attractive; then difficulty, anxiety, even agitation follow. We are afraid, fearful, everything in us revolts. It is the [moment of the] garden of Olives, of sacrifice.

*Oh! How much did I myself suffer from that situation*; not so much with doubts about my vocation, but from my unworthiness, my presumption. I was asking for the grace of a sudden death rather than to act counter to the will of God. God supports us in this state of war; we feel within ourselves a powerful strength which goes beyond the ordinary. Then, at a grace-filled moment, we forget all our suffering. We love, we desire sacrifice, we accept everything, we want everything to be as God wills because he wills it.

However, we must not open the door to practical doubts, to indifference toward both [ways] of life. We must incline our heart toward the way which is more perfect, more glorious for our Lord. Indifference would be the beginning of infidelity. God forbid!

Therefore, dear mother, when the sight of the children you are leaving strikes you with all its emotions, make it a bouquet of flowers; look at Abraham, the Blessed Virgin, our Lord.

When your struggle springs only from yourself, from the sacrifice of your freedom, your comfort, your person, Alleluia! (in spite of Lent). This is the victim of pleasing fragrance, the true Isaac [cfr. Gen 22,2]. The more there is, the greater the victory!

Oh! Desire to come soon! Come under the shadow of this divine palm tree, which feeds and covers the solitary soul with its shadow. Vocations other than the great vocation of our Lord are only sporadic.

At least, be here at all times in your heart, your mind, your life. Then you will be on a mission, but at home, which will be your duty at that moment. [...]

*To Mrs. Camille Chanuet - March 6, 1862 - (CO 1101 ; III,531)*

## **32 - Happy the soul which gives itself to our Lord**

*This letter takes up the theme of the last one. Again, Fr. Eymard shares with Mrs. Chanuet his personal experience, the fact that he felt unworthy of the call of the Lord to the Eucharistic vocation, and that he fought an interior battle which lasted five years. He shows himself to be a counsellor with a great spiritual peace and great humanity, he points out to her the changes that her choice will bring in her relationship with her daughters Emilie and Marguerite, and her sons Michel and Amedee. To follow the call of the Lord can seem sometimes like martyrdom and it requires the total gift of self.*

I am writing a few lines to tell you how happy your letters made me. You understand the dignity of the gift of grace which our Lord wants to give you, while yet recognizing that you are unworthy of it, and in fact, who is worthy of a eucharistic vocation? It is the means by which we live the life of the Angels, dwelling with the adorable person of our Lord, we become his by immolating ours [will]. Oh, how afraid I was to become unworthy of this grace, [even] when I was still longing for it! How I feared to be rejected by God! I spent five years that way, feeling both fear and great interior joy. The eucharistic attraction had become a supernatural force which enabled me to understand the value of trials and the progress [that comes] by means of crosses.

What impressed me most as the time approached was this thought: this sacrifice of leaving everything is done only once in a lifetime. It must be done well, it is worth martyrdom, it is

the Baptism of love. Oh! Happy the soul which gives itself to our Lord to be only his! It's only right, a servant gives herself to service, a bride to her bridegroom, an adorer to the God of the Eucharist who will be a good Master, a great King, a divine Spouse.

How fortunate you are, good Mother, to end your life here below by the sacrifice of love! To come to live at the feet of Jesus, after having worked for him in your neighbor. Each thing in its own time.

It comforts me to see that your fine daughters, in spite of their pain and the loss which your departure will cause their poor hearts, participate in the grace and the glory of our Lord, to give you to him, to offer such a great sacrifice to him. They will receive the hundredfold in this world which you will receive yourself, because we could say that their sacrifice is greater than yours. Poor Emily!\* I understand her tears and her pain. She is such a good daughter, yes, she is such a tender mother! But her heart will follow you and become even more spiritual. From here you will help her greatly. Later she will see you again, and her dear brother Michel. Oh! No, she is not losing anyone, she will always have both claims.

Good Lady Marguerite also sees and praises God for everything, she is right. Our Lord, for whom she loves you, will take account of this immense sacrifice. He will give her the strength of his love. It is boundless. Now she knows where to draw her strength and her light, in Holy Communion.

And dear Amedee, he is surely the one who is losing the most, or rather, who will gain the most, for I understand the void you will create for dear Lady Blanche who must replace you. But, they will come to see you and look for you here at the feet of the Blessed Sacrament. The thought of you will be inseparable from the [thought] of our good Master. Love for their mother will be an adoration of the divine King she serves, the thought of you shall be like a perpetual mission among your dear ones.

Please, dear Mother, Easter is approaching, the beautiful day of love, the eucharistic wedding, the entry into the Paradise of Jesus.

*\* Emily, Michel, Marguerite are the children of Mrs. Chanuet.*

*To Mrs. Camille Chanuet - April 2, 1862 - (CO 1111 ; III,538)*

### **33 - The Eucharist! Here is your Centre, your Life, your Death**

*Marie, the daughter of the Countess de Fegely de Vivy (Swiss), is a lay person who lives an intensely Eucharistic life. She is also engaged in charitable works. Fr. Eymard, speaks to her of the strength which emerges from the Eucharist and which can transform those who allow themselves to be drawn by the love of God. He encourages her to live by this love, which illumines all her existence; he presses her also never to be afraid to make of the Lord and of love for Him, an exclusive nuptial love, if this corresponds with the will of God. Love of neighbour is authentic if it gives first place to the glory of God.*

[...] Love him well, serve him royally, this good King and divine Spouse of your heart! Isn't it right that there should be souls called great by the world, and whom the world would like to buy!

Even if you had the most beautiful crown in the world, the richest wedding dowry, I would like to see you as you are belonging entirely to Jesus, the King of love, and you, his happy servant, his eternal spouse. Jesus, our good Master, has so few chosen souls, so few royal servants! You must count for a thousand, and serve him for ten thousand, by a fervent and generous eucharistic piety.

The Eucharist! That, dear Mademoiselle, is your center, your life, your death. He is a personal Emmanuel; you must be his faithful companion. Love life only for the divine Eucharist, just as Heaven is loved only for God, and not for self.

May your divine love be your criteria for law, virtue, charity, and especially the scale from the sanctuary to judge, esteem, reject, desire, struggle according to your grace of love. Yes, yes, be pure with a purity [which is] like the rays of the sun, since this divine Sun rises in you every morning. The rays from heaven enlighten the mud the same as the flowers, but are not soiled by it. They do not unite themselves to stench, to darkness, but scatter them; they all begin from the same source: so, dear Mademoiselle, may your purity be. May it emanate from the Sun of the truth and love of our Lord Jesus Christ; may never a cloud or an obstacle cut them off from their direct line upon you or upon others. Let them be visible, like the rays, but not tangible, in order that no one may soil them by an impure or imperfect touch.

It is the ray which allows the beauty of the flowers to show; may purity be the beauty and goodness of all your virtues.

Oh! Yes, be very pure, because God only joins himself to purity, - and according to the degree of purity, - like the affinity of two bodies in harmony. Be, not proud, but jealous of this purity, which is the most beautiful crown of divine love.

All the efforts of the devil and of the world are directed against the purity of the Spouse of our Lord, be sure of it.

You will even find priests who are more zealous for the good of their neighbor, of a man, than to protect and perfect a spouse of Jesus Christ. Beware of those who speak only about the salvation of their neighbor, and forget that the glory of our Lord has first rights. There are priests who The Wedding Feast of the King imagine they are doing a great thing who encourage the marriage of a spouse of Jesus, or of one who wants to be, alas!

May our Lord keep you, strengthen you and possess you ever! In him then!

*To Marie de Fégy de Vivy - April 4, 1862 - (CO 1113; III,542)*

### **34 - You should read the Bible more often**

*What Fr. Eymard recommends is important for all Christians: when one is pressed and stressed, as they say to-day, it is necessary to have the courage to stop all activity and seek solitude, to find oneself, and to try to understand what one is going through. We should be enlightened by Sacred Scripture. This principle is basic to a life of prayer and love. Fr. Eymard has not answered a number of letters in order to remain in solitude with the Lord, like Moses on the mountain, and thus to get answers directly from the Lord.*

[...] I bless your time of solitude; it is the only thing that does good to a burdened soul. Do so from time to time; it is the soldier's withdrawal. There is only one thing for you to do in order not to regress, but to advance; it is to give yourself to the spiritual life, to the life of recollection, to meditative readings, like Sacred Scripture; you really ought to read it a little more often; buy the Bible of Carrieres. Keep this principle of life in mind; you will be happy in God's service only by an interior life of prayer and love. That does not require that you should give up the Presidency, but it will make you bear it even better. When our good Master will no longer want you to serve others, he will remove you himself. I would like to see you a bit more of an adorer, how bad you are!

Miss Agathe wrote me at least three letters, and I didn't answer any because I wanted to be with God alone in my solitude, like Moses on the mountain [cfr. Ex 24,2]. A well turned

phrase is like a well curled hair, or a sound without ideas. Please, dear daughter, don't think that is my weakness.

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - Paris, December 4, 1863 - (CO 1323 ; III,711)*

### **35 - Have great trust in prayer**

*Fr. Eymard gives advice on the subject of prayer, it is "the all powerful". He invites his correspondent not to abandon the "old prayers", even though he remarks that the new liturgical prayers of the hours, the prayer of the Church, are "the best".*

[...] Have confidence in prayer. It is the unfailing power which God has given us. By means of it you will obtain the salvation of the dear soul whom God has given you, and all your loved ones. "Ask and you shall receive" [Mt 7,7], our Lord said.

I'm not urging you to put aside your old prayers: they are old friends; but Prime is the best Morning Prayer and Compline at night. We have no others; it's the prayer of the Church.

Freedom and naturalness of spirit are preferable. Be yourself with the good Lord. However, nourish your spirit with holy thoughts and good reading. [...]

*To Mathilde Giraud-Jordan - January 4, 1864 - (CO 1332 ; IV,15)*

### **36 - The gift of your entire self to this good Master**

*In this letter, Fr. Eymard anticipates the themes which will be the subject of his retreat in Rome in 1865: the reign of God in us, "the gift of your entire self", the true Cenacle and the interior Cenacle. These themes represent an important evolution in his Eucharistic thinking. Natalie Jordan will be the first to benefit from what Fr. Eymard experiences in his Retreat in Rome.*

Now at last, my good and dear Madame, it is your turn, things have cleared up a little. I will be a bit freer for God's friends. What a life mine is! It is all cut [in pieces] and torn in shreds! At least if our Lord can draw his glory from it! It's just that one is forever losing in the world, we must be ever giving while receiving nothing: then we always give too much and we steal from the good Lord in order to give. Oh! We are much better on the Tabor of the Eucharist! There is no visible body there, the senses are dead or chained.

What did I wish for you this year? You surely know, the eucharistic kingdom of our Lord in you. Notice that I did not say devotion, virtue, or even love, but the kingdom, that is, the gift of your whole self to this good Master to be his possession, his field, his heart, his life and even his death. We must absolutely come to that; otherwise, you would only be like wood that is put close enough to the fireplace to be dried; it may smoke, cry, shout, be warm; it will never burn if it isn't in the fireplace, assimilated by its power. Please, you know that in order to light a candle we must take fire from the flame itself and not from the draft.

And what have you wished for me? The love of my Master? I do think that I love him; his Paradise? Not yet, I still need to suffer for houses; Lyons? Wish me the real Cenacle [first], and then the interior Cenacle; then, I will be happy. [...]

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - Paris, January 8, 1864 - (CO 1334 ; IV,17)*



### 37 - Always see the wonderful goodness of God over us

*Fr. Eymard invites his correspondent to serve our Lord with joy and with love. To learn to look at all things through “the prism” of the goodness of God is the remedy for sadness, natural and spiritual.*

[...] Well, Madame, I had them tell you to serve our Lord with joy; you must. What is better than to serve him with love? Love produces joy and dedication: is anything better? You are in God's graces as in the Ocean: thanksgiving ought to be your continual sentiment. So always consider God's wonderful kindness over you, his fatherly hand, which is so attentive and always so gracious even in the smallest sacrifices he asks of you. Look at everything through this divine prism, and everything will be colored by it! Remember that natural sadness kills the body and the mind; spiritual sadness, the heart and devotion. I know that there is a wholesome sadness, but I don't wish you even that one. I prefer to know that you are on the Heart of Jesus with St. John, than at His feet with Magdalen...

And so, in order always to be happy with our Lord, flee from yourself. The sight of yourself agitates you, consider yourself as a stranger except in God. So be very simple, have a simplicity which looks at things in the goodness of God. Oh! How lovely everything then becomes! [...]

*To Mrs. Camille d'Andigné - January 19, 1864 - (CO 1342 ; IV,23)*

### 38 - Your mission is not over

*“Always be the apostle of the God of the Eucharist”. It is a mission of fire, of light and of holiness, which Fr. Eymard entrusts to his correspondent. The Eucharist here is seen especially as nourishment, It is “the Bread of life” (Jn.6:35) for the hungry soul.*

Madame, I thought I might see you around New Year's Day, but I see that I must give that up. However, I would have been very happy to see you, and to hear you tell me about your dear family and your holy spouse whom Heaven jealously snatched from you. He certainly owes you something, as you must have added to his crown. True friendship lasts forever. Such profound blows must have shown you the vanity of all passing things! Of every transient joy! Oh! How blessed we are to know our Lord and to find everything in him!

Your mission is surely not completed. You must still complete what has been started in your family, and which I hope you will see, for God's glory.

Remain always an apostle of the God of the Eucharist; it's a mission of fire near those who are cold, of light for those who do not believe, of holiness for the soul of the adorer. Jesus said: “I am the bread of life” [Jn 6, 35].

How good is the good Lord to have made us know, love and receive the divine Eucharist! What more can a hungry soul desire?

I recommend to your love for our Lord a great project which we have for his greater glory.

*To Mrs. Lepage - January 24, 1864 - (CO 1344 ; IV,25)*

### 39 - A spouse of Jesus should live by Jesus

*After having recalled his stay at St. Bonnet in October 1863, when he had worked on the writing of the Rules of his Institutes, Fr. Eymard speaks about Communion. He is glad that Miss Zenaide continues her Communions. Communion is to live by Jesus, it is Jesus and His love which she should look at, and not at herself. Communion makes us enter a conjugal relationship with Christ.*

[...] You are now my Bethany, and it seems to me that I am yours. You have all been so good for me! For me, St. Bonnet was the mountain of God, where a difficult task<sup>58</sup> became so easy and so pleasant for me. Thank you again for your charity.

I love your family as my own. St. Bonnet is my beautiful dream of peace and work! But when and how? I don't know. Our Good Master is not letting me see my future. I like to live from day to day in his arms.

You make me very happy when you tell me that you are continuing your Communions. Always continue them. A bride of Jesus must live by Jesus.

Don't look too closely at what you are bringing to it, but at the love that is welcoming you and giving itself to you. Holy Communion is the virtue of virgins.

Always be kind, gracious, pleasant and dedicated toward your loved ones, especially toward your good and holy mother. What you tell me about your friends would make me sad if I didn't know how generous you are.

My dear daughter, you see how things happen when something is too personal, friendship too social. Don't be too sad about it. It is just that our Lord loves you for yourself and wants you to be entirely his by the repose of the heart. However, continue to be kind to them and do not complain about them, either to them or to God. [...]

*To Miss Zénaïde Blanc de Saint-Bonnet - June 4, 1864 - (CO 1402 ; IV,69)*

### 40 - You need love more than virtue

*This letter is about spiritual direction. There was a change of priest accompanying Mrs. de Grandville, and now she has found understanding and she is nourished. Fr. Eymard gives her advice on how to interpret her weaknesses, her sins, her lukewarm Communions and her character.*

[...] I am very pleased about your direction by Fr. Rich. I lovingly thank our Lord for it. Finally, you feel understood, and especially fed; not always being purified. Yes, yes, you need more food than others, - more strength than sacrifice, more love than virtue! Consequently you are our Lord's poor grateful one. To receive and give thanks, that is your lot.

But your weaknesses? - well! This is the claim which the poor ones have on God. But my sins? - They are your claim to great mercy, which forgives once and for all; like a good mother who forgives over and over again, a thousand times a day, because her poor child is very weak and miserable.

Mediocre Communions that may be evil? - Mediocre! Sometimes, but lukewarm water is on the warm side. Since you don't want to let them be lukewarm, they won't provoke the vomiting that sin does [cfr. Rev 3,16], since you don't like it.

Evil? - Never.

But my temperament? My bad example? - It's true that you are not naturally kind, and supernaturally, you are not perfect. So I urge you to bear the first and not discuss the second. Presume that others have a little charity. After everything is over, humility says: I'm not a model of sweetness, but let's be a model of patience and sometimes of reparation. Know that

some thorns are more useful than some flowers; it's good that certain external faults cover our piety and protect our heart. [...]

Oh! How I would like you to be a little host of love in your little Tabernacle! [...]

*To Mrs. Antoinette de Grandville - August 7, 1864 - (CO 1433 ; IV,94)*

#### **41 - Love our good Master because He has great love for you**

*In these counsels for spiritual life, Fr. Eymard insists a lot on the love of God. He invites his correspondent to look constantly on the love of God, and put herself in this love, to free herself from her fears and her terrors, which arise from her awareness of her own poverty, but which risk impeding spiritual progress.*

[...] I can see that the storm is setting its thunder rolling over your head, and that your soul is troubled and discouragement would be quickly at your door, if God were not protecting the entrance. I understand that [the thought of] Heaven does not encourage you, because the idea of Purgatory darkens the path and divine justice frightens you. So, I will not tell you: Serve our Lord because he has a beautiful Heaven for you; but, Love our good Master because he is gracious and because he has a great love for you, because he created you through love, guided you in love and promised forever the mercy of his love.

You must absolutely avoid self-scrutiny in this great issue of God's service, because the sight of yourself upsets your heart, and yet, your heart loves the good Lord and sovereignly loves him alone.

Besides, outside of God, human beings amount to so little, or are even so weak and evil! You do well to be free of them. Work to free yourself of your fears, which, basically are not bad, but proceed from a good feeling which is the desire to be in God's good graces, not to displease him and not to be separated from Him. That is all very fine; but if these fears prevent you from receiving Communion, from being faithful to your duties of life and your spiritual practices, they would not be good and would harm you. Besides, you know that in such a painful state you must behave as one does in a storm: pray, and surrender oneself to the mercy of God; or, as when we have a very strong migraine headache, we say: "My God, I offer it to you... since it comes from you." [...]

May our Lord place a little more trust in your heart!

*To Mrs. Camille d'Andigné - August 7, 1864 - (CO 1434 ; IV,95)*

#### **42 - Walk in the interior kingdom**

*Fr. Eymard congratulates his directee because, finally, she has begun to walk in the "interior kingdom". Silence and solitude of soul are the places where one knows God better and tastes His love.*

[...] You really pleased me in your last letters! At last! At last! You are walking in the interior kingdom which I have been longing for you for such a long time. You love silence, solitude of soul; that is the sanctuary of God where he gives his oracles of love; love it very much and there you will learn quickly and easily how to know God in his light, enjoy him in the essence of his goodness, imitate him in his spirit of love. We are always beginners in this school of love, because we are always learning something new; we enter more deeply into the

depths of the knowledge of God and his virtue. Oh! Please believe me, let your prayer be made up of silence, contemplation, union with our Lord; that is the only true center of life. The rest is a painful and difficult work of the soul; it means working too much. Here, it is God working in her, the heavenly dew penetrates her gently. But also you are old, you must hurry to God by the shortest way, quickly redouble your efforts. [...]

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - Paris, September 30, 1864 - (CO 1453 ; IV,109)*

### **43 - Work at holy recollection**

*It is in Rome, where he has come to deal with the Cenacle affair, that Fr. Eymard writes to his correspondent. He invites her to work "on holy recollection", considered like the root of a tree. He also gives guidelines for working on recollection in ordinary life.*

[...] You are right: work at holy recollection; that is the root of the tree, the life of virtue and even of divine love. Distraction of spirit is really harmful for the heart, because when the mind is flitting everywhere, playing with everything, worrying over a thousand and one little nothings, it leaves the heart dry, stops feeding it with good thoughts; the memory no longer reminds it about the presence of God. The imagination is amusing itself and amuses the mind with its crazy inventions. Then our poor heart is reduced to pious feelings about a God of devotion and his inspirations of grace, without being well rooted in him, filled with his love, or living by the Holy Spirit, and then quickly becomes exhausted and bored.

Please dear daughter, work at holy recollection by living by God's law, his truth, his gift of kindness, the constant proofs of his love. You must establish for yourself a center of life in God, a dwelling, so that the spirit of our Lord may fill your sinful spirit and be the light, joy and life of your heart.

The essential thing in the service of God is to renew our strength constantly. It can be done by a fulfilling retreat; but when we cannot, we must direct our prayers, spiritual reading and little sacrifices, toward the great and unique point of recollection within our inner spirit, according to how we feel moved by the grace of the moment. Instead of a week, plan on two, and remember that the improvement of your soul depends on your greater ease to become recollected in God. The rest is only a practical application of it. It's like a plant drawing its life from the root, while the root depends on the humidity of the ground. Please now, take courage! Gather manna for the day; every morning it falls for you [cfr. Ex 16,19-21]; let it be everything for you.

I bless you in our Lord.

*To Mrs. Mathilde Giraud-Jordan - December 3, 1864 - (CO 1495 ; IV,143)*

#### 44 - Our Lord calls you further to the interior life

*Fr. Eymard advises on the subject of the presidency of a work, of interior life, a life which demands "generosity and energy". He uses the image of the exodus of the people of Israel at the moment of leaving Egypt: one goes through a painful moment before arriving at a new life under God's direction.*

[...] So you thought of giving up the poor and your Presidency? When the good Lord no longer wants you there, he himself will make it impossible for you. Wait for that, but don't create it; work, since it's the grace and duty of the moment.

Remember that we must force people, even pious people, even priests, to do good when it isn't their own undertaking. We must do a little like the woman in the Gospel, annoy the judge to make him render justice [cfr. Lk 18,3].

A second counsel is this one: When a soul gives itself more to the spiritual life, it needs more generosity and energy than when it is fully dedicated, or even sacrificed to charity or to external duties which, by themselves, nourish natural activity and have a grace of strength.

Because the spiritual life puts us continually at odds with ourselves, it ends up by wearing out our poor virtue, our natural energy. If we are not careful, we end up by dreading all interior exercises. The spirit is afraid of them, the heart is afraid and the will says: it is too hard to be constantly keeping watch over oneself, studying oneself, mortifying oneself in every way! And yet dear daughter, it must be done, that is the condition of the life of recollection to which our Lord is calling you. It's a hard and painful moment when we leave Egypt to pass the Red Sea; but once in the desert, under God's wings [cfr. Ex 19,4] like our Lord's little chicks [cfr. Mt 23,37], then we breathe a different air; we live a different life and we end up believing in these words which are so little known: My yoke is easy and my burden light [Mt 11,30]. We even say: I didn't think it could be delightful to sacrifice for God.

Go to confession for absolution; if you are given a good word, take it, if not, God will give it to you himself. The essential thing is to know how to find your life in God. [...]

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan, December 17, 1864 - (CO 1507 ; IV,157)*

#### 45 - I want to see you grow

*The Servants of the Blessed Sacrament have just commenced their community and religious life at Angers (26 May 1864). They are officially a new religious family. Fr. Eymard sends them some wishes: to grow in virtue, in holiness, in true religious life... to be good adorers, to achieve Eucharistic perfection. Religious and Eucharistic life demand, according to Fr. Eymard, the virtue of charity "Be true daughters of the divine love of our Lord! It is your grace, it is your law, it is your life: Eucharistic love!"*

I am writing to wish you a Happy New Year, you my dear daughters in our Lord, who are always present to me in his divine love and glory.

I am wishing you a happy New Year from Rome, from the city of our Lord Jesus Christ, where his Vicar resides, the center of Catholic unity.

Dear sisters, I've already sent beautiful graces from Rome for you! I didn't forget you on November 17th, during my audience with His Holiness. You must have received my petition to the Holy Father with the precious indulgences he is granting you, especially for the beautiful day of your vows.

The Holy Father granted them with great consideration, even though it was forbidden to present him the smallest sheet to sign; see how much God loves you!

What more could I wish for you, dear sisters, in addition to the royal and foundational grace you received at *Corpus Christi* [May 26, 1864]: your religious life, perpetual Exposition, in short, your Cenacle! Oh! My very dear sisters, if you understood as I do, what a great grace it was that brought you together as a Community, how difficult it was to establish a new religious family, without any other right than your sincere desire and my own nothingness, you should continually thank our Lord for it!

I should not say my *Nunc Dimittis* yet, unless it is God's will, but continue to water this little plant which God has blessed, and which has such a beautiful place in the garden of Holy Church.

I desire to see you grow, not in numbers, but in virtue, in holiness, in authentic religious life. No doubt, you are working with all your strength to become good religious, to be good adorers; but my sisters, there is still a long way to go to reach the *prie-Dieu* of eucharistic perfection!

May Christian charity be sovereign among you: that is our Lord's primary virtue and the soul of religious life. Let each one esteem her sister as better than herself, and, as St. Paul says, consider her to be more virtuous and more deserving [cfr. Phil 2,3]; let each one consider in her sister only her graces, her virtues, the love and goodness of God for her and in herself, her weaknesses and sins, and she will always be charitable.

I am not telling you: "bear with one another" [Col 3,13], that's not enough; but love one another, since you form the beloved family of our Lord. So, be pleased with the fine service and holiness of your sisters, just as in a body one member is pleased with the service of the other.

You form the court of the great King: always be dignified among yourselves. May good manners, proper behavior, a dignified way of speaking be the mark of your community life together.

You are in our Lord's house. Be happy in his holy house, in his beloved service, in everything you do for him; love will do that, a love that comes from the heart, a royal love which will become as tender and sensitive as wax near a good fire.

Oh! Yes, my sisters, be true disciples of our Lord's divine love! That's your grace, your law, your life: eucharistic love!

God has given you a fine heart: be sure to give it back to him. He wants that heart in his; be sure to place it in that burning furnace. Sometimes nature cries out, people make us suffer: that's all fine, because then the heart moves quickly towards its God and good Master. It would be a great misfortune, if we found our pleasure outside of our vocation and of our Lord.

So I bless you with my whole heart, dear daughters. May God keep you, make you grow in the knowledge and virtue of his holy love! And I will be happy.

All yours in our Lord.

*To Servants of the Blessed Sacrament - December 27, 1864 - (CO 1511 ; IV,160)*

#### **46 - The interior gift of self is the true gift**

*On 25 January Fr. Eymard began his retreat in Rome. The advice that he gives is the fruit of what he is meditating: to make to God the gift of self, of the interior which is "the real gift". The Retreat of Rome will be marked by the theme of gift of self, of the interior.*

[...] I prayed for both of you and for all of you, because we need to know our Lord *in his own light*, by his own love.

Then we must give ourselves to our good Master without *any interior conditions*; the exterior has belonged to him *for a long time*.

But the inner gift of self is the real gift, because then our Lord becomes the master of the field to be cultivated, the tree to be grafted. He becomes our Savior, also, by his choice of the graces to sanctify us, divesting us, first of all by self-denial, then by giving us his own form of life, according to his will.

To sum up, he is the God of our heart, the spouse of our soul and life: the bride is only a minor according to the divine law of this heavenly Bridegroom.

No doubt you reflected carefully upon this during your retreat. Now you must cultivate it carefully, by greater recollection, especially during the first two weeks after you leave and return home. [...]

*To Mrs. Lepage - February 4, 1865 - (CO 1528 ; IV,178)*

#### **47 - God loves us personally with a benevolent love**

*What Fr. Eymard writes to the Countess D'Andigne is a fruit of the Retreat of Rome: a deeper discovery of the love of God. Ten days later he will write a meditation on "God Love". "God loves us personally with a benevolent love, and an infinite, eternal love". He will develop especially the benevolent love. This letter in its entirety - we've only omitted the first two paragraphs which deal with practical issues - is not only the longest in his collection, but one of the most important in Father's correspondence. He deals with "a great richness which I have found", the fruit of his meditation during his retreat in Rome, and which will blossom some days later, on 21 March, in the 'gift of his personality' expressed in the form of a perpetual vow. The letter which follows, addressed to Mathilde, develops its riches.*

[...] Allow me to share with you a great treasure I have discovered: I hope you will reap good fruit from it.

God loves us personally with a great benevolent love, with an infinite and eternal love. This benevolent love consists in willing purely and exclusively what is good and what is best for the person who is so loved.

In God, benevolent love is personal. God loves a person, loves you as if you were his only daughter, because his love is one and infinite.

God's divine attributes are all at the service of his benevolent love for you, in order to make you holy in his love and grace, in order to be able to communicate his happiness and glory to you eternally because love seeks union, and union, the purpose and triumph of love, brings about a sharing of goods and life. Love doesn't want to be happy alone.

The great attributes of God which are used by his benevolent love upon a soul, upon you, are:

Divine Wisdom which chooses what is best for the good and current situation of the beloved soul; divine Prudence applies these means of sanctification; divine Power helps us, sustains us, defends us. Mercy always has the heart of a good mother at hand to forgive us, lift us up, because the child has two enemies or rather two claims to mercy: its weakness and its fickleness - I might say, its stupidity and its presumption. Divine Providence plans all the events, occurrences and circumstances around this dear soul, as if it were the center of the activity of heaven and earth, in order that everything may serve its supernatural purpose. - And so, there are some people who try us, make us suffer, remind us that we are in a time of exile, of expiation, of crucified love with Jesus Christ our good Savior - others guide us a short part of the way and then disappear, because God replaces the Angel Raphael, Moses,

Joshua. - Others are a mirror where we see our own weakness - at least, our potential - for evil, in the evil dispositions of Adam. Others are a book of holy living; others, God's poor ones. - The Imitation says: "There is no creature so small or so vile that it doesn't represent the goodness of God in this world" [Im 2,4:14]. Do not sinners also show us the goodness of God who does even material good to them, who invites them, waits for them, with their forgiveness in hand?

Divine Providence places on our path not only those who will test us in the practice of some virtue, but in its divine goodness for our soul it even determines our physical condition, illness or good health, because that is the prescribed diet of the day by which to glorify God that day. It is the day's message signed by divine Providence.

Natural states of soul are also determined by this gracious Providence by the graces God gives and the works he will request. Sometimes he gives more vitality to the mind, other times to the heart, always to the will because it is the head of the house, the servant of God.

Spiritual states of soul are always guided by divine Providence, because they are the real means of holiness. From this springs the great rule of our lives: we must proceed according to the direction given by the wind of grace, and honor God by our natural and supernatural state, make use of everything which is sent to us and placed on our path by divine Providence, see his holy and gracious Will in everything around us and in us, act under its guidance, consult its inspiration, offer it our first intention, pay tribute to it in every expected event, in every encounter, recognize it everywhere, suppose it when you don't see or hear it, because it likes to be veiled, since it loves faith-filled obedience and dedicated love.

The conclusion then is easy:

The best state to glorify God is my present state.

The best grace is the [grace] of the present moment.

The law of duty is the one which love inspires and love fulfills. Hold on to this definition, it comes from our Lord, found in his sermon at the Last Supper: I love my Father, I fulfill his will and dwell in his love [cfr. Jn 14,31; 15,10].

With that principle established, let us now look at the difficulties.

1. "If I were sure that God loves me as you say, I would be too happy!"

- You can be sure that God loves you with that benevolent love, your life is a continual proof of it. If you could write the story of divine Providence in your life, it would be a continual miracle of kindness, means, helps [given]!!!

2. "But who can assure me that God loves me?"

- He will [himself] in you. Don't you feel that your soul is in him and ultimately, wants to belong to him alone? Is he not the only good, the only God, the only desire, the only pleasure of your heart? Does not all your grief consist in the fear of displeasing him or of having displeased him? Wouldn't you give anything in the world to buy his love, his good pleasure, sinlessness in order to never offend him or lose him, or even go to Purgatory, something which frightens you so? - "Yes" - therefore God loves you with a personal, true love. I won't add: Therefore you love God above all things [because] it is really saying the same thing.

3. "But who can assure me that he has forgiven me?"

- Your humble trust, your faith in his mercy. To seek certitude in this world is like wanting to be in Heaven already. Wait! ... It's necessary that humility, trust, surrender, a bit of mud on the way show us that we are still on the way and that we must be God's beggar, God's poor one, and be indebted to him for his forgiveness, his grace and even his heaven.

4. "But, since God loves me, why am I so sad, so desolate, so forsaken even by him?"

- You are neither sad nor desolate, nor forsaken! Look around you: So many natural blessings! So many means for serving God! So many supports that so many others don't have! You have an education, you have faith, piety, means of nourishing that piety. So then what is lacking? Everything and nothing.



Everything, because you are still in this poor world of adversity and you don't savor God, but experience a struggle, a war within yourself, between the old Adam and Jesus Christ, human selfishness against the spirit of Jesus Christ: that is the struggle; there is no enjoyment on the battlefield. And then, everything is a void without God, without feeling him, without the gentle peace which his goodness gives us from time to time, and that is a good sign. It is a protection against the spirit and pleasures of this world and its creatures. It's a breath of love toward God, and it is very good.

5. "But I get discouraged and feel despair!"

- That is your trial, to a degree, it is natural to you within this supernatural state. This state would be very pleasing to God if you knew how to make it supernatural, that is to honor God in your weakness, your poverty, and your neglect! Do this now at this season of the passion of Jesus Christ. It's the grace and virtue of the time.

However, listen to my advice: Although the spiritual soul is fed in this state of interior suffering for which it is not responsible, take note of the three following rules:

1. Do not put aside any of your duties of piety, nor holy Communion, because of your state of turmoil.

2. Avoid the thought that it is the result of some secret fault, of some displeasure of God, who would leave or punish you by such means: that is a temptation of yours.

3. In this condition make acts of positive love for God, of respect for his holy Will; that is, take the opposing virtue, or honor a similar state of our Lord.

So I am running out of paper, and I close with this royal word:

*Abide*, not in *love*, for that would often be the cause of a thousand and one temptations: "Do I love? Am I loved?"

Abide in the house of God's divine fatherly goodness, like a child who knows nothing, does nothing, damages everything, but dwells in this *gentle kindness*.

I bless you in our Lord,

*To Mrs. Camille d'Andigné - March 19, 1865 - (CO 1538 ; IV,186)*

#### **48 - It is no longer I who live, it is Jesus Christ Who lives in me**

*On the evening of 8 April 1865, Fr. Eymard, returning from Rome, where he made the Vow of his Personality, arrives at the Jordans' home in Lyon and leaves again on the morning of 11 April. During these two days of rest and conversations, Mrs. Giraud-Jordan benefits from spiritual guidance which she notes as if he had dictated them to her. Later, Fr. Eymard will complete these notes himself, adding some new guidelines. (CO1797)*

*Here there is the question of the "life of union" with Jesus Christ, which is in each of us "a birth and a spiritual growth". We note that Father Eymard has just entered a new stage on his spiritual journey: 'Oh! If we could understand ....' Through the gift of his personality, it is as if he is configured to Christ and enters into the night of the spirit. From now on his correspondence takes on a new tone.*

You are called to a life of union with our Lord. He is the one who wants to direct you by coming to dwell in you.

Human beings can do nothing of themselves. They are inclined to evil and can commit any crime unless God sustains them. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself without remaining attached to the trunk of the vine, so we cannot bear fruit unless we remain attached to Jesus Christ [cfr. Jn 15,4].

Oh! If we could understand these words of St. Paul: "It is no longer I who live, it is Jesus Christ who lives in me" [Gal 2,20], and this other: "Jesus Christ must grow in us until we

reach full maturity” [Eph 4,13]. Yes, Jesus Christ has a spiritual birth and development in each person. He wants to glorify his Father in each one of us. Let us then say like John the Baptist: “He must increase and I must decrease” [cfr. Jn 3,30]. In order for him to dwell in us, we must dwell in him; we must respond to his call.

Let us give him not only our heart, but our mind. God hasn’t asked for this sacrifice from everyone: it’s too difficult. He only asks for their heart: “My son give me your heart.” [Pro 23,26].

It is only from a small number that he asks for their mind, intelligence, judgement: “Whoever wants to be my disciple, let them deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me.” [Mt 16,24]. It is easy to give our heart, but to give our thoughts, our judgement, our intelligence, that is a more difficult sacrifice. It is like being stripped alive. It costs a great deal. We can’t understand God’s thoughts; but later, what light he gives us! His wisdom blinds us.

How can we attain such divine union, you may say. You have complete freedom on the choice of means, rather, use everything to obtain it. Let everything speak to you about God, and yourself speak about God to all those with whom you are in contact, pray to him for those who don’t know him, ask him to be like the virtuous people you see, not to be more beautiful [than they], but to serve him better.

Don’t let the thought of God remain abstract. Always bring your heart into it. Remain especially in praise and thanksgiving. Be constantly happy to repeat: “How good God is! He alone is good!”

Also use concrete helps to think about God; for example, when the clock chimes, and give yourself a penance if you fail. Our body must be treated like a slave [cfr. 1 Cor 9,27].

Don’t remain in the abstract, make positive resolutions. During two or three weeks concentrate on the same fault to be corrected, the same virtue to practice. You may not always have the opportunity to practice the opposite virtue. You could always make positive acts of it and ask it from God. In everything, even in the smallest events of life, we must see the Will of God, and let ourselves be directed by it with love.

For prayer, have a book you like and read until some thought strikes you, in order to avoid spiritual laziness which prevents you from knowing yourself.

Be on guard against temptations of zeal; the result would be that by thinking of others, we neglect ourselves.

*To Mrs. Mathilde Giraud-Jordan - [April] 1865 - (CO 1547 ; IV,199)*

## **49 - God loves you very much**

*God like a “Jealous spouse” takes everything away in order to be our sole possession. God strips us in order to re-clothe us with His graces and mercy. Fr. Eymard wants to assure his correspondent of the love of God and invites her to abandon herself to His mercy and to remain faithful to it.*

[...] So, now I can reply to your good letter. Were you then worthy of love or hate? The object of love and mercy. Yes, surely, yes, you can see that in spite of yourself, our good Master is still a jealous spouse toward you. He takes everything away from you in order to be your only possession. He even takes away your virtues and your ability to work in order to be your only virtue and activity.

Well, it’s a sure principle that when God strips a soul, it is because he wants to clothe it with his graces of mercy. He strips you from yourself and to reach that final state of doubting

even your good works and unable to be confident in anything except surrender to the infinite mercy of God and the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God loves you very much. He always had your heart first. You have always suffered. He has given you good judgement; this has been a good protection for you and your conscience which is a bit strict has sustained you. You find that your prayers and meditations are very poor and deficient. It is true that when we get older, our natural feelings become more youthful and our supernatural feelings weaken from day to day, to yield to a spirit of pure faith and fidelity to virtue. That is where you are. Be faithful and ever concretely faithful to your practices of devotion; at least as much as your health and strength allow and God will be pleased with you. Our temperament remains the same. That is natural; it's even necessary.

Where would the daily struggle of virtue be if we possessed perfect peace? Never make peace with your defects of character, but love it for the virtue which will become its reward and strength. Our character is ourselves.

For brief confessions, continue - that's fine - they are the rule for your situation. A beggar's only introduction is his habitual poverty. Prepare confession in the morning, if possible; this preparation becomes a habit. Thanksgiving will gain from it.

Recollection must be very difficult for you - especially examination of your conscience and actions - that comes from the monotony of your life, your sickly condition and also a little from your mental laziness. Look at your conscience with simplicity. Reject whatever is unclear or imprecise as a temptation. Alas, dear sister, we must be resigned to serve God only by the heart. The heart inherits what the other faculties lose, and God wants our heart; he is always at our disposal. As we journey toward Paradise, let us desire this beautiful heaven, repeating often: *Adveniat regnum tuum* (Mt 6,10). [...]

*To Miss Adèle de Revel de Nesc - April 22, 1865 - (CO 1552 ; IV,203)*

## **50 - Continue to place your trust in God**

*In a moment of great trial which touched the d'Andigne family, Fr. Eymard invites them to trust in God, to abandon themselves to His divine goodness, to be united with the Lord and to "live through Him, with Him and in Him" (cf. doxology of the Mass). To adore, love and praise God in every place, in every situation, in every state in life, these are the three assignments for his directee.*

[...] I know that you are generous and strong in major events, and that you know how to rise above weakness and sadness. You are doing so at this moment.

Continue to place your trust in God, surrender yourself entirely to his divine goodness which has never failed you.

Please, leave the future to God. - Thank him for the present good and trust that everything will turn to his greater glory....

You see how good it is to stay firmly united to God our Lord, to live by him, in him, through him. He will never fail you, he is ever our good Father and Savior. Human beings, on the contrary, even the most helpful or desired, are either barren or absent. - God remains with us, the divine Emmanuel whom you have with you at home. Adore him from every corner of your house, love him in all your works, praise him in all your interior states! Establish this continual extension between your heart and the divine Tabernacle, and this divine Lover of Angels, this eucharistic Prisoner of love will be happy.

I place you everyday on the holy Paten and I offer you, and your whole family, to God the Father through our Lord, in whom I am. [...]

*To Mrs. Camille d'Andigné - October 25, 1865 - (CO 1657 ; IV,284)*

## 51 - It is the flowering of love in the middle of the desert

*When a soul lives in union with Jesus Christ, it should pass “through all the states of our Lord and all His sacrifices” in order to reach the mountain of the Ascension. It is an expression of love. The “deep peace” which a person has, is a good indication that the path is good. This is the conviction expressed by Fr. Eymard.*

[...] At the feet of our good and mutual Master, I offered you the very same wishes and desires<sup>15</sup> to be one in his holy service and for his greater glory. Your soul must be united to our Lord by the grace of the moment, in union with its various sufferings. The soul, which is a spouse in time on its way to Eternity, must pass through all the states of our Lord to reach the glorious mount of the Ascension. These sacrifices make love flower in the midst of the desert, guided by the eucharistic column. What you tell me about your deep peace of soul shows me that love is at work. Very good.

Always be simple and tender in your prayers to our Lord. Your soul needs it, since it cannot enjoy anything in this world, it must make up for it and strengthen itself in this divine conversation, faithfully following the impulse of grace, the interior movement of the Holy Spirit.

*To Mrs. Tholin-Bost - January 19, 1866 - (CO 1710 ; IV,321)*

## 52 - Forget yourself, in the love of our Lord

*The Countess d'Andigne shared her life between the chateau (castle) of L'Isle-Briand au Lion d'Angers (in Maine-Loire) and her private hotel in Paris for the Winter. The chapel in the chateau had the privilege of reserving the Blessed Sacrament. In this letter Fr. Eymard makes a comparison between the Countess' life and the passage of the Gospel where Jesus is welcomed by Martha and Mary at Bethany (cf. Lk. 10: 38 - 42). He invites her to centre herself solely on God, to believe in His love and to be “all His”.*

[...] So God wants you in his hermitage at l'Isle, his Martha in his Bethany. You are his respectful, devout sacristan, Mary at his feet, sometimes on his Heart, always in his love.

He wants you alone, no longer to be your own, but to be more his. He wants to be the means, the bond, the direction of your life towards him. That is why everything you would like to have as a means of edification, instruction, and help, is lacking: small loss! Since you go directly to Jesus and your efforts are more integrated because they are all directed toward his divine service, in his love, and his divine Will.

I have this great wish for you, convinced that it would increase the glory of God and your virtue as well. It is that you would avoid soul-searching for the love of our Lord; that you would consider as very small what you suffer, what you give him. But especially, don't be so dependent on feeling his love, his peace and the consolations of love.

God loves me: that is a truth. In all things he only wants what is good for me, I am all his and I want him alone. My weakness is my claim, my poverty is my treasure, my imperfections are my need for his grace.

This, dear Lady, is what must ever be put into practice, and you will find the kingdom of God in you. [...]

*To Mrs Camille d'Andigné - March 5, 1866 - (CO 1752 ; IV,359)*

### 53 - Continually see God's gifts for you

*Fr. Eymard invites his correspondent to "work at holy recollection" that is to say: in combining life, union and love with God. Recollection makes us contemplate unceasingly God's love for us.*

[...] So, dear daughter, you are now in your little Nazareth, be happy there. For that purpose, invite Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and be their happy servant.

Yes, work at holy recollection. That is, share your life of divine union and love with our Lord. May your recollection find its vitality in your heart rather than in your mind.

Always consider God's goodness for you; his past graces, his present love, his divine promise to be all yours forever.

Your strength comes from the heart, that is everything for you. That is how the good Lord has laid hold of you and keeps you. Since the heart's love brings more suffering than joy, you will have to suffer for God and with Jesus. The cross is love's struggle and its glory.

Oh yes! Love the good Lord dearly, the rest is nothing! Love him as he loves you, as he leads you to love him.

*To Mrs. Eulalie Tenaillon - March 12, 1866 - (CO 1755 ; IV,362)*

### 54 - Enter into this divine dwelling

*Fr. Eymard invites Mother Marguerite, with much zeal, to abandon herself to the mercy of God, Who will become the source of peace. In response to Mother's request, he gives her some guidelines, all inspired by a feeling of love and thanksgiving, to practice the Way of the Cross. He invites his correspondent to add others.*

[...] On leaving this world, my only regret would be if I had not served our good Master well, for being so lazy and so negligent. Then, I could see one thing clearly, that at such time strength lies totally in trusting in the mercy of God and surrendering to his divine goodness.

Oh! How ugly our virtues seem then and how shabby our good works!

Place yourself safely under the wings of divine mercy, of compassionate love, of tender charity, and your peace will grow with your trust. Oh yes! No doubt we must work, pray, perform every Christian work because God commands it and wants it. But that being done, we must do like a child returning to his parents after school; enjoy their goodness and love which is greater than anything he can accomplish.

You asked me for a few thoughts on the Way of the Cross. Here are a few:

1<sup>st</sup> Our Father. - Adore the sacred wound of our Lord's left foot, the pain he suffered, the steps he took to seek his lost sheep. Kiss that divine wound with Magdalen and the holy women at the Resurrection.

2<sup>nd</sup> Our Father. - Adore the wound on our Lord's right foot. Kiss it with respect and love, for it traced the road to Heaven for you. He tired himself to search for you, to come toward you.

3<sup>rd</sup> Our Father. - Adore the wound on the Savior's left hand, the hand on the side of the heart, which took your hand to lead you and support you. Kiss that divine hand lovingly. Receive upon your head the divine blood which flows from it to purify you.

4<sup>th</sup> Our Father. - Adore the wound on Jesus' right hand. This hand bore you in your weakness, defended you in danger, protected you in struggles, blessed you so often. Kiss it gratefully, place it upon your head, on your heart, on your mouth.

5<sup>th</sup> Our Father. - Adore the deep wound in the Sacred Heart of Jesus; place yourself below this divine wound, so that the water flowing from it may purify you, and its divine blood sanctify you. Kiss this divine wound, breathe in the beautiful and lively flame which issues from it. Enter into this divine dwelling, place your heart there, in union with his.

That is one approach. You may add others. [...]

*To Mother Marguerite Guillot - March 14, 1866 - (CO 1758 ; IV,364)*

## **55 - May the heart offer itself and give itself in a thousand ways**

*"Illnesses are retreats of the soul in God". Mrs. Gourd is ill, Fr. Eymard invites her to live her illness in union with Christ, Who comes to visit her. He invites her to abandon herself to the holy will of God.*

[...] Dear daughter, you have been ill again since your letter! Jesus crucified is visiting you with a particle of his holy Cross. Continue to receive it, for in this way you become the little garden which he cultivates with affection.

These small illnesses become retreats of the soul in God, in his holy Will, in union with Jesus crucified. Prayer is then the loving offering of suffering; prayers are prayers of invocation, and, since the mind is weak and sleepy, the heart must replace everything, offer and give itself in a thousand ways.

Dear daughter, believe me, your prayers of dryness and powerlessness are more pleasing to God than the most beautiful readings and the most sublime thoughts. At least you will be in God's presence like a poor person, a cripple and a child who doesn't know how to say anything but who loves.

Dear daughter, you know that the great natural temptation during convalescence is agitated irritability, impatience; these are our natural thorns. Yes, we must then really stay close to our Lord in order to be gentle and humble of heart as he is [cfr. Mt 11,29].

Surrender yourself ever to God's holy Will for you, dear daughter. You know that it is the great law of life, your grace and only virtue, and it is the mother of all the others. It is the sovereign virtue of Jesus.

*To Mrs. Joséphine Gourd - March 16, 1866 - (CO 1766 ; IV,373)*

## **56 - He has kept you to Himself and for Himself!**

*In this letter, Fr. Eymard give three rules of behaviour: "do everything to please God", "have a spirit of simplicity in all things", and to live with God as a Centre. God loves this person with "a tender and infinite love".*

[...] Keep in mind these three rules of behavior which I am giving you:

1) Do everything to please God; let that be the general and specific intention of your actions: this rule refers more to awareness than to a constant thought. It blends with everything and allows for the simplicity of your actions. A general intention is sufficient. However, when there is something more difficult to be done, a sacrifice which is very painful, then a specific intention is very good for the soul. To please God means to love what he loves, to will what he wills; it also means to reject whatever is evil.

The second rule consists in dedicating yourself to everything in a spirit of simplicity, that is, to do things in a spirit of interior freedom, clinging to them only insofar as God wants and as long as he wants; in a spirit of peace, doing things in an orderly manner, one after the other, with moderation and patience; working to do things well, but not to get rid of them. Let your model be a child, who does everything through obedience and whose life is not bound by anything.

The third rule: Live a little more in God as center, and nothing will be a burden; nothing will distract you; you then will be aware of the presence of God who gives life to everything, who sees everything and who directs the soul in all its ways.

Oh! How loved you are by the good Lord, dear daughter! He has kept you as his and for himself! And that, in spite of everything. He loves you with a tender and infinite love! If he leaves you dry, arid and suffering in his presence, that is the condition of those souls to whom our good Master gives outward responsibilities so as to keep them united to himself by interior suffering, and also by a spirit of pure faith.

Continue to go forward, yours is a good path, God is the one who traced it for you. After holy Mass and adoration are done and your rosary is recited, if God calls you to outward duties and healthcare, that is fine. Then when you are free again, get back on course.

Goodbye dear daughter in our Lord. I bless you. I am very happy that our divine Master has returned to his tabernacle; love him and he will be happy to remain there and be your friend of Bethany after all.

*To Ms. Stéphanie Gourd - March 16, 1866 - (CO 1767 ; IV,374)*

## **57 - All of life is in union of the soul to God**

*Mathilde Giraud-Jordan had sent Fr. Eymard the account of the spiritual directions which he gave verbally during his visit in April 1865 (cf. CO 1547). Father answers her on the same page.*

*His reply is undated. He writes: "Practice, my daughter in the Lord, these maxims, they seem to me to be always suitable for you" This seems to indicate that even after a certain length of time has elapsed, these maxims retain all their opportunity.*

*Fr. Eymard invites his directee to become interior; to live in close union with God, to work closely with God, to be happy in God. In a very simple way, he develops some themes of his spirituality, the fruit of the grace received in Rome on 21 March 1865: recollection, life of union with God, and interior life.*

My daughter in our Lord, practice these maxims; it seems to me that they will always suit you. It's quite evident that the root provides life and strength to the tree, but in a hidden way because it must work in mystery and peace.

To create great power, steam and chemical gas are condensed, followed by a powerful explosion.

Well, it's the same in the spiritual life: charity, the virtues, external works are and must be only branches, the same is true for vocal prayer. The life of these works lies entirely in recollection, in the union of the soul in God. It is its nourishment, its life and strength. That is why you must come closer to God in prayer, listen to him, rather than always speak to him, be recollected in homage at his feet rather than perform acts of generosity where the soul ordinarily puts aside its recollection to become scattered by sentiments that are foreign to it.

The activity of the soul is often our great enemy. It seems to warm our piety, but this ardor is often artificial and debilitating. True spiritual activity is the one that takes place in God, or near God, because the soul unites itself through charity to its end and immediate grace. That is

why nothing is more active than the true love of God, because it is the action of the flame in its hearth.

Apply yourself carefully at becoming spiritual (interior), my daughter, that is, to living with God, to working in union with God, to be happy in God.

Then his light will be the inspiration, the motive of your thought and the rule of your judgements.

Follow his divine Providence, like a trail of personal kindness, and you will be surprised to see how much God is concerned about you, even preoccupied.

This view of Providence, of goodness and love is the soul's greatest happiness, and constantly renews our feelings and insights. It's a little like Heaven!

So watch over your thoughts, let them be God's and let your heart be its echo and fruit, because to see God is the law and measure of love, love of virtue.

I will also send you a little book and one for your dear mother. I believe that she is still at Calet.

I thank God with you for the news you give me. You can see the realization of these words of the Prophet: "I placed my trust in God and it will not be in vain" [cfr. Ps 30,2].

*To Mrs. Mathilde Giraud-Jordan - May, 1866 [?] - (CO 1797 ; IV,397)*

## **58 - May your heart ever be with God**

*What do you say to someone whose illness is prolonged? Fr. Eymard invites Mrs. Gourd to discover the meaning of her state, to allow herself to be steered by divine Providence, to obey the doctor and to submit herself to God: "May your heart ever belong to God".*

[...] God has touched you with the tip of his Cross. You have been suffering for a long time; put it to good advantage. It is Purgatory in this world, but more sanctifying and more glorious to God than the other.

A state of suffering always comes from God. It is the state which he chooses for our greater good and to grant us some special grace.

Let yourself be led by divine Providence and be simple enough to take the remedies which your illness and obedience to the doctor require.

Yes, you must eat meat when you go to the springs. You did well to submit to that. When we are in a situation which sets a direction for our life, we must accept the consequences.

They say that the springs enervate the soul. It's possible, but never one's heart. May your heart ever belong to God through purity of intention, by attachment to his love, by trust in his divine mercy. Often make aspirations of love toward this good Master. These aspirations are for the soul what breathing is for the heart. They are its life.

Have no more vocal prayers than those you mentioned; it is enough. [...]

Please have courage, dear daughter. Continue to love our Lord who loves you so much, and in whom I am.

*To Mrs. Joséphine Gourd - June 18, 1866 - (CO 1810 ; IV,408)*



## 59 - Be completely the Lord's

*The advices are simple, very concrete, dictated by good sense. Spiritual life makes its way through the body, through the "routine" to follow, even through the "coffee", through sleep and finally, through a "renewal retreat". There follows a programme of spiritual exercises which fit in with daily life.*

I am writing to answer your last letter. Thanks be to God! You know yourself well. If you could get rid of all your spiritual weaknesses, you would be so happy! But you will have to carry them and drag them after you, dear daughter, because they are the baggage for your journey in this world. However we must [know how to] draw profit from them.

I will begin by saying: Continue your diet and have coffee without any scruples. Don't worry at all about gaining weight and do nothing different than what you are doing. Be sure to sleep, because the lack of sleep makes you nervous: you need it.

For spiritual matters, you would need to make a retreat of renewal. You will have to do it at home, when you can manage it, I will give you the subjects for it. It seems to me that it would shake you a little, because you have been following your ordinary routine for such a long time!

Always assure the essentials:

Attend holy Mass;

Go to Communion daily;

Spend one hour in adoration;

Recite your rosary;

Make your examination of conscience at night, for three minutes;

Include a brief reading for a half hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, except on days when you have had an instruction. So much for piety.

For your interior life; walk with God, work with him and for his glory. Often make invocations to God, especially when the clock chimes.

Be patient toward yourself; poor, sick and infirm; always accomplish your duty whether you like it or not.

It seems to me that your soul is experiencing famine, that you don't concentrate enough during your meditation with God. Go to prayer with a set thought as your beginning topic, then our Lord will help you to develop it or he will give you a better one, because you will have prepared it.

Remember that a daughter's charity must be your great virtue in the family. As for your nerves, your little emotions, quickness of temper, it's nothing. Let God become your tranquilizer and begin to advance as before.

I bless you very faithfully before God and at the Holy Altar.

Belong entirely to our Lord, by your heart and intention. [...]

*To Miss Stéphanie Gourd - June 29, 1866 - (CO 1812 ; IV,409)*

## 60 - Solitude carries the soul towards God

*Natalie Jordan divides her life between Lyon and the Manor of Calet at Saint Romans. At Calet, she loves the quietness of the countryside. Fr. Eymard invites her to benefit from the solitude and the silence to pray, listen to God and contemplate heaven. But a church is also a suitable place to pray and converse with God. She is a Member of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, and, because of this, she is part of the Eucharistic family: she should unite herself with the adoration of the Religious.*

[...] Solitude carries the pure and simple soul toward God. Well, you have such a beautiful solitude at Calet, between Heaven and earth, where you can pray, listen to God, contemplate Heaven.

The silence in the countryside recollects the soul naturally, and when we know how to read in every pure creature the good which God has placed in it for human beings and for his own glory. Oh! What beautiful aspirations we can send back to God, the author of every good!

However it is in church, perhaps very often alone in calm and silence, that the soul must pray, and converse with our Lord! You are his first adorer, you must be faithful to him; but you belong to us in our Lord, you must unite yourself to our adorations.

Then you are beginning to get old, like me. We must hurry to make reparation, to earn our ticket, to do what we must to pay homage to God. [...]

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - Paris, July 9, 1866 - (CO 1820 ; IV,416)*

## 61 - It's time to bury yourself with Jesus

*In the midst of trials which she met in the foundation of the Thanksgiving Society - perhaps the attitude of Fr. Bazire, her director - Fr. Eymard invites Virginie Danion to humility and trust. This theme of burial is familiar to Fr. Eymard and he lived it himself.*

[...] God has called you to great holiness. Your present state, your past graces, the love which our Lord has always shown you, tell you so [better] than anything else.

Therefore, dear sister, be very holy, holy like Jesus your Master and Spouse. You are now on the path that he so loved, the last one he lived and trod. This period of difficulties and present troubles has brought you a bit more to the foot of the cross, and that is a great benefit. It obliges you to dwell more in humility than in zeal, more with God than with his creatures, scorned rather than esteemed - it is a divine thing.

It's time to bury yourself with Jesus, to tie yourself to the dock during the storm.

My thought then, is that you let charity be the servant of royal humility, that you be silent, speak about it only to God and to your Director, don't even give a thought to the injustices, calumnies, present persecutions, and even less to those of the past. Be greater than Job and say: May God be glorified the more by it! [cfr. Jb 1,21] Don't focus your heart and mind on suffering, but on the glory of God which issues from these wounds and sufferings. [...]

*To Miss Virginie Danion - November 1, 1866 - (CO 1863 ; IV,445)*

## 62 - Always continue with daily communion

*Fr. Eymard asks his directee to receive communion daily and if her confessor thinks otherwise, she should change confessor. Faced with her scruples, he reminds her of her consecration: "You are God's, all God's, and always God's" She should not judge herself in the mirror of her virtues, but should look at the heart of our Lord: He calls you, her tells her.*

[...] Do continue, always continue your daily holy Communion. It's better to give up that confessor, if you must. Live above all, then the spiritual and godly plan of life we gave you with just reasons and complete information.

You know from experience that you need strength more than moralizing, grace more than virtue, love more than spiritual practices... So, put aside all your scruples and worries, and go forward by the strength of a good breeze or standing in the wind; but in that case, we must walk the plank of trust in God and continue to go forward with full sails.

You belong to God, are totally and always God's: therefore, you must live by God, rest in God, and rejoice in God. Well, how can you do it, if not by holy Communion?

Therefore, you must receive Communion, with your eyes on the Heart of our Lord who is calling you, [listening to] the voice of obedience which is telling you: Go! Not with your eyes on yourself in the mirror of your actions or virtues. If that were the case you would need to go and hide in the deepest recesses of a cave in the desert and cry because you are still alive.

Write to tell me that you are better and that you are following my direction, because I know you better than anyone else. [...]

*To Ms. Antonia Bost - February 12, 1867 - (CO 1914 ; IV,486)*

## 63 - You should live in thanksgiving

*Echoing the preacher who invited her to "live in thanksgiving", Fr. Eymard can only encourage his directee: "Be happy in God and in that which He sends you in His infinite goodness".*

[...] I certainly agree with that preacher, that we must avoid tension of mind and virtue which is only sacrifice. Rather we need to live in thanksgiving, which supposes a soul experiencing the joy of the Lord's gifts and blessings.

As for you, your path should consist in freedom of heart in God with some charity toward your neighbor.

Find your happiness in God and in whatever he sends you from his infinite goodness.

Love is strong, it refuses God nothing, joyfully giving him whatever he asks or wishes.

So enter well onto this grace-filled path. [...]

*To Mrs. Lepage - March 17, 1867- (CO 1927 ; IV,495)*

## 64 - Everything is found: the goal of the Society, Jesus Hostia

*Virginie Danion, who devotes herself to the service of Eucharistic works, carries a desire to found a Eucharistic Religious institute with a specific emphasis on thanksgiving. Fr. Eymard invites her, time and time again, to get into action. She has all the required elements ; it's time to give birth to this institute. The Society will come into being the following year, but after the death of Fr. Eymard. He asks for the prayers of his directee, because he knows the trial of the night of the spirit.*

[...] It seems to me that our good Master is really making the grain of wheat die [cfr. Jn 12,24], and that this grain is sprouting well because it is truly dead to the world. It needed many blows and many little deaths to make it die; now it must grow.

I understand your loneliness and distaste for the world as well as you do. When the wind is to the back such storms help the ship move quickly.

What will you do? Your Work of Thanksgiving? It's really beautiful and worthy of your life and death. But we need a center of life, and in Mauron you are only one worker, one poor individual. You need a society; it is high time! Who knows whether God didn't call your devout and esteemed Father to himself in order to give you more freedom?

I believe so, because the life you are living at Mauron, both in your family and in the city, strikes me as having very little future and possibility for development. Therefore, you need to get to work without delay; the sun will soon be setting. You have found everything; the purpose of the Society, Jesus Hostia, the law of the Society, its means, its character. The impetus has been given, so what is lacking? That Sister Anne, who is sleeping at Mauron, consuming herself in a little drop of water, should come out of her sleep and her little prison and say to our good Master: "You need a doorkeeper, an errand girl, a poor little servant? Here is a poor one, but she is all yours. Where should she go? How should she begin? In what direction? What kind of external life?" That, dear Sr. Anne, is the big question that must be resolved.

You must work for the glory of our good Master; it's time. Or else you should ask him to suffer and die for the Work of Thanksgiving. [...]

Do pray for me. My soul is very sad. It needs a little rest at God's feet; but I don't know where to find any, or how to take the time for it. [...]

*To Miss Virginie Danion - June 26, 1867 - (CO 1979 ; IV,532)*

## 65 - Yes, you are where God wants you to be

*A niece of Mrs Camille Jordan, Emdee has chosen to remain celibate and will become the educator of the children of her sister Isabelle, who died at 42 years of age. In this letter, Fr. Eymard confirms her in her choice of state in life. He outlines a triple rule for her: the primacy of God's love, the spirit of piety nourished by the practice of meditation and total trust in God: "Your future is God, and God loves you".*

I am writing to you from the home of your dear aunt. I read your letter here. I'm writing to respond categorically, and as you know that I am direct, I will do it with directness.

1. Yes, I am willing to be your director, but now that your sisters are married and well married, you have the right to write your direction as openly as you think and are in the sight of God and within yourself.

2. My thought is clear. It is that you should refuse any mission, any work, which takes away your freedom. Keep your independence as you keep your heart, keep it for God to whom it belongs and whose possession it will be.

3. Yes, you are where God wants you, consequently where you find good to be done, with the grace which precedes, accompanies and follows it. So, you are not wasting your time. On the contrary, it is used well. Act in such a way that it may always be so, with these three conditions:

1. May the law of God's love always be the rule and motive for your love of neighbor, in keeping with your duties and priorities.

2. May the spirit of devotion make you rise above all external duties. Nourish your heart by frequent outpouring to God, your spirit by the daily practice of meditation, your will by virtuous self-denial.

That is the rule of holiness which you need to acquire and nourish constantly.

3. Always keep your heart free of anything that might trouble it. No sadness, distress or worry about the future. Your future is God and God loves you. You are all his; you are consecrated to him. Work and sleep quietly in Jesus' little boat. I will answer for the rest.

I was very pleased to receive news from your sisters and your whole family. I can see that the good Lord is blessing you very generously. That is how his divine Providence is pleased to show his fatherly kindness to those who entrust themselves to him.

May God ever be, dear Mademoiselle, your center and your joy.

*To Miss Edmée Brenier de Montmorand - July 12, 1867 - (CO 1985 ; IV,536)*

## **66 - Abandon yourself to His love**

*Mrs. Camille Chanuet, nee Crozet, mother of Fr. Michel Chanuet sss, a widow, entered the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in 1862. During a stay with her family for health reasons, she made her perpetual Vows on 7 July 1867. Her condition becoming more serious, her son Michel goes to her on 21 August 1867. Fr. Eymard sends her this letter in which he invites her to holy abandonment in the arms of the mercy of Jesus. She died on 23 August.*

Very dear Mother and sister in our Lord,

I wanted to come with your dear son who is [also] ours and very dear, because it would be a great comfort to me to come see you, to bless you and pray over you. You are ever present to me in the presence of our Lord, I never cease praying to him for you. Dear Sr. Camille, surrender to his love for you; it is great and all merciful. Everything he has done through your lifetime, especially in recent years, certainly gives you the most consoling and constant proof of his love.

Good sister, struggle against the fears which are afflicting you, by holy surrender into the hands of the mercy of Jesus, your good Master.

You are his servant, you have given him everything, you are entirely his. He has accepted you into his service and has even crucified you with him. How would you not rest in his arms like a beloved child! You will go to heaven, good Sister Camille. As for me, I only ask that you work a while longer. However, it is more perfect to say: "May your kingdom come, may your will be done." [Mt 6,10]. [...]

*To Mrs. Camille Chanuet - Sr Camille du Saint-Sacrement - August 21, 1867  
(CO 2006; IV,555)*

## 67 - In prayer, God nourishes us

*In this comforting letter addressed to his directee, Fr. Eymard uses, like a refrain, the word 'to nourish': the soul is nourished by God - in prayer God nourishes us. - In Communion we nourish God with the bread of our sufferings. He invites her to nourish her prayer with gratitude - and, he adds, enjoy God and His goodness. An Eymardian note, if ever there was one.*

[...] I am happy about your good dispositions, your present state, especially your desire to follow your schedule faithfully. You do well.

A rule of life is like a physical diet. You must be faithful to it, because your soul will always be happy when it is well fed with God. It is only in prayer that you will find that delightful peace, calm and rest which is often more tangible than in holy Communion.

In prayer God feeds us; in holy Communion we often feed God with the bread of [our] suffering and the laborious fruit of [our] virtues: that is why we often suffer after holy Communion.

When you are joyful, meditative, one with God, feed your prayer with gratitude, and enjoy God and his goodness. When dryness comes, draw water from the well, water with hope, and if you are experiencing any suffering of soul, let that suffering be the subject of your prayer in order to supernaturalize it, or eliminate it if it springs from disappointments and turmoil.

I'm very happy about the good faithful affection which welcomed you when you arrived. Keep it alive, as you do. There is greater peace and benefit in doing so. [...]

*To Mrs. Lepage - August 27, 1867- (CO 2010 ; IV,557)*

## 68 - The principles of spiritual life - the 'Rock of St. Romans'

*Among the large volume of letters to Mrs. Natalie Jordan, this letter is one of the most precious. Not only does he convey to her judicious advices in inculcating in her the principles of spiritual life, but he reveals the grace which he received on the Calvary of St. Romans when he was a young curate at Chatte. The 4<sup>th</sup> principle in which he develops contemplative prayer is a summary of his spirituality and is like a perfect expression of his mystical experience of which she is the only confidante. This letter reveals the very deep bond which unites him to the Jordan family, as if it was his own family, especially Natalie 'his eldest daughter'.*

It has been a long time since you've given me any news about yourself. In a sense I am happy about it; it proves that you are fine, that your soul is well fed, that it is progressing on its true path.

You understood me well. Your summary of my advice is very precise. However, let me come back on it.

1st Principle:

Fidelity in fulfilling one's rule of life is the primary virtue, we must come back to it constantly! A schedule is a requirement of health.<sup>31</sup>

2nd Principle:

Let your fidelity consist first in fulfilling the external practices of your rule well, that is, in accomplishing them at their appointed time and place, in keeping with their accompanying circumstances; that's what the sacrifice of virtue consists of. What is more, they should be done according to the rules which their nature requires; in a word, as a moral action with its ordinary attributes. Their perfection consists in this. Therefore, when you have done your meditation following the prescribed rules, your reading in a determined author during the

required time, with ordinary attention, so as to benefit from it at that moment, you will have done a very good reading.

Leave the spiritual success to God as well as the sentiments of grace to be received. You are only bound to sow, plant and water. To say is otherwise: God is asking you to give it your care; the success depends on him.

3rd Principle:

In your prayers, aspire to nourish yourself upon God rather than to purify yourself, or humble yourself. In order to do this, nourish your soul with the truth personified in God's divine goodness towards you, with his tenderness, his personal love. This is the secret of true prayer; to discover God's actions and plans in his love for us! Then the soul is astonished, relieved and cries out, "How good you are, oh my God! What can I do for you? What could please you?" That is the flame which rises from the hearth.

But to attain such a living prayer, we must strive very hard to forget ourselves, to avoid seeking ourselves in any way in prayer. We must especially simplify the work of our mind by a simple and calm view of God's truths. The secret of this simple view is to see things at first glance, under the aspect of God's goodness for us, the reason for this grace, what it cost our Lord, its actuality and permanence for us.

When the soul has the joy of finding this good side, prayer becomes more like a delightful contemplation, where the hour passes quickly. Oh! Dear daughter, how often I wish and desire that you may taste God in this way! It lasts a long time; it is my rock of St. Romans.

But I see that I have strayed from my first thought which was to recapitulate your letter. I will leave it at that, convinced that you might prefer to read me than to reread yourself.

Believe what I say, accomplish acts of zeal only through duty, but aspire to the interior life by the attraction of divine love.

We are getting older and we still have a long way to go. We should take the shortest way, the way of love which gives everything without self-seeking.

I have often thought about my visit in Lyons. Sometimes you found that I was more a friend than a father. The joy of seeing you after so long made me think I was in my family; and then, my heart had been suffering so much lately, that it blossomed out when it encountered its eldest daughter. [...]

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - Paris, August 27, 1867 - (CO 2011 ; IV,558)*

## **69 - In the service of God, fidelity and generosity are necessary**

*In this letter, Fr. Eymard invites his directee to constancy in trials or in a time of spiritual dryness. For prayer, despite difficulties, she should attain calm meditation and peace in order to enjoy God in yourself. It reminds her of the two-fold law, that of prayer and of the holy will of God: to attain a pure love, to do things to please God.*

[...] After all, we need to know that when we receive a great grace of interior renewal, everything seems easy and pleasant at first, because we are under that gentle and pleasant impact of grace. This is followed by a time of trial. That is the great shock. Either we do too much at the beginning, or not enough. If we do too much, we become discouraged at the first infidelity. That is the fruit of pride. We were counting too much on ourselves. If we don't do enough, we feel bitter reproach, not from our conscience, but from the devil, to tell us that everything is already lost, that we are already unfaithful.

- But, you will say, I received Communion, as I had promised you, and I did what you told me, or at least what I could. - If you have done all that you could, everything is fine in God's sight.

- But I am not God! ... That's good... You would think that you were a saint!

In the winter, we hardly manage to get warm while working. You are in the winter now. So you must work, but not to the point of perspiration... That's always dangerous, because there is too much effort.

Remember that, in God's service, we need fidelity and generosity, but not strength. God is the strength!

- But you weren't able to pray as you wanted to, peacefully and alone. - That's unfortunate, because you weren't able to begin and finish your prayer well. However, try to attain a peaceful and tranquil meditation, in order to enjoy God in yourself.

A great rule of holiness is to know how to find time for one's soul. The devil makes us waste it. Prayer! Prayer with God and with yourself: that is the first law.

The second law: generosity in fulfilling the holy Will of God over us through self-denial, through love of duty - which comes back to pure love - to do things in order to please God.

Do you want to be transformed interiorly and quickly in God? - and consequently, exteriorly [as well], since the flame comes out of the hearth? Be mistress of yourself: command your old self with authority, and dominate it in order to live by the spirit of our Lord.

I won't discuss what was troubling and worrying you so... Can one become so upset!

Remember this rule forever: when anxiety follows an action, it's a temptation. - When it comes during an action, if the action is good in itself, or if it was begun with a good intention, it must be continued in spite of the agitation. - If the worry comes first, we must either suspend the action, or form a good principle for ourselves, based on duty or obedience or a virtue, etc..., and proceed. [...]

*To Mrs. Mathilde Giraud-Jordan - August 27, 1867- (CO 2012 ; IV,560)*

## **70 - Nourish your soul well with the Lord in the morning, for the whole day**

*Stephanie has just left her mother. Fr. Eymard comforts Mrs. Gourd, inviting her to welcome this temporary separation as "the holy will of the God of Providence". She should look after her affairs with all confidence according to her strength. But also in complete freedom, freeing herself from everything, so that in the church she can fulfil her missions of "a servant adorer of the blessed Sacrament. - Pure love forgets itself and glorifies the goodness and tenderness of God in Himself and in us" he writes.*

[...] We must always adore our good Master's plan of mercy and love, and see in this temporary separation the growth of his glory in our neighbor.

Your soul was longing to live at the feet of God, and see how he is giving you each a mission. But, dear daughter, you know that the holy Will of the God of Providence is the best and surest rule for our life.

However, you must often go to be with your dear daughter, for you are two beings in one.

Take care of your temporal affairs with trust in the light and strength of the moment, but without mental stress and especially without too much fatigue, doing only what your strength allows and prudence indicates.

In the morning, feed your soul with our Lord for the day. [...]



When in church, remember that you are only a servant adorer of the Blessed Sacrament. Consequently, don't worry too much about your responsibilities, or about yourself. Pure love forgets itself and glorifies the goodness and tenderness of God in himself and in us.

*To Mrs. Joséphine Gourd - August 27, 1867 - (CO 2013 ; IV,561)*

## **71 - We must forget ourselves in real love**

*Stephanie Gourd is looking after her nieces: it is "the holy will of God for now". She must relinquish the peace in order to care for her family, "forget herself in real love", in the service of others.*

You are now at Thorins, to teach your nieces and have your nieces as companions. You must tell yourself: God wants it so.

Charity will determine the external [details] of your life. It is the virtue of the present moment. See how our good Master knows how to place us on the path of self-denial.

You could have hoped to live calmly and in solitude close to your dear mother, but see how our Lord is separating you and is surrounding you with noisy activity. May he be praised! The more you expend yourself exteriorly, the more you must cover and fill yourself interiorly with Jesus.

Take my word for it, when you are with our Lord, don't allow yourself to think of others, busy yourself with our Lord, with our Lord alone. Say little about yourself to Jesus, much about Jesus to yourself, for yourself. In real love, we need to forget ourselves, achieve a life of union in our Lord by deep awareness of the heart. That is not tiring and can harmonize with everything else.

Always maintain control over your external situation in order to guide it with the fine and straightforward helm of the holy Will of God at each moment.

I bless you, dear daughter in our Lord.

*To Miss Stéphanie Gourd - August 27, 1867 - (CO 2014 ; IV,562)*

## **72 - Enjoy God, your graces, your tabernacle**

*In a few lines, Fr. Eymard outlines the ideal life of an adorer. He invites Mrs. d'Andigne to enjoy God "to enjoy Him means to want Him alone; to enjoy Him is to live through Him and for Him, at His feet, on His heart, in His divine person". He develops these different aspects and he concludes "to dwell in Jesus, that is to be His servant adorer". His commentary on the verse of St. John's Gospel inspires the grace received in Rome in 1865, the gift of his personality.*

[...] You are fortunate in the countryside, with your divine Guest, with the calm and solitude of adoration, the spontaneity of the grace and love of our Lord! May God increase it in you, and may you find joy in it.

Enjoy God, your graces, your Tabernacle, your good Master. To enjoy him means to desire Him alone; to enjoy him means to live through Him and for Him, at his feet, on his Heart, in his divine Person.

*At his feet*, listen to him like Mary [cfr. Lk 10,39]: it is the bread of life and knowledge. It is the banquet of the soul which comforts you in every way. It is the prayer of silence, of a glance, of the happiness of being under the influence of the divine Sun.

*On his Heart* in holy Communion, or when your heart suffers, or when your soul is sad. When Jesus seems dead, his Heart does not die, his blood was still warm even after his death.

*In his divine Person:* Jesus said, “Whoever eats me abides in me, and I abide in him.” [cfr. Jn 6,56].

A beautiful and divine sharing of life! To dwell with Jesus, in Jesus, that is to be his servant adorer.

*To Mrs. Camille d’Andigné - August 28, 1867 - (CO 2016 ; IV,563)*

### **73 - Always go to holy Communion - it is Jesus forming Himself in you**

*Fr. Eymard comforts Mrs. de Grandville, concerned about the health of her sister. He exhorts her to be faithful to frequent Communion. We don’t receive Communion because we are worthy of it, but because we need it, a vital need. It is, he writes “your only virtue, because it is Jesus forming Himself in you”. Hence the comment: “the poorer I am, the more I need God”. Faced with discouragement, with the temptation to inactivity, to entrust herself entirely to the goodness of God in a “holy poverty of love”.*

[...] What you tell me about your dear sister, her increasing weakness, your fear of losing her, of seeing this beautiful flower culled by Heaven, would all grieve me for your sake if I didn’t hope that God would leave her with you a while longer. She isn’t losing anything by staying a little while longer with us. So, you should pray and I will pray with you, that God may delay his call. I must admit that it would be a great misfortune for you, because your sister is so kind and your soul gains so much just by living with her.

You tell me that you are dragging yourself in God’s service.

It is better to drag oneself than to let oneself fall to the ground. Continue to go to Holy Communion: that is your life and only virtue. I say “only” because it is Jesus forming himself in you. Consider Holy Communion as a pure gift from God’s merciful goodness, an invitation to his table of grace, because you are poor, weak and ill. So, you should go joyfully.

Don’t speak about responsibilities in relation to our Lord, but about thanksgiving, that’s better. Begin with this principle: the poorer I am, the more I need God.

How happy you would make me if you followed this advice!

“I see that you are discouraged, sad, a bit impatient toward everything. You go to duty through duty, to the state of grace because of your conscience. - Oh, how I would like to see all these storms far from you! All this self-blame over with! All this weakness turned to strength! How can you come to that? Jesus is good, gentle, gracious. He loves me. He wants me to belong to him, - but through trust, in the holy poverty of love.”

*To Mrs. Antoinette de Grandville - October 7, 1867 - (CO 2039 ; IV,579)*

#### **74 - Jesus in His love made the cross blossom with the flowers of Paradise**

*Fr. Eymard comforts his directee who risks being overpowered by sadness. It is good to meditate on the Passion of the Lord, not to imitate it, but "as a proof of His love for you and for all".*

[...] Yes, yes, dear daughter, you have the best part, protect it carefully. It is the royalty of the love of Jesus Christ. Adorn these royal virtues daily by your fidelity, especially by the joy of serving God.

Struggle against sadness, which I call *physical*, and the *temptation* contrary to trust and holy surrender.

The good Lord loves you very much, I assure you. You also love him, you want only Him, I am sure of it.

Do meditate on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, not as a model of expiation and penance, but rather, as a proof of his love for you and for us all. In order to remove the bitterness and horrors of the cross which are intertwined with this life, Jesus in his love made this cross blossom with the flowers of Paradise. [...]

*To Mrs. Lepage - October 10, 1867 - (CO 2044 ; IV,583)*

#### **75 - Before all else, be a daughter of prayer**

*Fr. Eymard encourages Mrs. Jordan to grow in fidelity to prayer and to cultivate what is born of love, a prayer "which tastes God, which nourishes itself on God - this grace of the formation of the soul through grace, through God Himself."*

[...] You give me the greatest pleasure when you tell me: *With the grace of God I will remain faithful.* - Yes, we must remain faithful; there are enough defections. It's time to gather strongly together around Jesus our Master. Dear daughter, try to come closer to Him, and to remain in his service. Strength is the soldier's virtue; love is that of the child; pure dedication that of the apostle and religious. Have these three virtues; let them be your Trinity of life. Strength issues from Love; so then, love well. Love issues from the heart of prayer. First be a disciple of prayer, I mean a prayer which is your own: affectionate, recollected, inward, which enjoys God, feeds on God and always aspires toward the mystery of the truth, of the goodness of the love of God. Because a flame which comes to a halt either dies down or loses its light; it comes to nothing, it either goes out or turns to smoke. There is only one thing I would like to see in you - the desire, the hunger, the happiness of prayer in our Lord! That would be a beautiful hearth. Well, until our stomach gets used to food, digests it, or feels hungry, it is sick. So then, speak to me about your prayer, about the formation of the soul by grace, by God himself. That would please me the most.

*To Mrs. Natalie Jordan - October 14, 1867 - (CO 2049 ; IV,587)*

## 76 - Jesus, your Eucharistic centre - your world in this world

*Mrs. d'Andigne is "the most fortunate of secular Catholics". In the little chapel of her chateau of l'Isle au Lion d'Angers, she participates in Holy Mass every day and can recollect herself there if she wishes, in prolonged adoration, far from the noise and bustle of the town. The Lord is her "Eucharistic Centre", her house a "Permanent Cenacle of Eucharistic life". The clouds pass by, but "the sun does not change its nature" no matter what happens.*

I praise God for your divine ownership of a Tabernacle. You are the most fortunate of secular Catholics. You have everything that one could have which is heavenly and divine in this world, together with everything necessary to enjoy it: the peace of the country, solitude from the world, domestic independence, the ability to go - when you will and as often as you will - to visit our Lord in person. Then also, holy Mass daily, loving devotion, and Jesus, your eucharistic center, your grace, your law, your consolation, your world in this world. What more could you have and desire?

So, have a great love for your house of l'Isle, that Bethany of our Lord, the permanent Cenacle of his eucharistic life!

I find that you are very fortunate: at least, no one disturbs you when you are at the feet of Jesus! Oh! Remain there as he wants you to be, in the way he lets you be, as he makes you be. Our state of soul is its thought, prayer, and natural love. We must be ourselves in God's sight. - God changes the seasons to vary the work, the fruit of the earth. Well, our soul is the soil of grace.

Apply yourself to achieve a stable spirit of divine love in your various duties, actions, and interior states.

The nature of the sun doesn't change because the clouds veil it in passing.

I beg you, never hold on to black clouds. These black clouds can only harm you; because they are black they are bad and come from the devil. Oh! You are so sensitive! It takes so little to disturb your soul!

I understand that we can't always experience the joy of Heaven, but you can always dwell in our Lord's obedience and wait patiently for the return of the sun which will not delay.

*To Mrs. Camille d'Andigné - November 11, 1867 - (CO 2075 ; IV,608)*

## 77 - You must find God in the varied activity of your life

*On her return from her country house at Calet where she was resting, Mathilde Giraud-Jordan resumes her activities in Lyon. Fr. Eymard invites her to arrange for strength and recollection and to "find God in the varied activity of your life". The Liturgical time allows for varying the subjects of meditation or alternatively, the rhythm of the week. What is important is that meditation should lead her "to communion which is to follow and should be the centre, the inspiration, the goal of all spiritual life".*

[...] I read your short letter attentively. You are acquiring the quality or the fault of your dear mother: to say a great deal in a few words.

1. Don't be troubled by your distractions of mind and life when you first reached Calet. It's not surprising. You were in a hot-house at St. Romans, and now you are exposed to all the winds. However, you must become acclimatized to your new and usual position in life. You must find God in your varied activities: how can this be done? By frequent aspirations, by frequently renewing the offering of your intentions during your actions. The essential thing

that nothing can replace is to get a supply of strength and recollection for the whole day during your morning prayer. That is the first and absolute condition of your spiritual, even natural life, because God has willed that the spiritual life complete and help you succeed in your exterior life and duties as head of the house.

That is not a reason to pity you because your kindness depends on living more abundantly in God: fortunate necessity!

As much as possible, give the best of yourself to your prayers when you are alert and renewed by grace.

It would be good to vary your subjects of prayer in order to avoid distaste for a never-changing diet. I would like to see you vary according to the liturgical seasons.

During Advent, meditate on the preparation for the feast of Christmas, and after Christmas on the feasts that follow. During Lent, on the Passion. You have "*L'Horloge de la Passion*" by St. Alphonsus Liguori; marvelous "*Meditations on the Passion*" by F. Alleaume, Jesuit; "*Pensees et Affections sur la Passion*", in three volumes, at Widow Rusand, rue Cassette.

Here is another plan.

On *Sunday*, meditate on Heaven: Chapter 47, 48, 49 of the Imitation.

On *Monday*, on the law of the love of God: you will love the Lord your God with all your mind and with all your heart [cfr. Mt 22,37], with all your senses, through all your works. That is the Law! To consider the graces of love we receive, the proofs of God's love for us, our promises of love; and lastly, our infidelity, our negligence. That would be the starting point for the week.

On *Tuesday*, on the interior life, which consists in:

1. observing one's insights and stirrings of grace;
2. adoring our Lord by all our faculties;
3. praising, loving and embracing the holy Will of God upon you as you do or will know it.

On *Wednesday*, the external life, modeled on the Holy Family of Nazareth in one's duties, external contacts, in zeal.

On *Thursday*, on the Eucharist.

On *Friday*, on the Passion.

On *Saturday*, on the Blessed Virgin.

Be attentive to relate these subjects to the holy Communion which is to follow, and which must be the center, inspiration and the end of the whole spiritual life.

Always be gracious and pleasant within, holy and dignified externally, virtuous for yourself and tender for God: these are your four cardinal virtues.

*To Mrs. Mathilde Giraud-Jordan - November 14, 1867 - (CO 2078 ; IV,610)*

## **78 - God loves you with a personal love**

*By focussing too much on her wretchedness, she risks becoming discouraged. She must change paths, contemplate the personal and merciful love of God "Recollect yourself not in yourself, but in His divine goodness - you do not savour God enough in Himself".*

I read your retreat letter carefully. I am answering it with simplicity as usual.

God loves you with a very special and merciful love. He is giving you many graces. He wants you to belong totally to him, but his love is frustrated by the fact that you see your weakness too clearly, know it too well, and keep it ever present. This chills and troubles your heart; it can't be otherwise. Since your poor soul is almost always blaming itself or at fault,

you must change your way. The path you are following is too thorny and doesn't help you move forward. I accept your words that you are falling off, but it isn't effective to stop on the slope, to despair, or slip.

Believe me: forget yourself more with God, look more closely at the details of his goodness, of his divine Providence in action. Let his love be your point of departure; its greatness is seen in proportion to our unworthiness. God loves us though we are poor and unfaithful and so deserves our gratitude all the more: that is the means that would help you to get up and find courage. Do this without delay and try to forget yourself. You will see your faults better in God's mercy than in yourself.

Find recollection not in yourself, nor in your actions, but in this divine goodness. Then heaven will seem purer and the sun more life-giving. You don't savor God sufficiently in himself. [...]

*To Mrs. Antoinette de Grandville - December 8, 1867 - (CO 2084 ; IV,615)*

### **79 - You are *all His* as *He is all Yours***

*In this short letter where he announces his next visit, Fr. Eymard expresses his spiritual nearness to the Gourd ladies, mother and daughter, at the same time as he recalls their attachment to the Lord with the invitation to allow themselves "to be led by His gentle and holy will".*

[...] I am praying for you and I so much want to see you. Our good Master will give me this pleasure shortly.

In the meantime, I visit you in our Lord, in whom you both are ever present to me.

You are all his, as he is all yours. Do what he says and what pleases him. Let his gentle and holy Will lead you. Consider the necessities of your position and life as the present law of his divine Will. The demands of your duties and the propriety of your situation are the marks of his holy Will.

A soul that belongs to God finds its whole life in these two laws: God wills it or God does not will it.

The perfection of love consists entirely in doing each thing as God wills it and in God's spirit.

The best grace is the grace of our interior state, which then becomes our form and law of action. Always consult it carefully.

*To Mrs. Joséphine Gourd and his daughter Stéphanie - December 8, 1867  
(CO 2085 ; IV ;616)*

### **80 - In the desire to be all God's and for God**

*Total trust in God: "Communion, prayer and act like God's poor one, and God in His mercy will supply whatever is needed. - Go to God through everything around. - Concentrate your spiritual life in your heart". Truly holiness is the work of God in us.*

Receive Communion, Pray, act like God's poor one, and God in His mercy will supply whatever is needed. May God bless you and lead you by the hand!

Distinguish clearly what comes from God, from reason, from imagination, from the effects of scruples or the devil, and judge each thing by its cause and its principle.

Go to God through everything around, without being attached to anything, except to His holy will and what pleases Him. Should the occasion of practising a virtue arise, avail of it to please God; but don't become preoccupied with it, it is a visit of a celestial messenger, that's all.

Concentrate your spiritual life in your heart, in the desire to be totally God's and for God. As to the spirit, the intelligence, the memory, even reflection, leave them at the door of the sanctuary of divine love. Do not directly do battle with your distractions, the vagaries of the imagination. Regard it all as alien to your desire to love and serve God, and then not being troubled or upset by it, the heart will very gently draw all the faculties towards God.

*To Mrs. Josephine Gourd - (undated) 1867? (CO 2086 ; IV,617)*

## **81 - Our Lord loves you too much**

*Fr. Eymard invites his directee, who is experiencing the same spiritual sadness as he is, to become aware of the grace in which she rejoices, that of the sacramental Presence of the Lord in her private Chapel - "you walk in the company of our Lord, you dwell with Him, how fortunate you are!". Let her surmount her fears and opens herself to trust. Faced with the temptation of giving in to discouragement in relation to the judgment day, this astonishing affirmation: Our Lord loves you too much to let you be happy without Him and outside of Him.*

On this beautiful day I want to write you a few lines. I read your last letter carefully, and I see that your soul is a little sad, and sometimes barren in the presence of our Lord. That is our situation in this poor life of exile and weakness. We must expect it, the Heavenly sun doesn't always shine on it, but there is always enough light to see and follow the narrow path which is ever widening for a faithful soul.

What is more, you are walking in our Lord's company. You dwell with him, how fortunate you are! - Jesus Savior is working at your salvation with you. This Jesus, the future Judge you fear so much, of whom you are so afraid, is nevertheless working with you and shares your life and actions. Therefore, he will judge himself when he judges you. Then, he will be kind, so kind. So don't make him out to be nasty or severe. You wouldn't dare to do that to a friendly and faithful heart.

I would be pleased if you would use the thorns and storms of the journey to find our Lord better still. We enjoy the fire when we return from a cold place; we love our good Master even more when we have experienced one that isn't as good.

It's better for us if the path to the promised land isn't too beautiful or too lovely; we would become attached to the desert and to the path.

Our Lord loves you too much to let you be happy without him and outside of him.

Your life would be too secular if you found life too pleasant. Let our Lord act and follow him with love and gratitude for everything. [...]

*To Mrs. Camille d'Andigné - December 8, 1867 - (CO 2087 ; IV,618)*

## 82 - When will we love God for His own sake!

*Fr. addresses his wishes to Mrs. de Grandville. He wishes that "Jesus may be your centre of life". It's too easy to live from oneself, by oneself and for oneself. "A negative life", he notes. And he advises to develop a life centred on God, on the contemplation of His perfections, His divine and infinite goodness. And to conclude this encouragement: "Ah! It's high time to make Jesus our life to glorify Him alone".*

[...] 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.

How I would like to see you find your life in God!

My God, dear daughter, our lives are based so much on ourselves, by ourselves, for ourselves! A very negative life, because we concentrate almost only on our sins and faults, our imperfections which need to be healed and deplored! That is what crucifies me so about myself.

So, when shall we love God for his own sake! When will his divine perfections be the delightful subject of our prayers! His divine and unlimited goodness, our recurrent feeling of affection! The love he showed in his life and mysteries, the recurrent subject of our piety! Since unfortunately we are always in this poor world! The heavenly fire is barely a wisp of smoke! Oh! It's high time to make Jesus our life in order to glorify him alone! During your monthly retreat, try to think only about these thoughts. [...]

*To Mrs. Antoinette de Grandville - December 26, 1867 -(CO 2092 ; IV,623)*

## 83 - Be serious about the Presence of God, the knowledge of Jesus Christ

*In a few lines, Fr. Eymard invites his directee to fight against lukewarmness of spirit. In the end, it is important to acquire "the knowledge of Jesus Christ", which he summarises in a few words: "To know is life. God is light, truth, then God is charity".*

A. We must know where mediocrity of spirit comes from.

The first is the worst: it's a scattered mind, a life which is too active. Nothing can cling to it. It's like the seed of the Gospel falling on the open road [cfr. Mt 13,4].

The remedy is to bring the mind back to natural reflection by some reading or serious meditations which strike it and help it to be focused. In general, it's better to choose a great truth than a pious feeling. The work of truth is to refocus our attention, reflection, and finally, devotion.

The second source of mediocrity of spirit is mental boredom toward what is serious and positive. This illness can only be healed by openness to divine love, since it is based on discouragement.

The third source is laziness of the mind which fears to consider the truth.

The fourth source is when we counteract the grace, the attraction of the moment. The mind becomes closed and foolish. We must follow the need and light of the moment. People are afraid to be powerless and so are off their path. We are neither natural nor supernatural. What can we do? Follow grace. Let the mind become accustomed to the truth which God's grace is offering. It takes a week or two for a truth to become natural and habitual, but we must make it the center of our piety and let everything converge toward it.



Be serious about the presence of God, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, a definite thought of some virtue, and you will have a center of strength and consolation. Our Lord said: "Eternal life consists in knowing you, you the only God, and the one whom you have sent, Jesus Christ." [Jn 17,3]. So, to know is life: God is light, truth, and then, God is charity.

B. As we are always going downhill when we use up our spiritual strength, and as our pious exercises only sustain us for a moment, from time to time we must have exercises of reparation and exercises to renew our strength for the extraordinary events of life. I mean: a weekly or monthly examen, in order to know what condition we are in. This examen bears on our graces, duties, sins and virtues. It is an examen of our situation and we must be faithful to it.

Above all, have good will based on God's grace and a very firm will to favor God over yourself, if necessary.

*To Mrs. Mathilde Giraud-Jordan - 1868 (debut) - (CO 2132 ; IV,652)*

#### **84 - You have our Lord all for yourself**

*There is a great spiritual affinity between Fr. Eymard and Mrs. d'Andigne. If she tells him that she suffers from spiritual dryness, he answers that he understands her spiritual state, "a little by analogy": for over two years he knows spiritual darkness. He speaks about himself when he writes, "we suffer so much from this sterility, this paralysis of soul and God's silence" To comfort her, he recalls the privilege of her private chapel: "You have your solitude and your solitary chapel - You have our Lord all for yourself - and I, I hardly have time to see Him or my mind is so agitated!". This shared confidence is in harmony with the Retreat of St. Maurice where he calls to mind "the silence of God" and his state of spiritual desolation. (cf. NR 45,14 ; V,399).*

[...] I understand your interior state, a bit by analogy, and I sincerely and frequently sympathize with you in the sight of God. At least, you have your solitude and your solitary chapel where one hears only the echo of one's prayer or one's tears, and I don't have that. You have our Lord for yourself, alone, and he always welcomes you, watches over you and blesses you as the hostess of his Cenacle. But I, I hardly have time to see him, or my mind is so agitated!

Pity me more than yourself, and I will repay you. But at all cost, keep our Lord in his Ciborium of gold and fire. If he should leave you, follow him, but you will keep him. There is a great spiritual secret that I will share with you: eliminate interior agitation by forgetting yourself and others even more; then begin to praise our Lord and try to please his Heart by the beauty of his own graces, the wealth of his merits, those of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. Make yourself so beautiful and so good that he will look at you with indulgence and recognize himself in you. [...]

*To Mrs. Camille d'Andigné - May 15, 1868 - (CO 2166 ; IV,676)*

#### **85 - We must hurry to take advantage of the lamp that is lighting the rest of our path**

*The last letter to his faithful correspondent, where he allows the "rest of our path" to be introduced. He invites her to avail of the solitude of the Calet Manor "to enjoy and breathe God". Meditation, prayer - "that your soul can live from truth your heart can enjoy it" - contemplation of beautiful nature in this radiant springtime, then the interior work, never achieved, to acquire "gentleness of*

*heart”: so many advices which are sown in a well prepared soil. He is swamped in work. The two days of calm that he allows himself at the Novitiate of St. Maurice to bring his correspondence up to date are only a brief respite. Even if he accuses himself of being distracted by “meaningless things”, we know that he will soon succumb to the task.*

[...] Now about you, dear daughter.

You are in solitude now, that means closer to the good Lord because you are closer to yourself, more with yourself. Open wide the doors and windows to chase away the smoke of cities and crowds. When the smoke is chased away, close the blinds to enjoy and breathe in God.

Read much in the beginning, especially until your soul can live from truth, your heart can enjoy it, and your life can become fruitful under the beautiful sunshine of grace. Spend a half hour in loving prayer mornings and evenings.

Then admire the beautiful stars, the flowers and the fruit of the field which obey the laws of divine Providence.

Now, good and eldest daughter, you must definitely work at gentleness of heart. Jesus said: “Learn from me that I am gentle of heart.” [cfr. Mt 11,29]

If I didn’t know that you have your faults, I would almost say that you are working very hard at becoming supernatural, since our natural feelings revolt from time to time, and so foolishly. Oh! What miserable self-love, what a traitor it is! Peace comes only through war; make war upon it. [...]

Goodbye dear daughter, we are getting old. We must hurry to take advantage of the lamp which is lighting the rest of our path.

This thought struck me this morning during my adoration:

We are now on the last stretch of life and we let ourselves be distracted by meaningless things.

I bless you with all my soul in our Lord.

*To Natalie Jordan - May 19, 1868 - (CO 2169 ; IV,679)*

## **86 - The rays pass but the sun remains, and you receive it every day**

*A testament letter to Mathilde Giraud-Jordan in which he recalls the foundation of the Society of the Blessed Sacrament in Paris in 1856: it is the work of the Lord, and of Him alone. He invites his directee to pray for it and “for its poor Superior”. No doubt the saints are a reflection of the goodness of the Lord like the rays of the sun, but they will pass. “The sun remains, and you receive this sun every day”. May it be her wealth and her strength.*

I couldn’t write to you by the time you had indicated, so I’m doing it from here, from our novitiate, where I came to spend a few days to prepare myself for the feast of the Ascension. The feast of the Ascension is such a beautiful feast for me! It’s the day when I began a retreat in Paris to examine at the feet of our Lord whether he wanted me to labor for the Work of the Most Blessed Sacrament. That was on May 1, 1856.

It was truly the Ascension for me! Because I didn’t deserve that our Lord would look at me and choose me for such a beautiful, such a great Work, which needed a saint, a learned man and a prince at the service of such a great Master.

It has now been eleven years since that date. So many graces received, and so many deficiencies in me!

Oh! Our Lord wanted to prove once more that he is the one who is everything, that he can do everything, and that the weakest and most vile instrument in his hands is the one he prefers. And so dear daughter, on the holy day of the Ascension, please pray for the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament and for its poor Superior.

Now about you. I was really sorry to learn about the death of your relative, Mr. Giraud, substitute in Lille. Although he died suddenly when he fell, he had time to recommend himself to God, since he saw the danger for 8 kilometers, an act of contrition is quickly made and at such a time it is well made. Then, it's the month of Mary, to whom his devout mother prayed so much! We must really pray for him; I am doing so, since he is your relative and I knew him.

So then, you saw Msgr. Mermillod! That is a great grace, that you benefited from it is even better, and so thank God for it. The saints who reflect something of the gentleness and goodness of our Lord are like a proof of how excellent the sun is - of which they are just a few rays. But rays pass, the sun remains, and you can receive this sun every day. You are very rich and very strong; but we must constantly rewind the watch of virtue and even of grace. We use up everything.

Do it, dear daughter, and take as a royal virtue inviolable fidelity to the service of Jesus.

Serve him through your generosity and not through your feelings. Serve him at your own expense: then you will truly love him. I bless you as he loves you.

*To Mrs. Mathilde Giraud-Jordan - May 19, 1868 - (CO 2170 ; IV,680)*

## **87 - Dwell in the *light* of the goodness of God**

*In a few lines, Fr. Eymard reminds Emdee, who consecrated her virginity to the Lord, of the great principles which constitute the "rules of direction", and which should apply to her choice and her state. He invites her to nourish herself on the Lord, to dwell "more in the light of the goodness of God than in His gentleness", "to study our Lord until thrilled by Him". Emdee will know how to make her Director's advices fruitful.*

Your dear aunt [Natalie Jordan] has shared your letters with me. I read them in the presence of our Lord and I thanked him for the graces he has given you. I can see that he is your director of love and Providence.

Let yourself be led within by his divine Spirit, and externally by his fatherly Providence following your grace and total gift. Often repeat the *Introit* of the third Sunday of Lent. ["Permanently my eyes are on Yahweh", Ps 25,15]

Always remember these rules of direction:

1. When your soul gives itself to God as you have, the service of God becomes a set state, virginal love for our Lord becomes the heart's sovereign law. The glory of God, the purpose of all our actions, is legitimate and pleasing to God only according to the law of duty, or fidelity to one's interior spirit, which inspires us to do what is good and what is better.

2. Once our gift has been made, our state in life under vow, our rule of life determined, all external graces must adjust to this state, to this rule, as means [to it]. External works have value only as an exercise of this state; and if they are contrary or foreign to this state, they must be set aside. God cannot contradict himself. We do not ask a tree to give us fruit other than its own kind.

3. Once a person has determined a direction, a principle for their life, this direction only applies the laws and rules of their spiritual and personal vocation, it shouldn't be submitted to

the decision of others. It relates to one's state. If God changes the state, this principle of direction ceases.

However, since we must never hold back the work of grace, and especially God's plan for us, we cannot be the slaves of a state which is not vowed, or of a given rule, because God is always the God of the heart.

In a new situation, we must begin by praying, by holding to what has been done, by testing the new spirit, judging it even by the interior proof of peace and divine strength, wait for obedience if possible, and finally only give in to a two-fold insight and a two-fold sign of holiness.

4. Finally, and I thank God for helping you understand the following rule: In your condition, as I know you, let yourself be the last to judge God['s will] and the works and matters proposed, because in many ways your grace and attraction leave you free because you cannot and ought not give or promise anything other than what is free, and finally because, as a spouse of Jesus, Jesus must say the last word.

Therefore, you did well regarding the offer made by Msgr. Delaplace.

Now listen to a little advice:

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." [Jn 15,7]

Place yourself not in the rays, but in the sun, and you will have all the rays in their essence. In everything you do, discover the bread of life of Jesus, and then nothing will weaken you. May your faults, even your sins, be purified and rectified, like the rust on a sword thrown into a fire instantly disappears by its sudden impact.

Dwell more in the light of God's goodness than in his sweetness. Light is the knowledge of his perfection, of the details and motives for his love, his gifts and his manifestation to mankind.

Be happy when Jesus shows you the reason for his goodness, his love, his virtues, even, or rather, especially for the trials and sacrifices which he imposes on one he loves.

Dear daughter, study, study our Lord, and try to understand him, to discover his secrets, the motives of his heart, and you shall be thrilled.

Always go towards his heart: this source and happiness of life. Give your neighbor the flames of your devoted heart, but leave this heart in the heart of Jesus, and you will have nothing to lose, nothing to fear.

Then, when you write to me, let your thoughts flow and always do so with simplicity, for we love the morning light.

I bless you in Jesus, our common center and Master.

*To Ms. Edmée Brenier de Montmorand - May 19, 1868 - (CO 2171 ; IV,681)*

## 88 - Daily Holy Communion, your place at the family feast of God's children

*The letter refers to the presence of Miss Antonia Bost (Both of them - and at the end, Antonia, the silent one) who lives with her; also a directee of Fr. Eymard. He encourages her to persevere with faith, even if it does not bring her consolation. He asks her especially to remain faithful to daily Communion: The Lord awaits her; it is, he writes, "your place at the family feast of God's children". This letter, the last he will write less than three months before his death, culminates with this vision of eternity: "Ever singing of love in this life and in the eternal Kingdom".*

[...] I believe that you both enjoy good health, except for a few little thorns, which protect the flowers of Paradise.

In your last letter you were telling me that you no longer feel any consolation in your devotions, nor do I. Now is the time to serve God for God's sake, by the faithfulness and dedication that come from love. Dear daughter, if you don't have any consolations, you have what is worth more, the strength and peace of trust in God. Hold on to these two possessions at any price, for they rise above the waves of the sea and clouds of this life.

Never give up daily Communion - that would be like giving up your place at the family feast of God's children.

In this matter we shouldn't consider our unworthiness, nor our dryness, but rather our weakness, the loving invitation of our good Master and the company of our dear Mother. So continue to go to the holy table, as long as you can still drag yourself in spite of your pain. That is the sign that you are expected. You will return from it like the paralytic of Siloam.

Always keep your heart uplifted and joyful, keep a light spirit toward your troubles, but ever singing of his [your?] love in this life and forever in the eternal Kingdom.

A thousand and one blessings from God and Miss Antonia's family, Antonia, the silent one. I bless you as one.

All yours in our Lord

*To Mrs. Lepage - May 20, 1868- (CO 2172 ; IV,683)*

## 89 - Act through pure faith in the mercy of God

*Fr. Eymard again comforts Mrs. d'Andigne in the midst of her interior trials. He invites her to "act through pure faith in the mercy, in the goodness and the power of God". God loves her in a special way and the privilege of His Eucharistic Presence is a favour which confirms this. "You have Him, You possess Him, forget about the rest! You only need to enjoy this possession, He will know how to defend you. See how the Good Master is Good!"*

[...] Don't worry about my letter, it was forgotten: God willed it so. I was writing to you about crosses, you had your share!

Do you know what people do when they swim during a storm? They try to keep their head always above water and to close their eyes against the waves. Always keep your heart turned toward divine submission. Close your eyes in order not to see the horrors of the waves, and cry out to God: He will surely come! Then when you are suffering in every way, and when everything is a cause of suffering, thank God for purifying you, sanctifying you through human beings, so that you may make amends for yourself and for others.

However, the essential thing which should never weaken is to act through pure faith in mercy, in the goodness and power of God; to serve him nobly for Himself, for his Will and his glory by the sacrifice of one's comfort and happiness, the loveliness of his service, of his gentle consolations, of that healing assurance that he loves you and that his love is satisfied with you. - You have often been quite privileged but it is better to give than to receive.

See how kind our good Master is. He stays with you, in your home, at your side, in spite of the will to take it away. I admire how well you were able to defend it, and obtain the gift beyond all gifts. So keep it carefully and don't worry about future difficulties and limits. You have him, you possess him, forget the rest! You only need to enjoy this possession; he will know how to defend himself. [...]

*To Mrs. Camille d'Andigné - May 29, 1868 - (CO 2178 ; IV,689)*

## **90 - You are the religious of the love of Jesus**

*Adele Martel had tried out the Carmel, but her mission is in the world where she has chosen celibacy by private Vow. From this background comes this reference to her vocation as "consecrated" and the advices which Fr. Eymard addresses with this instruction: "prayer before all else, it is the morning provision of Manna from heaven". He ends by a discrete echo of the spiritual desolation in which he finds himself, with this recommendation: "put me in the budget of your prayers, I need them so!"*

Do not get discouraged about writing to me, even though I do not answer right away. At least I answer immediately in God's presence. I pray especially according to your state [of soul] and the needs which your letter expresses. Then, always write your real thoughts to me: at least it is natural and simple. Besides, you couldn't do otherwise.

I may not tell you anything that you don't know already, dear daughter; but you will know it better, since both of us will know it.

It is good to render an account of our soul from time to time. The devil cannot hide in the folds, nature doesn't have a chance to get drowsy, and grace benefits because it is perceived more clearly.

Live from day to day, dear daughter, and you will accomplish your duties much better, accomplish the sacrifices of the journey better by telling yourself: "It will be over tonight."

Besides, there is a great law of holiness which is ever true, ever good and ever powerful in works: the law of the Holy will of God upon us. We find our special grace of sanctification in this present and personal divine will, and this special grace is attached to every hour, every action. When the time for action has passed, this grace has also passed.

Now listen carefully to my advice, dear daughter:

1. You are a religious of the love of Jesus. Carmel has given way to this personal vocation: act according to the meaning of that beautiful name!

2. 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.

3. As you are the traveling spouse of Jesus, protect your fidelity to his honor and love. Let him console and strengthen you. Give him the glory of everything.

4. Always be gracious in the presence of duty; pleasant towards your parents and your friends; pleased with everything and everyone, since God wills it so.

5. But give priority to prayer: it is the morning provision of manna for the day, your orders for the whole day; and doing so, you will spend a good day. And then, put me in the budget of your prayers; I need them so!

I bless you very eucharistically in our Lord, dear daughter.

*To Miss Adèle Martel - May 29, 1868 - (CO 2179 ; IV,690)*

## 91 - May your soul have trust in God for the future

*Father exhorts his directee to have trust for the future, leaving aside all her worries of the past. "Sleep peacefully in the hands of divine Providence!" The Lord's mercy is : "a second Baptism". With what delicacy he invites her to respond to the provident love of the Lord: "Let your love for our Lord be youthful, - you are the beloved of the Lord - rejoice in His divine goodness".*

[...] I would like to hear that you are in good health. That requires that you should avoid any upsetting reactions, any anguish about others, be a little stronger against external winds and storms.

What I desire most is that you would place your trust in God for the future. Sleep quietly in the hands of divine Providence! Be joyfully devout in the service of our Good Master, [you are] the virgin of his heart and the happy servant of his love. Be merciless and strict about the past, forbidding yourself a broad view, firm conclusion or even just anger. Baptism erases everything; the second baptism increases its merit.

You must do so at any cost, without any pretext. You know very well how dear your soul has always been to me, that I asked God for your healing in order [that you might] serve him better and for a long time.

So then, let your love for our Lord be youthful, rediscover the joy of the Springtime of life. - You are white, why darken this beautiful flower? You are the beloved of our Lord; discontinue your crying and rejoice in his divine goodness.

May God keep you and always be all in all for you.

*To Miss Adèle Julhien - June 14, 1868 - (CO 2191 ; IV,690)*

## 92 - Never be discouraged - Love our Lord very much

*Fr. Eymard's concern for Mrs. de Grandville knows no bounds. How could he forget someone who was "among the first acquaintances from the beginnings" at the start of the Foundation? He accompanied her consistently, inviting her never to be discouraged. This 105<sup>th</sup> letter - the biggest share addressed to a lay person - and the last of his correspondence, contains the same message. With age, he notes, "we die by degrees, we must resign ourselves to it! - But the heart does not grow old, it becomes younger". He is on his way to La Mure where he will rest and he proposes to go to La Salette. In fact he will not go to the Marian shrine; on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1868 he dies at La Mure - "There are virtues which only blossom at the last breath" he wrote. Aged 92 years, Mrs. de Grandville will be the first to appear before the Informative Process in Paris for the beatification of Fr. Eymard, to give evidence on 21 November 1899.*

Finally, I received news from you!

Thank you, because I expect it. We never forget our first acquaintances from the beginnings and you were in Paris when we began our Work.

I see that you are still complaining about your old faults; you must shake them when you can, because they are making the road to Heaven longer, more tedious, and fruitless for this life.

There are some virtues which blossom only with our last breath: such as mortification, gentleness, patience and self-denial. Therefore, we must water them every day: we must cultivate them anew. Here, faithfulness is the real virtue; to get up again is to heal.

Never become discouraged, that would be ingratitude or spiritual pride. Always walk in obedience and trust and you will reach the heavenly goal.

As the years increase, they weaken us physically. We die by degrees; we must resign ourselves to it! But fortunately the heart doesn't age. On the contrary, it becomes younger as it inherits what is lost by the other faculties.

Love our Lord very much. Yes, I will certainly pray for your devout and beloved sister, in order that Heaven might leave her with you awhile.

I came here to see some people who are ill. I have rheumatic gout which won me a few weeks of rest; from here I'll go to see my sick sister at La Mure d'Isere and from there go to Notre Dame de la Salette where I will remember you.

I bless you with all my soul in our Lord.

*To Mrs. Antoinette de Grandville - July 19, 1868 - (CO 2211 ; IV,713)*



## LIST OF CORRESPONDENTS

**Andigné, Camille d' (1823-1907)**, born de Montagu, married Count Emmanuel d'Andigné de Mayneuf in 1841. Lives in Paris and in the Chateau of l'Isle-Briand at Lion d'Angers (Maine-et-Loire). Met Fr. Eymard in 1858 and chose him as director. Involved in the Work of First Communion of Adults. - 50 letters.

**Blanc de Saint-Bonnet, Zénaïde de (1832?-1897)**, sister of the philosopher Antoine Adolphe (1815-1880). Lives with her brother in the chateau of Saint-Bonnet at Vaugneray (Rhône); secretary to Fr. Eymard when he stayed there during October 1863 in the quietness of the countryside, to draft the Constitutions of his Institutes, Religious and Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. - 8 letters.

**Bost, Julie Antoinette, known as Antonia**, sister of Mrs. Tholin-Bost, celibate, lives at Tarare (Rhône). A Marist Tertiary, she lives for many years with Mrs. Lepage at Rennes (Ile-et-Vilaine). - 28 letters.

**Bernier de Montmorand, Edmée (1838-1912)**, daughter of Edmond (1813-1894), niece of Natalie Jordan. Chose celibacy. - 4 letters.

**Chanuet, Camille (1807-1867)**, born Crozet, married Leon Chanuet in 1827; Four children of the marriage, including Marguerite who married Adolphe Blanc de Saint-Bonnet and Michel (1834-1888) who will become a Blessed Sacrament Father. Widowed in 1856, she entered the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in 1862 and died in 1867. - 20 letters.

**Danion, Virginie (1819-1900)**, Born at Mauron (Morbihan), tried religious life at Carmel then at Adoration Reparatrice. She returned home where she animated Eucharistic works. After she learned about the Society of the Blessed Sacrament in 1857, she makes contact with Fr. Eymard, who encourages her in the development of her project of a Thanksgiving Society. - 37 letters.

**Eymard, Marianne (1799-1876)**, Fr. Eymard's half-sister and God-mother. She accompanied him to Monteynard when he was appointed parish priest (1837-1839). Accepts with difficulty his entry to the Marists, then became a zealous member of the Third Order of Mary at La Mure. Devoted to parish work, Fr. Julian stayed with her during his visits home and she accompanied him throughout his last illness and at his death. She will hand on the memories of her brother's childhood. Died in 1876. - 154 letters.

**Fégely de Vivy, Marie de**, Fribourg (Suisse). With her mother, she is friendly with Fr. Eymard. 3 letters addressed to the Countess and 3 to Marie.

**Franchet, Mrs. Lyon**, Marist Tertiary. - 33 letters.

**Gaudioz, Jenny**, Lyon, niece of Marguerite Guillot. Tried out Religious life. - 3 letters.

**Giguët, Mrs. Lyon**, resident at the Our Lady of Mercy House. - 6 letters.

**Giraud-Jordan, Mathilde (1835-1915)**, daughter of Natalie Jordan, wife of Paul Antoine Giraud. A son, Gerard is born of the marriage in 1866. She chose Fr. Eymard as a director and received from him 19 letters of great spiritual richness.

**Gourd, Joséphine**, born Morel lives at Thorins Romanèche (Saône-et-Loire) with her daughter Stephanie, who will choose celibacy. They have an on-going correspondence with Fr. Eymard. 79 letters to the mother, 50 to Stephanie.

**Grandville, Antoinette de**, born de Cornulier-Lucinière. Lives in Nantes; a Marist Tertiary, she is present at the opening of the first Eucharistic community in Paris and regularly visits Fr. Eymard, attends his retreats and copied his papers. He sent her 105 letters, which are most important to lay people.

**Guillot, Marguerite (1815-1885)**, born at Chasselay (Rhône), worked with her mother and her three sisters in Lyon. Met Fr. Eymard during Lent at the Hospice of Charity in 1845 and chose him as director. A Marist Tertiary, she became Rectress of the Fraternity of Virgins, then she left Lyon in 1858 and came to Paris to create the nucleus of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament; in 1864, the community settled in Angers and she became the first Superior General of the new Institute. - 398 letters of which 382 are personal.

**Jordan, Natalie (or Nathalie) (1810-1882)**, born Brenier de Montmorand, married Camille Jordan (1799-1867) in 1834. Lived in Lyon and spends the Summer at the Manor of Calet in Saint-Romans (Isère). A daughter, Mathilde, is born of the marriage. Met Fr. Eymard in 1846, enrolled in the Third Order of Mary, chose Father as director. He formed her in a solid spiritual life, centred on the person of Christ and His love; he confides to her the grace received at the Calvary of Saint-Romans. He links her to the Eucharistic foundation. A deep spiritual friendship unites them. In his last letter, he announces his immanent departure. - 82 letters.

**Julhien, Adèle**, from Marseille, miraculous recovery of Notre-Dame de La Salette. - 2 letters.

**Lepage, Mrs.**, born Delys, directee of Fr. Eymard. A widow with no children, she shares her life with Antonia Bost. - 26 letters.

**Martel, Adèle**, Marseille, cousin of the Bourges ladies. Tried out Carmel. - 2 letters.

**Matagrín, Fanny**, Tarare (Rhône), Marist Tertiary. Helped Father at the time of the foundation in Paris. - 5 letters.

**Revel de Nesc, Adèle**, Lyon, Marist Tertiary, Mistress of novices and assistant directress of the Fraternity of Virgins. - 43 letters.

**Tenaillon, Eulalie**, directee of Father Eymard, mother of two Religious of the Blessed Sacrament, Alphonse and Edmond.

**Tholin-Bost, Mrs.**, Marist Tertiary, lives at Tarare (Rhône), mother of two Marist Religious. Animator of Home Adoration in her parish, she is encouraged by Fr. Eymard who reveals to her that the Eucharist is the remedy for the indifference of the time; he confides to her the project of a Eucharistic Order and tells her about the consoling grace received on 18 April 1853 at La Seyne-sur-Mer. - 52 letters.

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