

Manna 3 – First Session

Transformed with Jesus: Eucharist and the Jubilee

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Today was a big feast!

The First Communion of eighteen children . . .

They were an inspiration and a consolation for us.

-December 25, 1859

Letter to Louis Perret from Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Preface

While stationed in Lyon, France in the early 1850's as a member of the Society of Mary (the Marists), Father Peter Julian Eymard became very aware of the emerging plight of unskilled workers and the poor living in miserable conditions in and around the city. Industrialization and the development of railroads had brought about significant changes in the life of the city.

There is the famous story of an incident during what could be best described as social upheaval in the city which included a dangerous anti-clericalism among the working class. Father Eymard found himself in the midst of an angry group of agitators who threatened to throw him in the Rhone River. However, someone saw who he was and shouted, "That's Father Eymard! He does much good in our city!" The crowd then escorted him safely back to the convent where he was living.

And recall that upon approving his request in 1856 to establish a new religious community, Archbishop Sibour of Paris, agreed to approve this new order on the condition that Father Eymard would start a catechetical ministry to the working poor in the slums of Paris to prepare them for their First Holy Communion. Father Eymard fearlessly went into these dangerous slums where neither priests nor the police would dare to go.

Though Father Eymard never encountered the situation of indigenous peoples – the focus of this Manna session – his deep spirituality and pastoral sense led him to serve the poor and marginalized both while serving in Lyon and later in Paris.

Introduction to the Theme

Country-and-Western singer Camille Cowley lives on a large property in southeast Queensland, Australia. When all the landowners in the surrounding district came together for a special pastoralists' meeting to discuss their response to a judicial ruling on native title, she and her husband attended. Fear and apprehension prevailed. The farmers were told they would lose

their land to the local Aboriginal people. Camilla thought it strange that no Aboriginal people were present. She felt in her heart she needed to talk to them before she could discern where she stood.

She went to the local Aboriginal office. Before she could step inside, an Aboriginal woman inside said, “Stop, do you realize what you are doing? Once you are inside, you will never be the same again!” Well, Camilla did go inside and was won over to the Aboriginal point of view. She has now been ostracized by her peer group. Sadly, even at Mass in a distant parish, people refused to give her the sign of peace.

“The future is nothing, but the past is myself, my own history, the seed of my present thoughts, the mold of my present disposition” (*Tales of the Road*, R. L. Stevenson). Chris Bielenberg, the Irish-born, English-educated niece of British press baron Lord Rothermere, educated in England, lived through the war in Nazi Germany as a mother of three young boys. After a failed assassination attempt on Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, many of her friends were arrested and executed and her own German husband was imprisoned and interrogated in the Ravensbrueck concentration camp by the Gestapo. Twice she made train journeys to Berlin during intensive air raids to visit her husband in prison and even voluntarily underwent interrogation by the Gestapo to plead his innocence – at no small risk to them both.

Opening Prayer

LORD of Time,
we have lived through a century which has discovered marvels.
We praise and bless you for sound amplification and recording,
for television and film.
We praise and bless you for the internal combustion engine,
which has given us new modes of transportation by land, air, and sea.
We praise and bless you for the discoveries of atomic science,
for the exploration of space, for the use of radiology in medicine,
and for the wonders of modern surgery, including the transplantation of major organs.
We praise and bless you for the fashioning of artificial intelligence,
and for the information highway and near-instantaneous communication.

But we lament also the use of weapons of destruction,
the crimes of genocide against your Armenian, Ukrainian, Jewish, Japanese, Tibetan,
Cambodian, Ugandan, Bosnian, and Rwandan people.
We lament the systematic oppression of the poor in Third World countries.
We lament the addictions and despair that so many of our young people experience.
We lament the exploitation of women and children,
and the destruction and pollution of the Earth you gave us.
We lament the plight of the marginalized native people of the world.

We confess our powerlessness and call on you again to come and save us.
We confess that the Jubilee vision can only be fulfilled
with the coming of the anointed one, with Jesus the jubilee in the flesh.
With him, time is transformed.
With his Spirit, new hope and life is given us.

Song Options

- “Sing Out, Earth and Skies,” by Marty Haugen
- “Song at the Center,” by Marty Haugen

Work Exercise

1. The Vatican has launched a fierce attack on land-owning elites and international companies for often depriving indigenous peoples of their land, and called for sweeping agrarian reform. The strongly worded document takes as its cornerstone the respect of indigenous peoples' land rights and calls for reforms to promote the fairer division of land (World in Brief, 15/1/98). What is your view?
2. Do you review the companies in which you have investments as to whether these investments are ethically sound and in line with gospel values?
3. What addictive behaviors control your life? These may range from substance abuse of coffee, cigarettes, junk food, and alcohol or the things like success, gossip, perfectionism, workaholism, or putting self or others down.
4. Is there something or someone in your life for which or for whom you have not forgiven yourself? Perhaps that you have not been the perfect parent, a betrayal, an accident, not reaching your potential, not realizing a dream?

The work exercise is followed by a small group sharing and a large group sharing.

Teaching

The Gospel of Luke especially presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the Jubilee promise and vision. Jesus began his public ministry in the Nazareth synagogue. He inaugurated the Lord's year of favor.

1. *Be free from slavery.*

Luke portrays Jesus as the liberator bringing freedom from sin and slavery in all its forms. He heals and calls to life those held captive by fear, ignorance, and insecurity. Luke's Gospel is for those on the margins of society: the Gospel of the poor and the Gospel for women. God's word, not the law, alone sets people free. (You may tell the story of Dorothy Day, who worked for the liberation of migrant workers.)

2. *Declare a sabbath*

In his six Sabbath stories of teaching and healing, Luke presents Jesus as the Lord of the Sabbath. The celebration has been burdened with human regulations. Jesus lifts the burden so people can live and give praise to God. Jesus announced his jubilee agenda and vision on the sabbath. (You may witness from your own life about how Jesus has set you free from self-righteousness, excessive guilt, or a particular prejudice. In other words, how Jesus has made you a jubilee person.)

3. *Make relationships right*

Luke is a wonderful storyteller. He makes people's relationships with each other a metaphor of their relationship with God. Luke shows Jesus with sinners, prostitutes, and tax collectors. He explores Jesus' relationships with women more than the other evangelists. (You may tell the story of Jean Vanier, the founder of L'Arche, who has taught us how to love, cherish, and live in community with mentally and physically handicapped adults.)

4. *Forgive your debts*

Luke's Gospel is a gospel of mercy. He alone has the classic stories of forgiveness: the prodigal son, the lost sheep, and the lost coin. Forgiveness brings power and the strength needed for discipleship. Luke alone records the words from the cross, "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing." (You may choose to witness about a forgiveness story from your own life.)

5. *Prepare a feast*

Each parable of forgiveness ends with an invitation to rejoice and feast. Like Matthew, Luke explores the banquet as an image of the kingdom of God. "This man welcomes

sinners and eats with them.” The prodigal stands for all the desperate of the world who are to hear the jubilee call and invitation, “We will celebrate by having a feast” (Luke 15:23). (You may want to share together something to eat and drink.)

Closing Prayer

If in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, exposition is made during the opening hymn. When the hymn is concluded, the assembly kneels in silence for several minutes. During this silence, the community welcomes the presence of the Risen LORD before them in the Blessed Sacrament and within them as the LORD’S own body.

- *Opening Song:* “Come to the Feast,” by Marty Haugen
- *First Reading:* Leviticus 25:10-12
- *Period of Silence:*
- *Second Reading:* Luke 4:16-21
- *Period of Silence:*
- *Intercessory Prayer:*

If in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, incensing of the Blessed Sacrament and the assembled community occurs after the prayers. Consider using the ritual books for Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery Outside of Mass (2024) that provides this ritual texts of prayer, praise, The Lord’s Prayer, etc.

- *Benediction: optional*
- *Reposition: optional*
- *Closing Prayer:*

God of all ages, all time belongs to you.
We believe that eternal life is this:
to know you, the one true God,
and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.
Help us to prepare with faith, hope, and love
to celebrate the great jubilees
that marks the birth of Jesus.

Make us channels of your truth and love,
so that we can add to the river that flows
from Jesus Christ across the centuries
and so that you may be active in the world through us.
Make us disciples like Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ.
May we open ourselves to you and to one another,
so that our horizon will stretch far beyond the third
millennium, toward life with you forever.
Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit. Amen

- *Song*: “God Has Chosen Me,” by Bernadette Farrell.
- *Sign of Peace*: