

## Manna 3 – Twelfth Session

### Remain United in Me & I Will Remain United to You: Eucharist and the Vineyard

Ann Ventisei, Scotland

*Although we should have a great love for our sacramental LORD,  
love is the law, the duty and the sanctity of all.  
Our LORD in the Most Blessed Sacrament belongs to all.  
It must be a virtue that is sovereignly and perpetually eucharistic,  
of which our LORD is perpetually and universally the present model,  
the grace and the actual end.*

-February 1, 1865

*Great Retreat of Rome, Saint Peter Julian Eymard*

#### ***Preface***

The Eucharistic theology of Saint Peter Julian Eymard evolved over time. It was during his “great retreat” in Rome in 1865 that he made a great discovery. For up until that point, he believed the virtue of religion should be the characteristic virtue of a disciple of Jesus. But, “on February 1 of that year, a new conviction was acquired. From then on, the love of God contemplated in the life of Christ or in the mystery of the Eucharist became the center of his life and the personal distinctive mark of his apostolate.” (*Peter Julian Eymard: Apostle of the Eucharist*, André Guitton, SSS, 254.)

Peter Julian believed that as branches on the vine, we should abide in the love of Christ, to abide in his love. Meditating on the Gospel of Saint John, especially chapters 13 to 17, he came to these conclusions and desired to pass on this legacy to his spiritual sons and daughters.

For this “apostle of the Eucharist,” the Mass is the supreme source of unity in which all are called to participate and from this source of God’s abiding love, go forth to be his presence in the world by serving one another.

## ***Introduction to the Theme***

Jesus' mission while he was on earth was to bring people to God – to invite all to a personal relationship with God and to unite people of all races to bring about God's kingdom. Jesus was our great example. He healed people of their infirmities and of their feeling of insignificance and insecurity. He did this so that they and we in turn could become the people God meant us to be – whole, loved, secure, and happy in the knowledge that we are truly loved by God.

In this session then, we will take a closer look at the passage from John 15:1-8. We will look at what it means for us in our daily lives. What is this vine Jesus speaks about? Where am I in this vineyard? We will reflect on what part the Eucharist plays in the vineyard of life.

## ***Opening Prayer***

Blessed are you, O God,  
creator of the universe.  
We thank you for making all things good,  
and giving the Earth for us to cultivate.  
Grant that we, in union with you in the Eucharist,  
may have the courage to share your gifts with those in need.  
Grant LORD, that growing in knowledge and love of you,  
that we may share with others the new life within us.  
Give us the grace to support one another in the service of your people.  
We ask this through Christ our LORD.  
Amen.

### ***Work Exercise***

1. When you think of a vineyard, what springs to mind? What are the necessities for a good harvest?
2. Jesus himself said, “I am the vine, you are the branches.” What does this mean to you?
3. How do you think your reflection on the second question relates to the life of Jesus and his presence with us in the Eucharist?

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

## ***Teaching***

Can I ask you now to take a flight of fancy into the vineyard?

1. What do we find there? Vines arranged like foot soldiers in rows, some healthier than others – maybe some choked by weeds, maybe some bent and broken, maybe some in a prime position in the sun. If we take a closer look at the vines, we will find that the healthier vines bearing the most fruit have sturdier stalks and thicker branches. If we could see under the ground, we would find that the roots are much stronger and widespread. These solid, strong roots have spread their tendrils wide to pass water and nourishment to the stalks, from the stalks to the branches, and from the branches to the little buds that will become the plump grape – the new harvest.
2. Looking at the analogy that Jesus himself made, we can imagine Jesus as the root. The Eucharist is our root. If we remain in him, we are fed and nourished by the Eucharist not only so that we can grow strong in the knowledge and love of God, but also that through us, the branches, united in Jesus in the Eucharist, we will feed and nourish the new buds – the new harvest. Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches.” Like the vines in the vineyard, the branches don’t just take from the roots, but they also give to the smaller branches and the new buds. It is a constant taking and giving that keeps the vine healthy. This is what Jesus offered to us in the Eucharist. “Remain in me and I will remain in you.” we constantly go to him in the Eucharist. “Remain in me and I will remain in you.” We constantly go to him in the Eucharist, our root, our source of life, and like the branches, pass on what we have received to others. The new life within us is passed on to nourish the new harvest – God’s people.
3. We don’t go to Mass because we feel like it. We go to Mass because we are called. We are called together as members of the one body of Christ. We are called together as disciples of Christ. Discipleship is not an optional extra for Christians. Jesus called us not only to make a personal relationship with God, but also that through that relationship we should be united with one another in a community of Christ, bringing him and the good news to everyone with whom we come into contact.
4. Some branches in the vineyard do not bear much fruit. Let us look at the reasons for this. They might be surrounded by weeds that are choking their source of nourishment. Could this be us, surrounded by the choking materialism of the world in which we live? Could it be our desire for the things of life which do not last? Other branches may be withering because there is a break in the branch. The branch still is attached to the vine, but it is unable to pass the water and nourishment to the smaller branches; therefore, the new buds

are not being fed. This branch eventually rots away because of its inability to share in bringing about the new harvest.

5. Could we be this branch? Would we remain attached to Jesus and be unable to pass on the new life which has been given to us? Are we afraid of giving for fear of rejection? Does our self-consciousness stop us from sharing with others? Can we really be attached to Jesus and still refuse to do his work? The answer is yes, we can, because we have been given the gift of free will.
6. The story of the rich young man (Matthew 19:16-24) is the perfect example. He has a close encounter with Jesus. He wants to be part of his kingdom; he is willing to do many things and keep all the laws to secure a place in the kingdom. Jesus wanted the rich young man to give himself in service. This was too much for him and he left unhappy and sad.
7. Each of us encounters God personally and intimately in the Eucharist. We are fed and taught by the Word of God each time we celebrate Mass. At the moment of communion, we become one with Jesus as we receive his body and blood. Each one of us becomes the “beloved disciple.” We have the same free will as the rich young man, therefore the challenge for each of us is to make the decision to be united to the vine – to be part of a living community of believers who support one another in seeking and following the LORD in the service of humanity. Remember Jesus said, “Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do it to me.”
8. The questions each of us must ask ourselves are: where am I in this vineyard? Can I make the decision to be one of these foot soldiers in the rows of the vineyard? A foot soldier who will spread the word of God – the word which is love! The choice, the decision is ours. We, rooted in him, can be his hands, his feet, his voice in our world today if we remember his words.

“Remain united with me and I will remain in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”

## ***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:* “Love One Another,” by Bob Dufford, SJ

*First Reading:* 1 John 4:7-11

*Period of Silence:*

*Intercessions:*

Response: ***LORD, you are our life and our salvation.***

Leader: May your Holy Spirit teach us to do your will today and may your wisdom guide us always.

Response: ***LORD, you are our life and our salvation.***

Leader: LORD, our God, with fatherly love you come to the aid of your children. Bless us with your gifts. May your gifts refresh us, O LORD, and your grace give us strength.

Response: ***LORD, you are our life and our salvation.***

*Second Reading:* Romans 12:4-13

*Song:* “One Bread, One Body,” John Foley, S.J.

*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.*

*Incensing of the Blessed Sacrament and the assembled community: optional*

*Benediction: optional*

*Reposition: optional*

*Closing Prayer:*

Loving God,  
you created all people in the world  
and you know each of us by name.  
Keep us always close to you.  
Give us the courage and perseverance to do your will.  
May our work in your service be fruitful.  
May God, the source of all patience and encouragement,  
enable us to live in perfect harmony with one another,  
in the spirit of Christ Jesus.  
With our heart and one voice may we glorify God now and forever. Amen.

(Adapted from *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers – First Edition*, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC)

*Dismissal with some sign of peace:*

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