

## Manna 3 – Sixth Session

### Traveling with Jesus Christ: Eucharist and Accompaniment

Joe Dirks, SSS, Australia

*Our Lord wanted to be my Master in everything, pretty much as he was Saint Paul's . . .*

*I have been a bit like Jacob, always on the move.*

*The purpose of all this was to lead me to the eucharistic vocation.*

*I needed Marseilles to render my love for that vocation exclusive, to make it a center;*

*I needed Lyon to give me the practice of it and to set me on the road to the Cenacle.*

-February 5, 1865

Retreat at Rome

#### ***Preface***

While on what the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament refers to as the “Great Retreat of Rome,” Father Peter Julian Eymard spent hours before the Blessed Sacrament in contemplation and reflection. On the anniversary of his baptism, February 5th, Father Eymard entitled the second meditation of that day, “God’s goodness since my Baptism.” The reflection took him back through the years and how the good Lord had accompanied him on the long journey that brought him to his “Eucharistic vocation.”

In this meditation, Father Eymard especially remembered his time in Marseilles and Lyon. The reminiscing led him to write down one of those iconic sentences that the Congregation and its many members, religious and lay, so fondly recall: *I have been like Jacob, always on the move.* And as Father Dirks writes in today’s Manna session, Father Eymard’s journey was full of ups and downs, successes and failures, pain, suffering and great joys. Cannot each of us say the same? Hopefully we can also affirm what he wrote at the beginning of this meditation, “the goodness of God since my Baptism.”

We also see in the notes from this retreat, as well as other writings and letters Father Eymard wrote, how much the Blessed Virgin Mary was a part of his spiritual journey – as Father Dirks also states here.

## ***Introduction to the theme***

The word “companion” means, literally, “one who shares or eats bread with.” Such companionship – friendship – is a treasure indeed. Just as a singer is accompanied by music, so we, too, fare better on life’s journey if we are accompanied. Such accompaniment can take different forms: a life partner in marriage, a friend with whom we are at ease; a spiritual guide to help us focus and center our religious life, someone who meets our cultural or recreational needs.

The new Eucharistic Prayer approved for use in Australia in 1995 contains the line: “You accompany us with love as we journey through life.” Is not the risen LORD our faithful companion in the daily communion we may have with him?

“The Songlines” is a powerful collection of experiences and reflections on human beings. The religious duty of Aboriginals is to ritually travel the land, singing the ancestors’ songs: singing the world into being afresh.

“It is not good for [us] to be alone.”

“The history of a nation is not in parliaments and battlefields, but in what the people say to each other on fair days and high days and in how they farm and quarrel and go on pilgrimage,” said W. B. Yeats. Human beings are nomadic by nature. This restless trait of human nature is summed up in the biblical phrase, “My father was a wandering Aramaen” (Deuteronomy 26:5). Pius XI encouraged Christians to regard themselves as spiritual Semites, as linked to the spirituality of our spiritual ancestors (*Divini Redemptoris*, 1937). Saint Peter Julian Eymard, in Rome on February 5, 1865, said, “I have been somewhat like Jacob, always on a journey.”

## *Opening Prayer*

LORD God, you do not leave us orphans, for you are a God of communion,  
who calls us into life through the creative partnership of our parents.  
All through life you travel with us under the supporting forms of parent, teacher, and friend.  
To help us grow  
you stretch our horizons through the challenge of the stranger, the poor, and the needy.  
Open our hearts and minds anew  
to discern your presence on the never-ending Emmaus Road.  
Through Christ our LORD. Amen.

*The leader is asked to read these texts slowly and meditatively.*

1. Raphael said to Tobit, “I will go with him. Do not be afraid. We shall set out in safety and return to you in safety, because I am sure of the way” (Tobit 5:16).
2. Ruth replied, “Don’t ask me to leave you. For I will go where you go and stay where you stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God” (Ruth 1:16).
3. Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, and led them up a high mountain . . . (Mark 9:2).
4. But he took Peter, James, and John along with him, and as he became filled with fear and distress . . . (Mark 14:33).
5. That same day, two of them were going to Emmaus, a village seven miles from Jerusalem, and they talked about what had happened. While they were talking and wondering . . . (Luke 24:13).
6. Therefore, we must choose someone from among those who were with us during all the time that the Lord Jesus was with us (Acts 1:21).

### *Song Options:*

- “We are Companions on the Journey,” by Carey Landry
- “We Are Many Parts,” by Marty Haugen

### ***Work Exercise***

1. How do you consider yourself a pilgrim? What does pilgrimage mean for you, if anything?
2. What has been your experience of being accompanied?
3. What do you make of the Lord's injunction of sending out the apostles "two by two"? "He called the twelve to him and began to send them out two by two, giving them authority over unclean spirits . . ." (Mark 6:7).
4. Which biblical persons do you resonate with most? Why?

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

## *Teaching*

1. Heart songs are many. One of them is about a couple who married early and never had money. The man is laid off at work, starts drinking, fights with his wife in front of the children, and is told to leave home. After a year he writes a letter to his wife saying that he wants to see her. She thinks he sounds better and sends him fare. “His heart was singin’ like a low-down guitar . . . he came in on a Sunday, every muscle achin’, walkin’ in slow motion . . . did they have a future, would he know his children, should he take a picture . . . he was shakin’ in his seat, cryin’ through the streets, ridin’ in a silver top, to her door, to her door . . .
2. The human heart races with fear, hammers in anger, and throbs with love. No wonder that the ancient Hebrews believed that this 1 pound, fist-sized organ was the seat of human thought and emotion. Even today Judaism regards the heart as one of the eight human senses. Father Eymard once said, “As the years advance, the weaker we get. It’s like dying in stages. We have to accept it. But fortunately, the heart never grows old; on the contrary, it gets younger by absorbing everything that the other faculties lose.”
3. Father Eymard was an apostolic priest whose work took him to many places and many peoples. He was born in the mountain country in the south of France, worked as a pastor in the Grenoble Diocese, joined the Society of Mary (the Marists), and worked in Lyon, France and focused especially on groups of laity. He burned with a desire to convey God’s love revealed in the Eucharist to his contemporaries.

To follow his great attraction to the Eucharist he arrived in Paris and started his work there with great difficulty. He travelled the length and breadth of France on his preaching ministry, also several times visiting Rome and neighboring countries such as Belgium. He made pilgrimages to various Marian shrines and sought to establish a “cenacle” in Jerusalem, where the Eucharist had been instituted. The cenacle was the Upper Room in which the Lord had shared with his apostles the Last Supper.

When securing the actual “physical” cenacle proved impossible, he turned his attention to the “interior” cenacle. The difficulties that he had to overcome were considerable: lack of formal education, especially in Latin; poor health throughout his life; opposition from his religious superiors to his desire to dedicate himself exclusively to the Eucharist; and episcopal reservations (that would later prove mistaken) about him launching his project.

4. The journey is primarily an inner journey. “The great mission of Mary is to form Jesus Christ in us; she is the mother who educates us. Honor in Mary all the divine mysteries of her life as so many stations on the way to the cenacle. It is the life of Mary in the cenacle

which should be the model and the consolation of your life,” Father Eymard wrote. This is not just recalling the past. Journey, for Father Eymard, has taken on a symbolic value. The cenacle project, bold and audacious, was not to succeed. But Father Eymard discovered what counted was “The cenacle in me – the glory of God in me.” What can Mary in the Cenacle teach us? Firstly, there is a link between Mary’s “Do whatever he tells you,” and, Jesus’ “Do this in memory of me.” Secondly, Cardinal Daneels has written that those who pray before the sacrament of the Eucharist are being transformed by what they adore, and radiate the fruits of the Spirit. Thirdly, the presence of Mary with the first community at Jerusalem was linked to the vigor of missionary activity.

5. So many of life’s stations on the faith journey are linked with the celebration of the Eucharist. Parishes routinely have baptisms as part of the Sunday celebration and the Easter Vigil itself. Confirmation is administered by the bishop or his delegate during the Eucharistic celebration. Nuptial Mass is the preferred option for committed followers of Jesus. Penance and anointing of the sick gave a communal form to sacraments of reconciliation and healing that had hitherto been very private experiences. Ordination has been part of the Eucharistic liturgy. That Eucharistic meal then becomes the matrix of communion with the risen Lord.
6. Spiritual communion was described by Karl Rahner, S.J. as a prime reason for the reservation of the sacrament. It is the moment between celebration and actual holy communion. There is an everydayness about such prayer. Something ordinary, just like the daily bread we need to eat. Nothing exciting may happen at such prayer times. Perhaps we are tired and jaded, sad or weary. But we persevere. We spend time with the Lord. We know we are loved and we return as best as we can. Here is a friend who truly accompanies us on our journey into God.

*Resource helps for this teaching:*

- *Bread for the Journey*, by Anthony Gittens. Maryknoll, Orbis, 1992.

## ***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:** “We Walk By Faith,” by Marty Haugen  
“A Living Faith (Faith of Our Fathers),” Verse 1 by Frederick W. Faber  
and Verses 2 – 4 by Joseph R. Alfred

**Opening Prayer:**

We praise and bless you, LORD God,  
for gathering us around you  
as we journey to the new and eternal banquet feast.  
Keep us safe and open to see your care  
especially in the least of our sisters and brothers.

Through Christ our LORD. Amen.

**First Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6

**Period of silence:**

**Second Reading:** Luke 24:28-31 *optional*

**Period of Silence:**

**Intercessory Prayer:**

**Eucharistic Litany:**

**Leader:**

LORD, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
LORD, have mercy.  
Christ, hear us.  
Jesus Christ, Son of God most high,  
Jesus Christ, sent from heaven to earth,  
Jesus Christ, anointed with the Spirit,

**All:**

LORD, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
LORD, have mercy.  
Christ, graciously hear us.  
Send us forth in your name.  
Send us forth in your name.  
Send us forth in your name.

Jesus Christ, Savior of all peoples,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, teacher of the nations,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, compassion of God,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, healer of souls,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, worker of miracles,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, liberator of the masses,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, missionary of the apostles,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, head of the church,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, dwelling among us,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, bread for the journey,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, bread of life eternal,	Send us forth in your name.
Jesus Christ, reward of the faithful,	Send us forth in your name.

*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:*

Eternal God, source of all union and harmony,  
we believe you have called us to be together and faithful companions  
to deepen our understanding of you and of one another.  
Help us to work in trust and never to lose heart.

LORD God,  
teach us to be truly present to one another  
as you are to us.  
We thank you for being our guide,  
our companion, and our future. Amen.

*Closing Song:* "Trust in the Lord," by Roc O'Connor  
"Though the Mountains May Fall," by Dan Schutte

*Sign of Peace:*

Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing – A Ministry of the Province of Saint Ann  
5384 Wilson Mills Road  
Highland Heights, Ohio, USA 44143-3092  
(440) 442-6311  
© Copyright 2025 Emmanuel Media – Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament