



CONNECTIONS

Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family

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Feast of Our Holy Founder — August 2

Happy Feast of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist!

So, if Peter Julian Eymard was born on February 4 and died on August 1, why does the church observe his feast on August 2?

There is a long tradition in the Catholic Church of celebrating saints' feasts on the day they died rather than on the anniversary of their birth. The custom dates back to early Christian practice in honoring a martyr on the day of his or her death or "birth into heaven" (in Latin, the *dies natalis*). Martyrs were held in great esteem because their love and fidelity to Christ, reflected in their dying for the faith, were seen as most perfect. Later, feasts

of non-martyrs were added, confessors, bishops, pastors, holy men and women, founders of religious orders, etc., until the Middle Ages when saints' feasts occupied virtually every day of the calendar. More recently, the number of saints whose feasts are celebrated in the "universal calendar" of the church has been pared back; the feasts of some are marked only locally or by those with a special devotion to them.

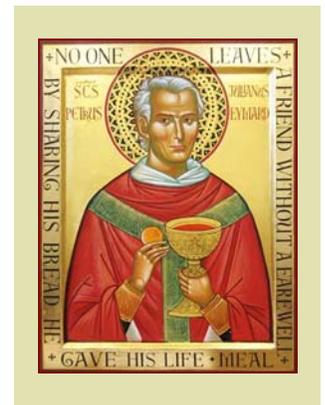
Father Eymard died peacefully at home in La Mure d'Isère, France, on August 1, 1868, at the age of 57. Father André Guitton, one of his biographers, writes: "Since his 'gift' (of self) made in Rome in 1865, he never spared his health. Truly, he was stripped of everything

and entrusted himself totally into the hands of God. . . . He spent himself, without calculating the cost."

In the final days of his life, he returned home to be with "his sisters." Brother (later Father) Albert Tesnière accompanied him. After days of suffering, with his eyes fixed intently on a large picture of the crucified Christ on the wall of his room, he passed away. It was 2:00 in the afternoon.

In 1996, Saint Peter Julian Eymard's feast was inserted into the church's universal calendar by Pope John Paul II and moved to August 2, to not conflict with the feast of Saint Alphonsus Liguori on August 1. Hence, August 2!

Father Anthony Schueller



Pray for us!

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Please Pray For . . .

- The participants and presenting teams who are taking part in Life in the Eucharist retreats for adults and teens at Saint Paschal Baylon Parish in Highland Heights, Ohio, on Saturday, August 1, as part of the annual Eymard Triduum.
 - The candidates who are completing their formation and making their Promise as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament on Sunday, August 2, at Saint Vincent de Paul Church in Holiday, Florida.
- The Eymardian Family as we celebrate our Holy Founder's feast!

The Spirituality of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

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

His Vision of the Eucharist

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

Jesus sacramentalized. . . . Blessed is the soul that knows how to find Jesus in the divine Eucharist, and in Jesus Hostia everything else.”

However, while emphasizing this “personalist” aspect, Father Eymard understood that this presence is the source of a dynamism, that it is related to a mission: “The grace of the apostolate: faith in Jesus. Jesus is there, therefore to him, through him, in him.” This faith in the Eucharist is nourished by meditation on the word of God. Adoration, which he proposed as the particular type of prayer for his religious and, in a general way, for the faithful, is a means for allowing ourselves to become penetrated by the love of Christ.

This prayer takes its inspiration from the Mass. For this reason, he proposed to his religious that they pray according to the method of the “four ends of the eucharistic sacrifice” with the purpose of “actualizing, as it were, all the mysteries of our Lord Jesus Christ in the most eminent worship of the Holy Eucharist,” in attentiveness and docility to the Holy Spirit, in order to “advance

in recollection and in the virtue of holy love at the feet of the Lord” (cf. Constitutions, 16-17). Therefore, far from being sufficient by itself, adoration tends towards sacramental Communion.

Nourishment of Daily Life

Eymard was a tireless promoter of Holy Communion. In a beautiful text of 1863, he expresses the central role of the Eucharist: “Convinced that the sacrifice of the Holy Mass and Communion in the body of the Lord are the living source and the aim of holy religion, each one has the duty to direct his piety, his virtue, his love, so that these may become means that will allow him to reach this goal: the worthy celebration and the faithful reception of these divine mysteries.”

The saint broke with the practice of his time in which, under the pretext of respect for the sacrament, many pastors prevented the faithful from approaching the eucharistic table. This is how he expressed himself in one of his letters: “Whoever wants to persevere, let him receive our Lord. He is the bread that will nourish your failing strength. The church wants it

this way. She encourages daily Communion: as a witness to this, we have the Council of Trent. Someone will say that we need to be very prudent. . . . But our reply to that would be: this nourishment, if taken at very long intervals, would have to be considered as an extraordinary food. Therefore, where is the ordinary nourishment that is meant to sustain me each and every day?”

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

A few months before his death, he wrote: “He who does not receive Holy Communion has only a speculative knowledge. He knows only the terms, the words, the theories; he is ignorant of what they signify. But he who receives Holy Communion, while previously he had just an idea of God, now sees him, recognizes him at Holy Mass.”

The above is excerpted from an article which appeared in L’Osservatore Romano on October 9, 1996, and was reprinted in the July/August 1997 issue of Emmanuel.

Editors
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Church of Father Eymard's baptism

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

Rule of Life for Associates, 2