



CONNECTIONS

Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family

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Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Reflections on Advent

We recently received a request for Father Eymard's reflections on Advent. We contacted Sister Catherine Marie Caron, SSS, who has translated thousands of Saint Peter Julian's voluminous correspondence from the original French to English and synthesized his teachings to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament.

Sister Catherine Marie sent us the notes from a conference Father Eymard gave to the Servants on December 10, 1861. The following quotes are excerpts from that presentation.

"Here we are, my Sisters, in the season of Advent. Let us enter into the sentiments of the Church. The best of all pieties is that which is in relation to the spirit of the Church, because each liturgical feast has its own grace and virtue. The object of the Church's cult is to honor our Lord in his various mysteries, then the Blessed Virgin and the saints. This is why each season has its grace, each day has its mystery. Pious souls follow the devotion of the Church."

"My dear Sisters, if you could only appreciate the

Office (the prayer of the Church) during Advent!"

"There we see the Church gathering all the prophecies referring to the Messiah, the writings of all the scholars and saints who waited for him and desired him. How they described his glory, his majesty, his reign, glorifying him in advance. The Church puts all that into its Office."

"When we have the happiness to understand it, truly this prayer elevates us to God and seems to make the mystery come alive again. And there's more! There's something so joyful that it feels like receiving good news."



"Advent and Christmas, followed by Lent with its sadness, then Easter! Do what the Church does; better still, what the Blessed Virgin did."

"What was that? She pre-

pared herself for the birth of her divine son."

"What should be happening? Just as the Blessed Virgin carried him and offered herself to serve him, we should do the same and with the same joy."

"What was the most Blessed Virgin Mary doing? She was recollected. Therefore, recollect yourselves fully in the Lord, since you are his living tabernacle. Recollect yourselves in him."

"Since he loves, you should love. Since he works, you should work. He is invisible, but find a way to be with him. This is how to live Advent."

"Each season has its grace, each day has its mystery. . . . Just as the Blessed Virgin carried him and offered herself to serve him, we should do the same and with the same joy."

Saint Peter Julian Eymard



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*Anniversary
of the
Canonization
of Saint
Peter Julian
Eymard
December 9,
1962*

CONNECTIONS

Ongoing Formation — Living, Loving, and Learning and the Gift of Self

The following are highlights of a workshop presented by Father John Keenan, SSS, at the Province Convocation held in Cleveland, Ohio, this past July. The theme was “Celebrating the Gift of Self in the Year of Mercy.” Father John is the Vicar Provincial and Consultor for Formation of the Province of Saint Ann. He presented a vision of what it means for associates to be engaged in a process of ongoing formation as lay members of the Eymardian Family, just as the professed religious are.

To be an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament is to *associate* oneself with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. Words have meaning and in its deepest sense it means to be in a relationship *and* be involved with certain mission foci, namely:

- First of all, being a disciple of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of the Father, who was sent on mission to do the will of his Father.
- To be oneself continuously engaged in an ongoing discernment of the will of the Father.
- To also be involved in “communal” discernment with the Congregation.
- To accept the idea that ongoing discernment of mission implies ongoing formation for mission.

This past April, the Superior General, Father Eugênio Barbosa Martins, SSS, sent a note to the religious of the Province who were meeting for an Amplified Provincial Council meeting in Cleveland. It read as follows:

“A great gift that we have received from God through our holy Founder is that of sharing in a charismatic family wherein lay men and women have a fundamental role, through the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament. The Province has been a pioneer in sharing the charism and mission with the laity. May your reflections lead you to enhance this dimension that greatly assists us to live the challenge of Eucharistizing families and society.”

Father General’s words point to a paradigm shift taking place in our Congregation. (I am defining paradigm as a way of looking at or thinking about something.) Some examples:

1. Latin text book theology to original sources;
2. Devotions during the liturgy to liturgical devotion flowing *from* the liturgy;
3. The Church makes the Eucharist to the Eucharist makes the Church;
4. The Congregation’s *Constitutions* to its *Rule of Life* and a *Rule of Life for Associates*;
5. Blessed Sacrament religious *and* men and women to Blessed Sacrament religious *with* men and women.

Our spirituality is a conscious orientation of the life and activities of the members of the Congregation and of the lay men and women who are drawn to associate with it in relation to the God of Jesus Christ. Under the action of the Holy Spirit, the Eucharist as celebration of the paschal mystery of the Lord becomes the source, the center, and the summit of all that religious and associates are and do. Shaped by the gift of God made present through the Eucharist, you who are Associates of the Blessed Sacrament become witnesses and prophets of this mystery, a gift of the Lord to the Church and society.

As we move from an *and* to a *with*, you also enter into the paradigm shifts in ongoing formation taking place among us religious throughout the Congregation. Mark Twain once said, “Continuous improvement is better than delayed perfection.” So, think in terms of the *human, intellectual, spiritual, and pastoral* elements of the formative process.

The Eucharist inspires us to respond, in communion with the Church, to the needs of persons of today. This mission is intrinsically linked to understanding the Eucharist. It is not optional, and the whole of formation must be geared to preparing and initiating the individual for the entire *gift of oneself*, as Christ has done for us.

To this end, please consider the following as means to the “continuous improvement” we are talking about:

Educational: Conferences and seminars

Spiritual: Retreats, spiritual direction

Interpersonal: Gatherings with the religious and with one another, convocations

Physical: Lifestyle choices

Social: Activities with the larger Eymardian Family

Pastoral and Ministerial: Proactive participation

In a word: *the gift that never ends, the growth that never ends.*