



CONGREGATIO SANCTISSIMI SACRAMENTI

Superior Generalis

Rome, 2 February 2015
Presentation of the Lord

To the whole Eymardian Family:

Provinces and Regions of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament
Provinces and Regions of the Congregation of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament
Members of the Secular Institute Servitium Christi
Communities and groups of lay persons of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament
SSS lay persons

With the approach of the celebration of 204 years since the birth and baptism of St Peter-Julian Eymard I greet all of you fraternally.

This year 2015, just beginning, is full of great events for our Eymardian Family. I invite you to share in it and to benefit from it in regard to our growth in fraternity and spirituality, to become ever more passionately committed to our eucharistic mission. Celebrating each year the birth and baptism of Father Eymard is already a rich occasion to thank God for the gift of his life and his baptismal vocation. These gifts in Father Eymard were multiplied and transformed in his dedication and service to the Church, his brothers and our spiritual family. My wish is that each community would carry out a fitting preparation for these celebrations and avail themselves of them to share with others this great gift that has been given to us by God.

The present occasion urges us to reflect deeply and assess the criteria of our fundamental commitment in living. This life, that of the planet or pertaining to human beings, has been seriously affected in innumerable ways. The greedy exploitation of natural resources has taken its toll of the earth and little by little it becomes sterile while its climatic harmony becomes imbalanced. Extremism of some cultural and religious positions mows down lives and only augments fear about the future. A model of Religious Life is in fact losing its strength and no longer corresponds to its purpose in facing the needs of the Church and society. In this context God renews his call and offers us a new chance to respond to it with clarity and availability. May the proposals that are presented to us today as men and women consecrated to the Eucharist be welcomed with love and enthusiasm so that we may be able to gather together our energies again in the choir of those who claim the fullness of life.

150 years since the Gift of Self!

On 21 March 1865, after a long human and spiritual journey of development, Father Eymard opened himself entirely to God's grace and a special way of making a gift of himself confronted him. This Gift would mark his whole existence and make a definitive impact on the understanding of the Eymardian charism. The path that led from the Cenacle of Jerusalem to the interior Cenacle opens up a new and profound dimension of devotion to God as a consecrated person and makes him still more fruitful. In meditating on his personal notes during the Great Retreat of Rome we discover a courageous and deep man, who carried out a sincere search into his real motives directing his life. Looking at himself in the mirror of personal truth demanded maturity and freedom. In this exercise we see a mature man in virtue of sufferings, imposed on him by life, but also an audacious man who breaks through barriers and suggests new paths to follow.



Father Manuel Barbiero has given us a gift of a very beautiful text set out in a form of dialogue with Father Eymard. This text that flows from his profound intimacy with our Founder acquired after breathing the same air that Eymard did in the early years of his life and in the last moments of his life at La Mure. The dialogue is provocative because it situates us as readers into an itinerary moving towards the interior Cenacle, which leads us to a true offering of life.

How can you benefit from this beautiful instrument of animation of our spiritual life? I indicate for you here some suggestions:

- By a prayerful reading, identify the strongest points for dialogue with the Lord during prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. The final message of the 34th General Chapter invites us to enkindle the passion for the Eucharistic mission in following Father Eymard. This is an important instrument to attain this objective.
- In our community meetings, set aside time to study and reflect together. In what way does the suggested text invite us to actualise our consecration as an offering acceptable to the Lord?
- Our monthly retreats could be prepared and animated based on this content. Reading it in our communities will bring abundant fruit as regards growth in the quality of our fraternal relations.
- Sharing this content with our brothers and sisters in pastoral and missionary activities will be greatly valuable in deepening this spiritual journey of Father Eymard and provide us with a sure and valid path to those who wish to go forward along God's way.

Use your creativity to best benefit from this text that is being offered to you.

You will find attached to this letter the text written by Father Manuel Barbiero.

200 years since the Birth of Mother Marguerite Guillot

The United Nations Organisation exhorts people *to give women their proper autonomy*. There is an awareness that only women have the potential to save life on the planet, namely, by being endowed with human capacities to generate, care for and organise life. We notice in reality a presence and enormous participation of women in our communities through the setting up and support of missionary and social projects. Pope Francis recalled in his commentary of St Paul's letter to Timothy that women were involved in transmitting the faith: "The gift of faith is communicated also through women, as Jesus comes through Mary."

In Father Eymard's life women always had an important role. He consecrated a great part of his time to the spiritual direction of numerous women. This feminine presence in his life was evident also in his seeking to dedicate himself when he twice chose congregations having an explicit Marian tone: the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and the Society of Mary (Marists). He has left us the precious devotion to Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament as a feminine and maternal point of reference for our SSS family.

We know that Father Eymard longed to form from the beginning of our foundations a single family comprising women and men and associate lay members. This open and very advanced idea was beyond the social and ecclesial appreciation of his time. Sensitive to the presence and participation of women, Father Eymard knew well that, if we form a whole, the eucharistic fire would be spread more easily and rapidly to the four corners of the world.

To enhance the mission committed to the poor of the periphery of Paris, in the beginning of our Congregation Father Eymard invited a particular woman who was able to set up and coordinate these new endeavours. Marguerite Guillot accepted the challenge and through this gesture she paved the way for the foundation of the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. We are in the bicentenary of her birth. This is a moment to give thanks to God for this precious gift to our Eymardian Family. It is a woman who is still little known by us. This is why our Sisters, the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, are publishing this year a new biography and they are actually gathering together her writings that comprise more than 4,000 letters. These are a precious treasure to be explored.

To acquire this new biography you can get in touch directly with the General House of the Sister Servants, their Provincial Houses or local communities. At the General Curia we have available only some copies in French.



I suggest also that you visit as often as possible the internet site of the Curia, where you can find a vast and rich source of material in various languages for animation and study. For example, we have made available a biography of Mother Marguerite Guillot written in French by Father Henri Evers sss. <http://www.curiasss.net/>

Year of Consecrated Life

The Year of Consecrated Life began on 30 November 2014. It was convoked by Pope Francis by means of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA). We have been reminded that this is not a year of commemorations and celebrations, but a *Kairos*, a special time for reflection and searching to recover the Joy of our consecration. The circular letter that has been sent to us on 2 February 2014 announcing this event was titled: "Rejoice". Joy is a gift of the Spirit. It is a *raison d'être* of consecrated life. Sadness shows the remoteness of love; love gives each consecrated person the courage and strength to undertake following the path of total commitment to the Lord. I think that we are already well aware that our type of existence at present saddens many people. We do not stimulate interest in the Gospel of the Cross and of Joy that we should proclaim as life.



The CIVCSVA has turned out a great richness of material already translated into various languages, which animators of religious life can employ in meetings, sessions of reunion, study and retreats. I know quite well that we already have a quantity of documents and texts that we must follow to remain in communion with the local churches where we exist. However, I invite Provincial/Regional Superiors, the Superiors and Coordinators of communities to be committed in this regard to the utmost. We cannot lose this time of grace that the Lord is granting us.

If you go to the internet site of the Vatican and look for the page of the CIVCSVA, you will have available the richness of this input. The Catholic editorial houses of each country have already made available the material so that it may be used for the animation of our brothers and sisters.

Eymard Chapel at La Mure - France

You are soon going to receive a new number of SSS International, which has especially been composed to share with our whole family the joy of the conclusion of the restoration of the St Peter-Julian Eymard Chapel at La Mure and its inauguration. I expressed my gratitude to all on the occasion of the commemoration organised by the community of La Mure for this event, which is the fruit of our eucharistic awareness of sharing and communion. The pooling together of the efforts and resources of members of the 4 branches of our family that were offered us has

brought about the final outcome, which can now be appreciated by everyone. We hope that this special number of SSS International may be widely diffused. It is a way to make better known our Founder and his native land. Reproduce the content and photos of this number in your bulletins and internet sites of our Provinces/Regions, parishes and communities. Make it available to the Media near you.

Our present community at La Mure has deployed its energies to carry out its mission in serving the widespread parish of St Peter-Julian Eymard, which comprises its church and more than 45 chapels. A great work of evangelisation is being undertaken thanks to our 4 brothers in this difficult situation that is anticlerical and at times opposed to the Gospel. This international community, formed by Fathers Manuel Barbiero, Armand Moudilou, Vergel Dalangin and Julian Prakash (recently arrived from India), has likewise the mission of welcoming pilgrims coming to La Mure to know and deepen a sense of following Father Eymard.

The inauguration of the Chapel is the conclusion of the initial project planned by the administration of Father Fiorenzo Salvi. This project also included Eymard House to welcome little groups and the Eymard Exposition. Under the coordination of Father Manuel Barbiero, the pilgrim groups visiting La Mure receive a rich amount of input for studying and reflection about Father Eymard, and they can also follow a path of visiting the principal places connected to his life and mission in the region.



With the scope of extending opportunities for a fruitful deepening, Father Manuel has prepared a session inspired by the Great Retreat of Rome that will take place within the perspective of the commemorations afoot for the 150 years since Father Eymard's Gift of SELF.

You will find in an annex a detailed proposal containing all the necessary information to deepen this theme.

Conclusion

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I renew my wish that this year may be lived in Joy and that we may be able to witness it through our lives. The occasion that is given us is characterised by brevity and urgency. Let us listen to the Lord's voice; he comes to speak to us in such various ways in these recent times.

I seize the opportunity to ask all to pray for the forthcoming Amplified General Council (AGC), an assembly comprising 3 regions, 13 provinces, the Procurator General, General Treasurer and General Council. Its objective is to assess the path followed since the last General Chapter and to programme the next Chapter, which will be held in 2017. This AGC will take place at the General House in Rome from 13 to 29 April this year. On this occasion we shall set a special time aside for the formation of all Regional and Provincial Superiors elected or re-elected in 2014; it is a matter also of being an occasion to share experiences regarding this important service of government and animations of SSS religious life.

United in the same ideal and commitment to maintain always alive our Passion for the Eucharistic Mission, I greet you fraternally.



Fr Eugênio BARBOSA MARTINS, sss
Superior general

