

# Bread Broken & Shared

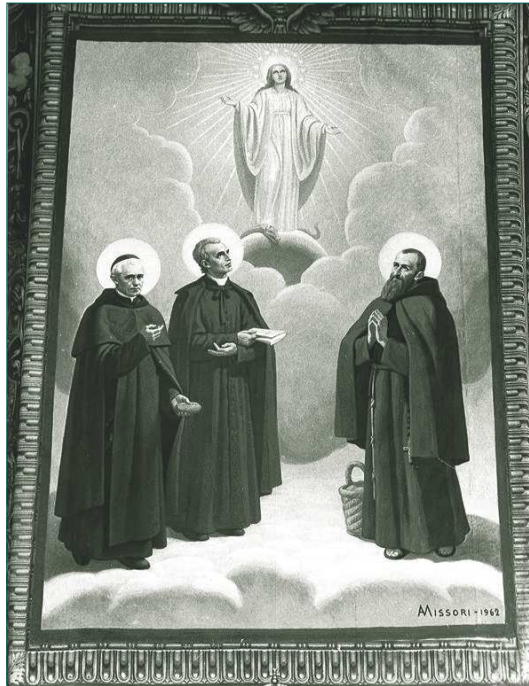
A Newsletter for friends of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament of the Province of Saint Ann

## Saint Peter Julian Eymard His Characteristic Spirituality

by Daniel F. Sullivan SSS

Perusing through our archives at the provincialate, I came across a file containing many different written pieces pertaining to the Canonization of Saint Peter Julian Eymard on December 9, 1962. Among these numerous pages, I discovered a homily that was written and delivered by Father Daniel F. Sullivan SSS, to religious sisters during a triduum in Cleveland, Ohio in celebration of the Canonization. Thus, as we look to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Canonization of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, we share with you the inspired words of Father Sullivan delivered to religious sisters on December 15, 1962 during a Solemn Triduum celebrating the Canonization. Although his words are tempered by time and addressed to Religious Sisters in 1962, his message about the newly-canonized Saint and his enthusiasm for the Blessed Sacrament ring true yet today for us who strive to live Eucharistic lives. This gem from 50 years ago can inspire us yet today, to become Evangelizers of the Eucharist, just like Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

Saint Peter Julian, whose canonization on December 9 we are celebrating by this Triduum, may be said to have purchased heaven at a high price, since he gave up for its sake all earthly prospects. As with all the other saints, the victory over self was the victory of grace, and the triumph was the triumph of God. When we consider the particular type of sanctity he achieved, we find that it was molded by the Principle of Love, and the distinctive contribution which he made to the devotional life of the Church was a tremendous, all-conquering love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.



Huge banner at the Canonization of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, pictured with two others who were canonized with him on December 9, 1962. Saint Eymard is the second from the left.

Saint Peter Julian was born at LaMure, in the south-eastern French Alps, on February 4, 1811. From his infancy he appeared to be set apart from other children. The poet William Wordsworth says of the soul of man that it comes from afar:

*Not in entire forgetfulness  
And not in utter nakedness  
But trailing clouds of glory do  
we come  
From God who is our home,  
Heaven lies about us in our  
infancy!*

This was emphatically true of Saint Peter Julian. He seemed to have come into this world as from some sweet and solemn presence which haunted him even before

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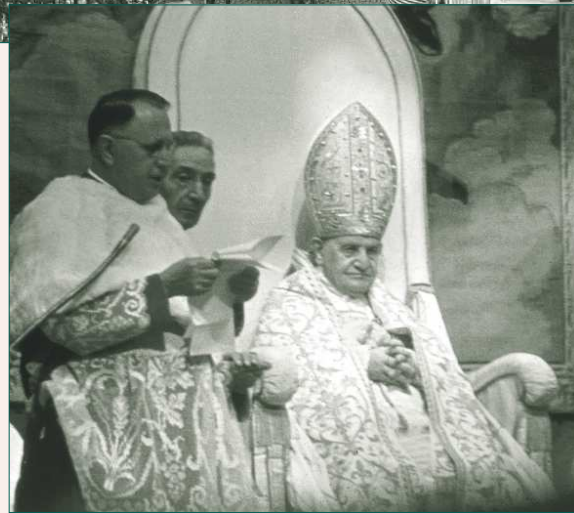
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the dawn of reason, and filled him with a heightened sense of the Eucharistic Presence on our altars. It molded his spirit and his very appearance, so that people said he was a saint. Time will not permit us to linger lovingly over the charming stories of his Eucharistic piety as a child and a youth or to describe in what heroic manner he overcame his father's stubborn opposition and the obstacles of ill health and poverty that loomed up to bar his way to the following of his priestly vocation. The radiant vision of a life of dedication to God in the priesthood beckoned him onward and upward and in its towering strength he surmounted every obstacle. Soon trials and hardships were swallowed up in the bliss that flooded his soul, when in his twenty-fourth year he first ascended the altar a priest of God.

After five years of fruitful ministry as assistant and as pastor, Saint Peter Julian abandoned a promising career in the parochial ministry and entered the newly-founded Society of Mary (Marists). Here his exceptional virtue and ability were recognized at once, and at the youthful age of 29 he was appointed Superior, and four years later, Provincial of his Congregation. For seventeen years of fruitful ministry, visibly blessed by God, and highly appreciated by his major superiors, he labored as a Marist Father, striving to sanctify himself by a tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, as enjoined by his rule, though drawn all the while by a secret force that would brook no resistance towards an all-consuming devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

He had now attained the age of 45; he had achieved the highest honors in his order; he might, had he so pleased, have warmed his remaining days by every comfort and distinction to which his virtue and ability entitled him. But in the mysterious designs of Divine Providence this was not to be. In the outpourings of his soul before the Tabernacle, there came to him as of old to the Patriarch Abraham, a call ever more insistent, until at length it assumed the proportions of a clear command from on high: "Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee; and I will make unto thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and magnify thy name, and thou shalt be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-2).

To comparatively few is given the high vocation of founding a religious order. To fewer still does it befall, that having lived in a religious order and grown enamored of it, they are called upon to sever the heartstrings that bound them to it, and to set out alone, amid enormous difficulties and start a new order. The call to leave home and kindred is always a hard one to follow, but, after having done this, and lived for years in a brotherhood of peace and affection, it is harder still, unutterably harder, to sever these ties and hazard all in a heroic enterprise of founding a new religious family. And what a strange, what a



*TOP: The Canonization Ceremony in Saint Peter's Basilica on December 9, 1962*

*BOTTOM: Pope John XXIII during the Canonization Ceremony of Saint Peter Julian Eymard*

seemingly quixotic society this was to be; one destined to accomplish a work which had never been done in the Church of God by a corporate body of men. That work we now recognize as a logical necessity, springing as it does from a devout understanding of the Real Presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

But while there had existed before the time of our Saint countless souls who spent hours before the Blessed Sacrament; while even Perpetual Adoration was not unknown in communities of women, yet there did not exist a body of men whose lives

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were solely and completely given to doing service at the Court of the King of Heaven on earth, without any primary thought of their own sanctification, without any primary thought of the salvation of souls. The new in the new Society, as visioned by Saint Peter Julian, were to be simply and solely officers of the Eucharistic King, spending themselves and being spent in procuring the splendor of the Hidden God, surrounding Him with everything that piety, intelligence and love could suggest men who should be a bodyguard of the King of kings; sentinels who should not only speak of the saving Presence and of the Majesty within, but by their example and attitude, should challenge and kindle the love of others to come forth generously and join them in a world-wide tribute of love and adoration.

*RIGHT: Some attendees among the thousands  
BELOW: Canonization Banner hanging from the central portico of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome on the day of canonization*

A grand conception, Dear Sisters, one that could spring only from an unselfish life; only from a heart that hoped not so much to benefit self as in the very ecstasy of unselfishness, to lavish such benefits as human beings can lavish upon the Eucharistic God, who deprived Himself of even the semblance of manhood, to get nearer, closer to the heart of man whom He wanted to save.

From that conception springs into existence the Society of the Blessed Sacrament. They are men who have been taught that they must not consider themselves; that their only thought, their all-consuming thought, must be for the glory of the Eucharistic King.

We must saturate ourselves with this fundamental truth if we are to gain any insight into Saint Peter Julian's providential mission. Were it merely the question of promoting devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, there would have been no need of his sacrificing his Marist vocation and founding a new religious order. Saints of various Orders – Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans – have preached Eucharistic devotion, have been apostles of adoration and frequent Communion, yet for all that, had never felt constrained to give up their respective vocations. Why couldn't Saint Eymard be content with spreading the Eucharistic fire



while remaining a Marist Father? It was precisely the question his Superiors were asking, and in truth a very natural question. The answer, clear and unmistakable, was given by Saint Peter Julian himself. As he viewed the matter, in the light

of his special vocation, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament could not be a mere sideline, it must absorb one's entire life. Christ Eucharistic is a King, and as such is entitled to a Court, to Attendants day and night. This is a whole-time job and could not be adequately carried out by an existing Order of men. A new religious Society must be called into existence, to fit this new conception of our relations with the Real Presence.

Years before the establishment of the Feast of Christ the King by Pope Pius XII, Saint Eymard had made the Eucharistic Kingship the cornerstone of his Society. The lowly appearance of Christ in this Sacrament diminishes in no wise His kingly prerogatives. The more He humbles Himself, the more honor is due to Him. And so our Saint planned an Order of men who would remove the King from the obscurity of the Tabernacle, where because He is unseen, He is so often unhonored, and set Him upon a royal



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throne, surrounded by courtiers kneeling in an attitude of profoundest respect.

The Church sets apart one day in the year when all the pomp and magnificence of Catholic ritual is unrolled to honor the Sacramental Presence of the King – the feast of Corpus Christi. Saint Peter Julian dreamed of one unending feast of Corpus Christi the whole year round. He envisioned a



*Pope John XXIII during the Canonization Ceremony*

perpetual bodyguard, made up not of volunteers but of regulars, of priests and brothers bound by vow to this service, devoting every faculty of mind and body to this worship, and by word and example, drawing others to join with them in this glorious service.

To realize our Saint's typical spirituality we need only consider his devotion to the Sacred Heart. Today when devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Holy Eucharist, go hand in hand, it seems impossible to develop the one without the other. But it was not so in the time of our Saint. A prejudice existed against which Saint Peter Julian had to contend with all his strength; a prejudice not entirely destroyed today. It led people to consider devotion to the Sacred Heart as essentially bound up with the worship of its picture or statue or image to such an extent that it seemed impossible to practice this devotion apart from that image. Of course, Saint Eymard had no notion of keeping people from seeking in this outward sign a reminder of our Lord's love. He simply wanted to oppose the general tendency which led people to demand of the imagination the main stimulus for their devotion to the Sacred Heart. By having too much recourse to the image, they ended up forgetting the

reality – the Holy Eucharist where the Heart, inflamed with love, lives and wishes to draw all hearts. To a person under his spiritual direction, he wrote: *“Find the Sacred Heart there where it is, living and all merciful, in the Holy Eucharist. Unhappily that Divine and human Heart is not known and loved, even by many devout people who waste their time in little devotions while they neglect that one devotion which ought to be the life and end of all the others: the living Heart of Jesus that made Calvary and the Holy Eucharist.”*

To cure this lamentable evil, Saint Eymard strove to inculcate this fundamental truth, so simple yet so poorly understood; that the first and immediate purpose of the Sacred Heart devotion is to lead the soul to God by love. The devotion of honoring the love of Jesus in His mortal life is good, but it is incomplete. It is a past love, without connection with the present. It lacks a living relationship. The adorable Heart of Jesus is found in the Holy Eucharist. There it is alive and inflamed with love. It is there we should look for it and adore it. What need have we of a pictured heart or a statue? Do not make a heart of plaster or stone. Worship it in thanksgiving

for past love and even for future love. But worship it in love for its present state, its present love. Find inspiration in our Lord's present thoughts and feelings, and in the desires of His Heart – thoughts, feelings and desires expressed in that gentle invitation which the soul hears as soon as it is willing to approach this fire of love: “My son, give Me your heart.” There is no true devotion to the Sacred Heart unless it is Eucharistic.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard lived by the Holy Eucharist, with the Holy Eucharist, on the Holy Eucharist, and his death was a death of love for the Holy Eucharist. At that supreme moment he uttered these touching words which are a splendid testimony to the singleness of purpose of his life: *“My heart has always belonged to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. No one has ever possessed that heart but my Master.”*

The lesson, Dear Sisters, is this, that since God raised up Saint Peter Julian less than a hundred years ago, to preach the Blessed Sacrament and draw all souls to that source of life and grace, it must be his will that you His chosen Spouses, avail yourselves of your unique opportunities to adore and honor Christ frequently in His Sacrament of Love in order to realize in your own individual lives what Saint Eymard realized so heroically in his: the truth that is the fundamental truth of Christianity, the truth that Christ in the Holy Eucharist is our life, that without Him we can do nothing, but that with Him abiding in us we, too, can be saints; we, too, can bear much fruit until life everlasting. ❖