

My Brother Gene...
Continued from previous page

dedicated it to our younger brother Peter and his family in California. I see this final publication of Gene's vast number of books as a celebration of his life. The book will be available through our SSS website – www.blessedsacrament.com.

If you wish to communicate with Father Gene, you may do so through me. I will make sure that your notes, cards and letters reach him and are read to him. I know that it would bring him much joy to hear from friends and acquaintances from his long career in Church ministry. Address any communications to: Brother Gary LaVerdiere SSS; Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament; 5384 Wilson Mills Road; Cleveland, OH 44143-3098.

I am grateful for all that Gene has given to us and to the Church and for all that he continues to teach us by his example and acceptance of his condition. ✠

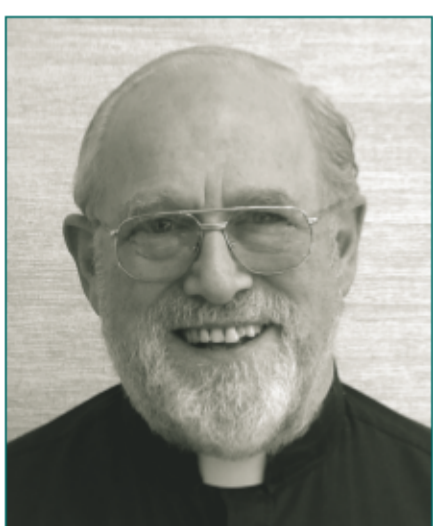
A Word of Thanks to our Partners in Ministry

Many of you discovered the envelope inserted in the middle of *Bread Broken & Shared* and sent a generous donation to the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. We are most grateful for making it possible for our priests and brothers to continue their ministry. Your gift, whether large or small, helps you to actually share in the ministry of the Congregation in the USA. You are remembered daily in the prayer intentions of the priests and brothers of the Congregation.

Prayer According to Saint Peter Julian Eymard
Inspired by the Mass

Paul J. Bernier SSS

Father Paul J. Bernier SSS, presently editor of *Emmanuel Magazine* published by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, is a noted theologian and author of several books on the Eucharist and Ministry which are available through the Congregation's website (www.blessedsacrament.com). In addition to his ministry with the magazine, Father Bernier is a sought-after retreat master and workshop presenter especially on themes dealing with the Eucharist. We are grateful to him for reflecting with us on the methodology of prayer suggested by Saint Peter Julian Eymard called "Prayer According to the Four Ends of the Sacrifice of the Mass". We are sure that you will enjoy Fr. Paul's reflections as he presents this useful way that we can pray.



Paul J. Bernier SSS

Most people talk too much when they pray. They tell God their problems, they catalogue their needs and wants, and ask for this or that favor or blessing. Or, they rely on some special prayer or novena that is guaranteed to draw down God's blessings and infallibly get them what they pray for — providing they pray it a certain number of times and leave copies in various other churches. Isn't this praying like pagans? And, Jesus did warn us NOT to pray like pagans, who think that they can win a hearing by the sheer multiplication of words (see *Matthew 6:7-18*).

How, then, are Christians expected to pray? Jesus Himself has given us two important clues.

The first clue is found in the Our Father. We are to begin with the assurance that God is a loving father. God cares: "God so loved the world that he sent his only Son" (John 3:16). When that conviction is at the root of all our prayer, two things happen.

1) **We pray with assurance.** We know that we do not need special prayers or

Continued on next page...

PROVINCE OF ST. ANN NEWSLETTER

*Prayer According...*Continued from previous page

formulas. We don't have to imagine that our prayers are going to break God down so that — even though he was not minded to do so — he eventually gives us what we ask. Prayer does not twist God's arm, so that he changes his mind and grants us our desires. Instead, prayer changes us, so that we are open to God's will and grace, so that we can always be able to pray, as Jesus did, "Thy will be done, not mine."

2) **We pray with gratitude.** Knowing that God has already given us everything that he could in giving us Jesus, we should be filled with thankfulness. This should underlie all our prayer. If there is anything that should characterize Christian prayer, it is gratitude. The entire Bible, especially the New Testament, is a chronicle of God's care and concern for all of us. Everything that is revealed there is a cause for gratitude. True prayer is not something we offer to God; it is simply our response to God's gift of himself to us.

"The Mass...is the model of all true prayer."

The second clue is found in the Eucharist. The Mass is the memorial of Jesus' redemptive suffering/death/resurrection. It is the sacramental celebration of his desire to save us from our selfishness and sin. As such, it is the model of all true prayer. The liturgy of the Eucharist that we celebrate as a community gives us the pattern that should inform our private prayer as well.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard saw this very clearly, and he informed us in the *Constitutions* that he wrote for his religious congregations that we should pray "according to the four ends of the sacrifice of the Mass." In so doing, we not only take our inspiration from the Eucharist, we allow ourselves time to interiorize the values of the Mass that we celebrate. The four basic movements of prayer that we find in each Mass are **adoration, praise and thanksgiving, reparation** and, finally, **petition**.

1st End of Prayer: Praise and Thanksgiving

As we might suspect, at the heart of the Eucharist is thanksgiving, as noted above. As we begin the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest asks those gathered to "give thanks to the Lord, our God." And they respond, "It is right to give God thanks and praise." Thank and praise are mentioned in the same breath because thanksgiving is really public praise. We don't thank God simply by saying, "Thank you!" We do so by letting everyone know how good God is, and the blessings that he has conferred on us.

Having already celebrated the Liturgy of the Word, the benevolence of God that we learn of there provides additional motives for gratitude and praise.

The Preface then specifies a particular motive for gratitude in that particular Mass; and the Eucharistic Prayer, of course, is a stark reminder that the Eucharist is all about the fact that Jesus was willing to give his body for us, and to pour out his blood for our salvation. We have so many reasons to be thankful.

2nd End of Prayer: Adoration

This alone provides sufficient motivation to adore God, to acknowledge that he is truly Lord, and that his will is but an expression of his care and concern for us. We owe him our very lives, and we can but marvel that, despite our sinfulness, God has not given up on his creation, but continually finds ways to bring us back to himself.

3rd End of Prayer: Reparation

Of course, this very fact is a reminder that it is because of human sin that Jesus was crucified. And we become more aware of the various ways in which we have sinned and failed to correspond to God's grace in our lives. This calls forth the need to atone for our sins, something that Jesus has done for us. But it remains necessary for us to be sorry and determined to root sin out of our lives, so that we might live more fully as God's children.

4th End of Prayer: Petition

It is only after this that petitions enter into the Eucharistic Prayer. This is probably a good indication that petition is not the whole of prayer, and not even the most important part. Nevertheless, it is part of every Mass, as is obvious even in the Prayers of the Faithful.

Continued on next page...

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007

*Prayer According...*Continued from previous page

Our Private Prayer

It is clear that the Eucharist is the prayer of the Church, the prayer of all God's people gathered together in his name. However, there is little enough time for private prayer during Mass, or even to enter into the prayer of the Church as fully as we might like. This is why private prayer is so important. It is also why praying according to the four ends of the sacrifice of the Mass is a way of insuring that our prayer flows from the Eucharist and leads us back to it, and does not simply become a narcissistic form of self-indulgence.

This type of prayer can be done in various ways. One might decide, for example, to reflect on a particular feast or mystery, or a specific scripture passage. One could then look at the same reality from four different perspectives, each based on one of the purposes of the prayer of the Mass. This allows us to give adequate time to adore the God who has loved us to such an extent. We can then look at the same thing from the perspective of the reasons it affords us to be grateful, and tell God or Jesus how thankful we are for everything that they have done for us.

From the third perspective, we become aware of our own failings, and resolve to eliminate them from our lives, asking God's pardon determined to have a "sincere purpose of amendment." Our petition follows from this, as we pray that God's will be done more fully in our lives and in our world. We try to see ourselves as part of God's plan, as instruments of his love, his justice and peace in our world.

On certain days, we might prefer to focus on only one of the four aspects of prayer. This might be because of our own need; for example to ask pardon for certain failings and to examine seriously how to bring about that daily conversion to God's ways that we always need. Or, perhaps, we can spend our entire prayer expressing thanks for some grace received, or for a particular feast such as Easter or Christmas. We should let the Holy Spirit inspire us on how to pray. Just remember that our gratitude must also be reflected in our lives.

Praying with the Scriptures

If we decide to pray with the Scriptures, this will help deepen our knowledge of God and better our response to him. Reflecting on the readings ahead of time is an especially good way to prepare for Sunday Mass. And by asking what these readings mean for us today, we can apply the Scriptures to our own lives and deepen our fidelity to the faith that is ours. Again, we can reflect on the same passage from the four different perspectives of eucharistic prayer suggested by Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

What counts in all this is that we recognize that **the Mass is the perfect prayer.** The more closely our private prayer is inspired by and reflects the Eucharist, the more pleasing it will be to God. We thank Saint Peter Julian Eymard for outlining this methodology of prayer according to the Four Ends of the Sacrifice of the Mass. May it prove fruitful in your own prayer life! ✠

Who We Are

"Following in the footsteps of St. Peter Julian Eymard, our mission is to respond to the hungers of the human family with the riches of God's love manifested in the Eucharist." *Rule of Life 3*

Conscious of our call to bear prophetic witness to the Eucharist, we commit ourselves to the renewal of Church and society through this sacrament, especially by:

- ◆ gathering communities characterized by hospitality, reconciliation, and service;
- ◆ celebrating the Eucharist as the source and summit of the life of the Church;
- ◆ associating others with our prayer;
- ◆ giving personal witness to the presence of Christ in the Eucharist;
- ◆ sharing our Eucharistic mission with others in full collaboration.

