

PETER-JULIAN EYMARD

*Counsels for  
Spiritual life*

drawn from his Correspondence  
selected and presented by  
Fathers Fiorenzo Salvi, Giovanni Moretti  
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With the permission of the Superiors

This collection of texts is drawn from "Oeuvres Completes de Saint Pierre - Julian Eymard", printed edition, Centro Eucharistico, Ponteranica, (Italy) - Nouvelle Cite, Bruyeres-le-Chatel, 2008, 17 Volumes - The Correspondence is contained in Volumes II, III, and IV.

The extracts may be viewed on the website [www.eynard.org](http://www.eynard.org) Each letter has a specific reference number. Click on the index of documents to obtain the letter in its entirety.

English Texts of letters taken from The Life and Letters of St. Peter Julian Eymard translated by Sr. Catherine Marie Caron, sss

The general introduction and brief introduction for each letter found in "Oeuvres Completes de Saint Pierre - Julian Eymard" were translated by Mary Keane, Directress of Servitium Christi.

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## INTRODUCTION

In getting to know Fr. Eymard and his charism, the writings he has bequeathed to us have little value. This is not the least of paradoxes: if he has left a mass of documents at his death, he published nothing, except the Constitutions of the Religious of the Blessed Sacrament, those of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, and some articles and notices concerning his work. The works published under his name after his death, are from the hand of one of his disciples, Fr. Albert Tesniere. It was necessary to wait over a century for the advent of electronic writing to have access to his complete writings, of which a large number are personally written. They were edited in 2006 on the Web and two years later they were printed. In total there are 17 volumes comprising more than 10,500 pages. In reality it is really only institutes of specialist research, university libraries, seminaries or religious institutes which would avail of this massive documentation. As for access to the electronic edition, though it is free of charge, it often gives only a partial glimpse. On the other hand, if this monumental edition allows access to the totality of Eymardian writings, many have only a historical significance: personal notes, canonical texts, extracts from the Constitutions or Statutes, sermons, transcription of texts etc.

On account of this, it seemed useful to edit the collections which enable his message to be made available to a wider public, anxious to know his thought and to be nourished by his writings. It would be a disservice to Fr. Eymard to confine him to his own era. His message must remain alive. In this context of the 19th century which marked in France a renewal of the Liturgy, notably the cult of the Eucharist, his intuitions as founder make him an apostle not only of Eucharistic Adoration, but also a precursor of a global approach to the Mystery of the Eucharist, Mass and Communion. Hence the title attributed to him in the decree which included his name in the Liturgical Calendar of the Church, "Remarkable Apostle of the Eucharist".

This collection contains a selection of texts drawn from his correspondence. This amounts to 2,212 letters, addressed to 251 Correspondents. In the *Oeuvres Completes* it fills 3 volumes. We have confined ourselves to the letters of spiritual direction, numbering about 850. In the course of his ministry, people, especially women, confided in him and asked him to accompany them in their spiritual life. This ministry developed especially from 1846 onwards, when he was appointed director of the Third Order of Mary at Lyon. He structured the little group of Tertiaries entrusted to

him and developed it by his teaching – notably his conferences on the interior life, and Marist spirituality – and by his spiritual accompaniment. After he left Lyon for La Seyne-sur-Mer in 1851, letters replaced the meetings. It was the same when he left the Society of Mary in 1856 to found the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Paris. Other people sought his advice. Father answered their specific questions, which we can only discern through the director's response, because, in the interests of discretion, he destroyed all the correspondence of his directees.

Fr. Eymard's advices are personal. However, some have a general interest and can be addressed beyond the person to whom they were written, to many others who will find in them enlightenment and comfort. They trace both the journey of the directees and also his own personal pathway. In his Marist period, his teaching is focussed especially on the great principles of Christian life as it was perceived at the time: struggle against faults, the practice of Christian virtues, development of personal interior life through prayer, recollection, asceticism, receiving the sacraments, confession, Mass, Communion, devotion to the Virgin Mary. He listens to everyone, discerns in the light of the Holy Spirit, counsels with respect for the grace and the journey of each person. His direction is based on reciprocal

trust, and his spirituality is inspired by love of which the Eucharist is the Sacrament. This note will develop gradually, and to the extent that he discovers, through the grace received at Fourviere in 1851, his mission as founder. From then on, he will consider Christian life only as Eucharistic. The grace of "The gift of personality" received in Rome in 1865, constitutes the summit of his spiritual life. We find echoes of it in his correspondence to some privileged people.

In the Preface to the edition "Letters of Direction to people in the world", Fr. Edmond Tenaillon, Postulator of the Cause of Beatification of Fr. Eymard, noted in 1901: *All Fr. Eymard's direction tended towards a single goal: to create in souls the union of life, of thoughts, of sentiments, of judgments, with Jesus Eucharistic*. Then underlining the prudence of this "wise Director" he added: He consulted the grace of each person, his particular attraction, the special action of the Holy Spirit – Who blows where He wants - ; and full of respect for the freedom of souls, and for the grace of God in them, he directs them skilfully and firmly towards the Blessed Sacrament Which he named "The Centre of All".

In this Edition, we re-produce the text of the "Oeuvres Completes", lightening the presentation

somewhat. Each letter carries a title drawn from the body of the letter, and an introduction which situates the document. We have omitted the headings, dates, forms of greeting, conclusions and thus only address the practical points of the subject. The signature is always omitted. Brackets [.....] indicate cuts that have been made. At the end of each letter, we indicate in italics, the addressee, the date, and reference in the Complete Edition. Some letters have the text of the edition of reference.

The choice of texts and their presentation is the work of four collaborators: Fr. Fiorenzo Salvi for the period 1828 – 1856, Fr. Giovanni Moretti for 1856 – 1863, Fr. Manuel Barbiero for 1864 – 1866, and myself for 1866 to 1868, the date of Father's death.

Choice is open to a certain subjectivity: some letters were chosen, others omitted, which were not without interest. It was about a sufficiently representative sample of the thought of Fr. Eymard and of his method in the art of Direction. I have done both the re-reading of the collection and the establishment of a list of the correspondents with a short biographical note. The Theme Table is the work of Fr. Salvi.

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