

SSS INTERNATIONAL

EYMARDIAN FAMILY

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Dem. Rep. Congo



The Gift of self in an eymardian perspective

We can't in any way speak of the Gift of self in St Peter-Julian Eymard without mentioning the Great Retreat of Rome, because it is there that this theme reaches its culminating point. Why then the adjective "Great"? What is the context in which this retreat is set or rather why?

1. Regarding the adjective 'great'

Three main reasons suggesting this descriptive adjective:

- 'Great': – this retreat is above all and before all to be seen in relation to the first retreat that Father Eymard made in May 1863 on the occasion of the pontifical approbation of the Congregation. The motive of it was not only administration, but above all the desire to lead our holy Founder to meditate before God on all his responsibilities, especially spiritual, which flowed from the approbation of his institute by the Holy See.
- 'Great' also because it is long and full of abundant notes that Father Eymard left. Whereas the first retreat lasted no more than a week, the second encompassed 65 days (from 25 January to 30 March 1865).
- 'Great' insofar as it holds an importance in the life of the holy Founder, for whom it constituted a decisive turning point, expressing emphatically his desire for conversion, the beauty of the eucharistic vocation and concern to centre his whole life on the Eucharist.

2. Context of its setting

This retreat is situated in the very difficult context of negotiations carried out to found a community in Jerusalem, possibly at the Cenacle itself.

In fact, since Father de Cuers' two journeys to Jerusalem in 1864 had been unsuccessful, Father Eymard considered it an obligation to go to Rome to follow up the situation and employ all his resources to realise his project. He took into account the considerable difficulties to ensure success. Likewise he was aware of the situation being almost without an outcome in which he found himself, but he didn't give up nor lose hope.

During this time of anxiously waiting, he lodged at the Villa Caserta with the Redemptorists to make a retreat. He realized that the struggle to be waged was more interior. In his notes, he left us concern to centre his life on the Eucharist, his desire for an ever more complete gift of himself which, moreover, would find its completion in the grace of March 21 when, amazed, taken aback, overwhelmed by the love of God manifested in Jesus in the Eucharist, he responded to this love by making the gift of his personality a Vow. It is then that a new path opens in his life and his apostolate: that of the Gift of Self. How did he get there? Where does this conviction come from? Certainly, it was after discovering a model par excellence of self-giving: Jesus Christ.

3. The Gift of self in the eymardian perspective

Jesus Christ is par excellence the model of self-giving, we continue to assert energetically. As an avid reader of Pauline writings, Peter-Julian Eymard found in this Apostle the one who followed in the footsteps of Christ and personally had experienced God's love. He came to the perfection of our Lord Jesus by the love of the cross. God knocked him down, flattened on the road to Damascus and asked

him for great sacrifices. Paul granted everything to the Lord to such an extent that he would never stop repeating this saying: "*Dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me*": He loved me and gave himself up for me (Gal 2:20).

21 March 1865 marks a great interior turning point in the life of our holy Founder. He wrote: "*I made the perpetual vow of my personality to our Lord Jesus Christ through the hands of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, under the patronage of Saint Benedict: nothing for me and anyone, and asking for the essential grace, nothing by me*". As if to say: "*Everything through him, with him and in him*". (cf. NR 44,199)

By making this vow, what he was now looking for was to be essentially identified with the Lord who wants to give himself to him, who asks to find a place in him, deep within himself. There is the aspect of "emptying oneself" in order to be filled with the other who is Christ, in order to be enabled to say following the Apostle of the Gentiles: "*I live, it is no longer I, but it is Christ who lives in me*"(Gal 2:20).

How did he intend to live this heavy resolution? He himself expressed this: "*I must be annihilated in all my own desires, in all my own interests and have only those of Jesus Christ who is in me in order to live there for his father*" (NR 44,199). And Christ coming in Holy Communion has only that purpose: "To be in me" to purify all my desires, enlighten my thoughts and lead my actions. It is a realization of what is in John 6:57: "*As the Father who is alive sent me and I live by him, so whoever eats me will also live by me*".

The gift of self, the gift of one's personality, was for Saint Peter-Julian Eymard an effort of self-denial, a renunciation not only of what one has but even more of what one is. It's about being entirely to Jesus what he is to his father. And what Jesus prefers for his own:

- It's an act of personal humility regarding all vain glories.
- An act of personal renunciation of all acclaim, successes or zeal.
- An act of poverty regarding all external accretion.
- An act of mortification with all the virtues.
- What Jesus prefers in short is to give myself to him, to serve him by the gift and the holocaust of myself.

As for us, Apostles and Disciples of the Eucharist, we have to give ourselves to the service, to the glory and to the love of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Most Holy Sacrament by faith, the gift of our life and total

dedication. Anyone who understands this thought better, says our Holy Founder, begins a new path in piety, not in itself, because whoever knows our Lord Jesus knows that he must be perfect, he must be absorbed in him, not by words, but in practice. We are therefore called to be human shadows for others, we must become living Eucharists of which the Blessed Sacrament is the focus. Through the gift of personality, our whole person is exchanged with Jesus Christ: the heart, the spirit, the will, the body, desire, in short, our whole being. It is a question of living for Christ, of being all his, through him, in him and with him in order to realise this Pauline conviction: "*I live, it is no longer I, it is Christ who lives in me*".

Binza, 12 March 2020

FATHER FRANCIS MWANZA, SSS



A different way of looking at Viruses

Throughout human history, humanity has tried to understand death and what threatens life in folklore, literature, and now cinema. These genres personify these threats in terms of the animal-inhuman, a werewolf, or lycanthrope; the dead, zombies; the non-dead, vampires; the non-living, a Frankenstein monster; the extra-terrestrial alien, and the never-living, a crazed robot. How can one portray or even conceive of the novel corona virus- SARS COVID-2 causing COVID-19? This virus has spread across the globe in a few short months, sickening millions, and has the dubious distinction of not really being a living organism, many biologists say. Our immune system could handle a single virus or virion, it is the hundreds of thousands of virions created in a short period of time that harms our cells. Is this threat alive or dead?

We need to get some idea about what a virus is. Bacteria are simpler to deal with. Bacteria are microscopic living organisms, one-celled, that can be found everywhere. They can be dangerous, causing infection, or helpful in fermentation for wine and decomposition, like for mulch. Bacteria are alive. Viruses do not test for being alive. Viruses are not really considered alive, they are "pseudo-alive", said Eric Mendenhall, an associate professor of biological sciences at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Life is a complicated reality; live organisms reflect that complexity in their structure. Smaller building blocks come together to make a larger entity. Even though viruses do this, have genes made from nucleic acids and a protective protein shell called a capsid, certain virus strains have an extra membrane (lipid bilayer) surrounding it made of smaller subunits called capsomeres. But this does not make them alive because of other reasons.

Living things must be made of cells. Viruses are not made out of cells. Living things reproduce. Viruses cannot reproduce on their own. Viruses do not have the constituent parts of a cell, they do not have the tools they need to copy their genes, much less create a whole new virion, a single virus particle. Viruses must use living host cells to create more virions. Viruses enter living cells and hijack a living host's cellular equipment to copy viral information, build new capsids, and assemble everything together. The term replicate is better than reproduce to indicate viruses need a host cell to multiply.

Living things grow. Viruses do not grow but use the host cell's energy and nutrients to become larger in size or more complex. Viruses manipulate host cells into building new viruses so each virion is created in its fully-formed state, and will neither increase in size or complexity throughout its existence. Viruses multiply at the host cell's expense. Creating new virion units is a major undertaking, from building nucleic acids to putting capsids together which costs energy. All the energy that goes into this construction comes from the host. Viruses benefit from the use of energy and latch onto the host's metabolism to get to it.

So not living like a zombie, and not a changeable werewolf like King Lycaon, turned into a wolf by Zeus, nor a parasitic vampire like Dracula or Nosferatu, the non-dead, how to conceive it? It is more like a robot than a living organism. Imagine all of the movies about robots and androids, the *Terminator*, *Data from Star Trek*, *the robots in I, Robot*, robots, fully formed relying on host materials to build and power themselves and can exist in two phases: the lytic phase (where the virus actively replicates in a host cell) and the lysogenic phase (where the viral DNA incorporates itself into the cell's DNA and multiplies whenever the cell multiplies). Sometimes a host does not support the virus to actively replicate, so it switches to the lysogenic phase when conditions are right. This maddening characteristic makes certain viruses so hard to eradicate.

This has implications on how to treat viral infections. Antibiotics treat bacterial infections and aim at killing the live bacteria. With viruses how do you kill

something which is not exactly alive to begin with? Antiviral medications attempt to disrupt the replication cycle or degrade the virus. Think of it like pushing the off button in the robot production line. For the time being, we can impede the replication of this crazy robot by not assisting the reproduction phase by social distancing, hand washing, and good disinfecting of surfaces and environments in which viruses accumulate. I hope this helps.

Honolulu, 2 April 2020

FATHER JOHN KEENAN, SSS, PSYD, PHD
VICAR PROVINCIAL
PROVINCE OF ST. ANN



The Coronavirus phenomenon: auspicious time for human relationships to flourish

History at this time in the world is being marked by the Covid-19 phenomenon. A pandemic that we can actually call an "invisible enemy" that has caused victims and much suffering all around the world. This has forced authorities and scientists to make people all over the world sensitive to the order of "staying at home". This order underlines the consequences of social isolation that is taking place in about forty countries. The situation is very demanding given that human beings are, par excellence, "essentially relational". We live in an era in which one to one social relationships at every level (work related, educational, liturgical, even in families) demand a new form to be expressed and even the moments of the Eucharistic Celebration are determined mainly by means of virtual communication.



From this perspective many questions arise: what challenges does the Covi-19 phenomenon awake regarding fortifying human bonds in the world? Could this event bring the world to a faith crisis? How can the Eucharist call us to endeavour to project human promotion under the signs of this pandemic?

This time of crisis challenges human beings in their search for a meaning to their existence from a logic of alterity. *Stay home – Save lives*, to remain at home implies to save other human beings. It is about a dynamic of creativity, new perspectives, new visions about the art of living together and fraternity, with the goal of overcoming moments of anguish, tension and human fragility.

This time of Covid-19 marks a barren road in recent history during this XXIth century, characterized by anguish, insecurity and panic, among other feelings. This traumatic situation could, without a doubt, bring about questioning the existence of God and his own attributes. A friend of mine, in fact, asked me this question: “Why has the all-powerful God allowed the Coronavirus to override the capacity of scientists and health promoters to prevent the killing so many people around the world?”

The answer was that Covid-19 is not the first pandemic that humanity has known. For example, the flu pandemic of 1968 caused more than a million deaths in the whole world. Even then God, in his relationship with humankind, gives the grace to act in favour of life.

Reason takes one to reflect not only about the links, that means, the relation not only between people but also with the environment. It is important hence to remember the call issued by Pope Francis in his encyclical “*Laudato Si*” regarding the necessity to look after our common home, deepening ever more the sense of an integral ecology from the relational perspective of human beings. This could be the right moment to generate new persons, a new world and new ways of relating to nature.

The Covid-19 phenomenon, even though could question faith at different levels, cannot bring to a faith crisis or put an end to the Church. On the contrary, it is a time manifesting God because in every moment of trauma, pain and suffering there is a call from God, as the theological conception of Israel exemplifies (Ex 3:7-8). In this sense Jesus’ journey shows that prayer is a guarantee of faith, the Blessed Sacrament Religious would say it is a part of its Congregational mission (cf. Mt 4:1ff.). That is why this time of pandemic has to strengthen this spiritual dimension through a prayerful dynamism as a way of sharing in communion with the victims. A supplication from Psalm 17 comes to mind: “I call on

you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer” (Ps 17:6)

The social isolation at present is not caused by an exclusion due to status, social class or difference between rich and poor but by a need in a time of crisis, which requires reflection about the sense of alterity and communion with the other in need of saving lives. Is it possible to say that it is a moment to try our faith in the mystery of Christ, who in his sufferings took over the history of all humanity? Yes, his victory became concrete at the final moment, believing always in the God of life.

An opinion of theological anthropology refers to the sense of the relationship of human beings (relationship with God, nature and fellow humans). This underlines the sense of alterity as a fundamental human dimension. “To stay home” shows the lack of concrete celebrative moments of life, especially of the sacrament which is “font and summit” of the Church, the Eucharist. In this way the means of virtual communication reflect the importance of technology even in the celebration of the mysteries of Christian faith.

From the sensitization of all who work for a real human promotion (RL 37), the Eucharist challenges us as Blessed Sacrament religious to discern and reflect, at the appropriate moments, about the art of brotherly coexistence, the need to strengthen the basic human relations in compassion, equality and love, as done by health professionals who risk and give everything in trying to restore the health of the sick.

Ultimately the Covid-19 phenomenon questions us all, showing us that we are all in the same boat (rich, poor, middle class). With this logic global leaders open new horizons about the great worries of how to foster economy as the summit of life. A new sense is discovered, challenged by the pandemic. What must flourish, hence, is a “human economy”, understood in the logic of harmony, searching for the common good and authentic relationships which favour life in the world.

Throughout the world there is war against an invisible enemy that is not invincible. While health professionals and scientist fight to save lives, the Church must go on its knees, supporting them and imploring to God for the grace so we can all, together, overcome.

Bogota, 6 April 2020

BROTHER ELIBIEN JOSEPH, SSS
4TH YEAR SCHOLASTIC



The death of a brother will be celebrated as a Paschal event filled with hope. We shall faithfully carry out the prescribed prayers for our deceased (RL 13).

N. 1573 - Father Cirillo Gheza

Province: Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament
Community: Ponteranica, Italy
Death: 18 March 2020
Age: 85
Profession: 64
Priesthood: 58



N. 1574 - Father Edison Ercilio Franco

Province: Our Lady of Guadalupe
Community: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Death: 28 March 2020
Age: 85
Profession: 62
Priesthood: 56



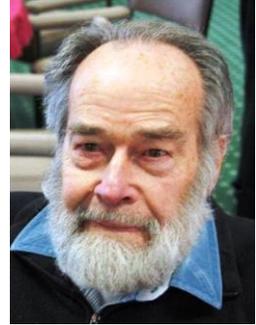
N. 1575 - Fr José Miguel Larrañaga Rodriguez

Province: Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament
Community: Madrid-S.Baranda, Spain
Death: 1 April 2020
Age: 74
Profession: 56
Priesthood: 48



N. 1576 - Brother Vincent Laurisen

Province: Holy Spirit
Community: Melbourne, Australia
Death: 4 April 2020
Age: 90
Profession: 57



N. 1577 - Brother Giambattista Tasca

Province: Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament
Community: Ponteranica, Italy
Death: 13 April 2020
Age: 83
Profession: 40



N. 1578 - Dom Aldo di Cillo Pagotto

Province: Our Lady of Guadalupe
Community: Fortaleza-Sao Benedito, Brazil
Death: 14 April 2020
Age: 70
Profession: 39
Priesthood: 42

