

## The excellent and ever new Book of God's love

**Opening prayer** based on a text of Father Eymard's preaching, inspired by the canticle of Daniel (PA 1,37):

R/ *To Him be highest glory, eternal praise!*

These magnificent stars adorning the firmament tell me: God made them... *Stars of heaven, sun and moon, bless the Lord.*

R/

I admire these mountains, their majesty, use, riches. God made them! *Mountains and hills, bless the Lord.*

R/

How beautiful nature is in the lovely days of spring: this grass full of hope, thousands of these flowers, an image of God's beauty. *All things springing up on the earth, bless the Lord.*

R/

This wonderful concert of birds, God has placed them between heaven and earth to remind me of the choirs of angels, the heavenly fatherland. *Birds of heaven, bless the Lord.*

R/

Creatures serve to clothe me, carry me, house me, defend me. God created them for this purpose. This comprises life's faithful company. *Bless*

R/

There are creatures God has given to nourish me. They provide flavour, taste, pleasure. *I use them in gratitude.*

R/

As regards human creatures, *each of whom he commanded to take care of his neighbour.*

[cf. Sir 17:12]

R/

So these words about creation can be understood: *God saw that all these things were good and all contribute to wellbeing.* [cf. Gen 1:31]

R/

### **Father Eymard's Texts**

“When I was parish priest [at Monteynard] (...) I lived on a mountain overlooking what is said to be the most beautiful valley of France, the valley of the Grésivaudan of Grenoble, which I surveyed. The whole sky in autumn and at the beginning of spring was covered with fog, looking like a sea of ice over the mountain, the sun being magnificent, I saw it and said to myself: These people enshrouded in fogs don't imagine that here the earth is decked in flowers, lovely violets, which they don't enjoy; and the sky seemed to me more beautiful that day.” (*Monthly Retreat, 4 March 1861, PS 301,4*)

“Many members [of the Third Order] are like my *good Dauphinoise* meditating the beauties of nature in the silence and peace of the valleys and hills. Do not forget my rock, my chapel, the beautiful view. Oh, what a wonderful hour I spent there a few years ago at the end of a beautiful day! My heart rejoiced in peace during a meditation I will never forget.” (*Letter to Madam Jordan, 7 July 1851, CO 263*)

“So you are at Calet in this charming countryside where there’s my mystical rock at which I contemplated the sky that is so pure and lovely! It is one of those nights that I shall never forget. Avail yourself of this gentle silence of solitude to get close to God, to taste God, to lose yourself somewhat in the harmony of his heart.” (*Letter to Madam Jordan, 5 May 1864, CO 1380*)

“Aspire in your prayers to be nourished rather by God than to purify and humiliate yourself; and for this nourish your soul by the personified truth in God’s divine goodness towards you, by his tenderness, by his personal love; here is the secret of real prayer, it consists in seeing God’s action and thought in his love for us! So the astonished soul is impelled to cry: ‘How good you are, O my God! What shall I do for you? What could please you?’ This is the flame in the hearth.

But to reach this prayer of life it is necessary to work a lot on forgetting oneself, not to seek anything in prayer; above all it is necessary to simplify the mind’s activity by simply and calmly looking at the truths of God. The secret of this simple look is to see things first of all from the aspect of God’s goodness towards humankind, the purpose for this grace, what it cost Our Lord, its reality, its continuity for us.

When the soul has the joy of discovering this aspect of goodness, prayer becomes a rather delightful contemplation during which the hour passes quickly. Ah! dear daughter, how I wish and desire that you often thus taste God! This is for long time; this is my rock of Saint-Romans.” (*Letter to Madam Jordan, 27 August 1867, CO 2011*)

“I have envied you because of your beautiful and attractive mountains, these ladders of the sky, which is more beautiful from the top of mountains; the soul is closer to God there. You have read very good books; there is an excellent and ever new one: the one that God has written on all plants, on all grains of sand, in you, it is the book of divine love. Therefore honour this beautiful book and add to it some pages of admiration and appreciation! Read all the books in this one and interpret them all in its light, and you will have the key to knowing creatures and God himself. If you only knew how much God loves you!” (*Letter to Madam Jourdan, 19 July 1860, CO 971*)

### **Prayer of conclusion** (Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*)

Father, we praise you with all your creatures.  
They came forth from your all-powerful hand;  
they are yours, filled with your presence and your tender love.

Praise be to you!  
Son of God, Jesus,  
through you all things were made.

You were formed in the womb of Mary our Mother,  
you became part of this earth,  
and you gazed upon this world with human eyes.  
Today you are alive in every creature  
in your risen glory.

Praise be to you!  
Holy Spirit, by your light  
you guide this world towards the Father's love  
and accompany creation as it groans in travail.  
You also dwell in our hearts  
and you inspire us to do what is good.

Praise be to you!  
Triune Lord, wondrous community of infinite love,  
teach us to contemplate you  
in the beauty of the universe,  
for all things speak of you.  
Awaken our praise and thankfulness  
for every being that you have made.  
Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined  
to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world  
as channels of your love  
for all the creatures of this earth,  
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.  
Enlighten those who possess power and money  
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,  
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,  
and care for this world in which we live.  
The poor and the earth are crying out.  
O Lord, seize us with your power and light,  
help us to protect all life,  
to prepare for a better future,  
for the coming of your Kingdom  
of justice, peace, love and beauty.  
Praise be to you! Amen.

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9 May 2020