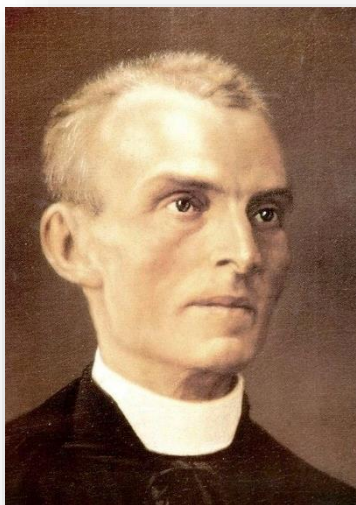


Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

Father Manuel Barbiero, sss

The music of the Eucharist



Saint Peter Julian Eymard
4 and 5 February
210th anniversary
of birth and baptism



Rome, January 22, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters of
Eymardian Charismatic Family

“Making the Eucharistic music
vibrate and resonate”

As we are in the proximity of celebrating the birth and baptism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, - 4 and 5 February, **210 years** - I present to you the most recent article written by Father Manuel Barbiero sss, which makes a parallel between the Encyclical of Pope Francis, ***Fratelli Tutti*** and the writings of Father Eymard. This rich work, can help us to deepen the Encyclical itself and grow in the knowledge of the thought and intuitions of our Holy Founder.

Allow me to suggest simple and concrete actions for each community to celebrate the birth and baptism of Father Eymard. Take advantage of this important date and schedule specific moments of study meetings, community retreats, special prayers, using this precious contribution.

After a careful reading and meditating on the proposed content, if you consider it opportune, the questions below can favor your sharing in community:

1. Of all the aspects addressed in the text, what did strike my attention most?

2. Having followed the relationship proposed in this article by Fr Manuel Barbiero between the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* and the *writings of Father Eymard*, what are the other points could be related, based on your knowledge of the Encyclical and the writings of Father Eymard?
3. Reading and reflecting on the proposed text, what are the inspirations and strengths that can help me to continue building a healthier and fraternal community life?

May the courage, creativity and audacity of our Holy Founder accompany you in this celebration of the 210th anniversary of his birth and baptism.

Fraternally

Fr. Eugenio Barbosa Martins

Fr Eugenio BARBOSA MARTINS, sss
Superior General



Make the music of the Eucharist resonate and resound

In the last chapter of his Encyclical Letter “Fratelli Tutti” (FT) Pope Francis calls on religions to be at the service of brotherhood in the world. He states: “The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society.” (FT 271) “As believers, we are convinced that, without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity.” (FT 272)

For us Christians, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the wellspring of human dignity and brotherhood. “From it, there arises, for Christian thought and for the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all.” (FT 277)

Invoking a very lovely and poetic image, that of music, the Pope invites us to make the music of the Gospel resonate in our depths, not to lose the joy that springs from compassion, tenderness born from trust, capacity for reconciliation that is rooted in the fact of experiencing pardon and being sent. He bids us to make the music of the Gospel resound in our homes, in our squares, in our places of work, in politics and in economy so as not to stifle the melody that impels us to strive for the dignity of every man and woman (cf. FT 277).

Pope Francis appeals also to the experience of faith and wisdom drawn from the course of the ages (cf. FT 274 and 275). We can draw on St Peter-Julian Eymard’s experience of faith and wisdom in making the music of the Gospel of the Eucharist resonate and resound.

Contemplate Christ

The first attitude that we can draw from Father Eymard's spiritual experience is contemplation of Christ in the mystery of the Incarnation and in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37).

Jesus, brother of all of us

In the notes of the "Great Retreat of Rome" (1865), Father Eymard meditated on "God who is love". The love of God is manifested first of all in creation. This love reached its summit when the Father sent his Son to become one of us. The Incarnation is the great proof of God's love for humankind. In the Incarnation Jesus assumes the appearance of the last, the excluded, the poor, the oppressed.

"God loves man and to prove this he is made like him, becoming his brother in the flesh – and *the Word became flesh* [Jn 1:14]; - and he became poor, the poorest of the poor in order to embrace all as brothers, - he became an infant to be the brother of the infant, and the poor infant of the stable." (NR 44,102)

In another text, this time in the Constitutions of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, Father Eymard invites us again to contemplate the Incarnation of Jesus Christ: "Jesus wanted to be the last of the poor in order to be able to extend his hand to the smallest and to be able to tell him truly: *I am your brother*. Indeed, there was no poor person so miserable, so impoverished as the Incarnate Word, born in the cave of Bethlehem. Exiled in Egypt, he lived there without a fatherland, without family, he worked under obedience, ate the barley bread of the poor, he slept most often in forests or on the mountains, he even lived on alms during the days of his evangelical life, and he died in a manner even the abandoned poor do not die." (RS 12,26)

Whoever wants to follow Christ and be a disciple of his love finds his starting point in the love of Jesus Christ, who has first loved him personally. The disciple of love "loves to consider this love of God that is so great in the Incarnation, God the Father loving fallen man,

buried, sinful, unto giving his own Son as Saviour. He contemplates this substantial love of the Father, the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ loving man unto the sacrifice of his own glory, unto the sacrifice of his life, loving him unto folly, making himself poor to be the friend and brother of the poor; weak to be the friend of the weak; an artisan to work among artisans; exile to console the exile; prisoner to be the consoler of prisoners; persecuted to console the innocent; betrayed, denied, scourged, reviled, crucified, cursed on the cross for love of humankind. This is the God of love. Oh! When have we recognized him, when have we felt the soft flames of this love, when did we see that face resplendent with kindness and sweetness, when did we meet those eyes so tender and so good, when have we heard one of those life-giving words from his heart, when he said: "Follow me" [Mt 4,19]; oh! Who could resist such charm, such power' (...) Jesus Christ loves the little ones, humble, poor, those who are merciful, charitable, suffering; Jesus Christ's disciple loves them in his Master, the friends of a friend are friends." (RA 17,2)

Contemplation of Jesus Christ's love leads us to love every person as a brother of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, the Good Samaritan

In his Encyclical Letter Pope Francis set out a very beautiful interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Cf. FT 56-86)

In Father Eymard's writings (cf. *Œuvres Complètes*) we can find at least twenty references to this parable. Here is an example. "Do you see this man left half dead by the cruel assassins on the road from Jericho? This man is humanity stripped, wounded, agonising on the road of life and of eternity. (...) Here comes the charitable Samaritan. Looking at this unfortunate man, he is deeply moved; *touched by compassion* [Lk 10:33] he approaches him, bandages his wounds, takes care of him and does not leave until he is healed [Lk 10:34-35]. This charitable Samaritan is Jesus Christ. He passes along the road of life, his heart is all charity, he loves those who are suffering, he heals

their gangrenous wounds with his blood, with his love. Jesus Christ is going to pass; are there destitute people here? Through us he will bandage your wounds and heal them.” (PD 15,2)

Father Eymard, following a tradition going back to the Fathers of the Church, regarded Jesus Christ as the Good Samaritan and humanity in the man left half dead.

Jesus Christ is the Good Samaritan, the healer who takes to himself our wounds, our sufferings, our sallow condition (cf. PO 1,3 and PD 14,11). Jesus has a kind heart; he loves his neighbour; he desires his good; he wants wellbeing for him. He is “a tender mother – the Good Samaritan is Jesus Christ. Each frail child, sinner, saint, all have a place of tenderness in his heart.” (NR 44,97)

By means of the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus explains who is the neighbour and clearly points out that a quality of love must be its universal outreach. This love is shown to “all, friends and enemies, relatives and strangers, superiors and subjects” (PE 2,19).

Today listen to Father Eymard commenting on the action of Jesus Christ, the charitable Samaritan, that must be continued through us: “Are there destitute persons here? Through us he will bandage your wounds and heal them.” (PD 15,2) “There are other destitute persons referred to; Jesus Christ is sending us to bandage their wounds, to heal them.” (PD 14,14)

Father Eymard acted as a charitable Samaritan above all regarding the work of the First Communion of adults. He opened his heart to brothers, to the most needy, as he opened it to God. He was convinced that life could not be fully eucharistic unless it was consecrated to God and people (cf. RL 2). He grasped, to borrow Pope Francis’ words, “great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people’s troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment.” (FT 77)

In committing himself to the work of the First Communion of young workers, Father Eymard began with the situations closest, with the poorest, he struggled for what was most concrete and most local, with the same care as that shown on the journey of the Samaritan for each wound of the attacked man. He took on himself the reality as his own without fear neither of the difficulties nor of powerlessness, “because there we will discover all the goodness that God has planted in human hearts.” (FT 78)

The Eucharist: fraternal atmosphere and sacrament of unity

We may be surprised to find in the Encyclical Letter “Fratelli Tutti” there no explicit reference to the Eucharist. We can explain this lacuna by the fact that Pope Francis has chosen the horizontal line of human brotherhood; he wanted to address his message to every living person without distinction. But the horizontal line needs the vertical line of love that surpasses all humanly conceivable frontiers, and that comes to us from God. In his personal notes we find that Father Eymard wrote: “This is Christian unity. This social unity rests on the brotherhood that Jesus Christ bestowed on people in calling them his brothers, his friends...” (NP 2,14)

Reading between the lines we can discover in the Encyclical Letter references to the Eucharist.

The Pope cites a famous text of Saint John Chrysostom, who expressed a challenge which faces us as Christians: live the faith that leads to openness of heart to brothers as a guarantee of an authentic openness to God. Saint John Chrysostom in a homily on the Gospel of Matthew wrote: “Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold.” (FT 74) This text is clearly related to the Eucharist.

The Pope invites us to face seemingly enormous difficulties by not acting alone, individually. “The Samaritan discovered an innkeeper

who would care for the man; we too are called to unite as a family that is stronger than the sum of small individual members.” (FT 78) He invites us to give consistency and strength to the ‘we’ of our common home (cf. FT 17 and 35), to work “all together” (FT 8).

This “we” of which the Pope speaks has in the eucharistic celebration a great school in which we pray as a family. In the liturgy this “we” is prominent. During the eucharistic celebration I learn to no longer think of beginning from “my-self”, but of “we”, thus to become and construct the “we”.

It is for this that we pray “our” Father, for “our” daily bread. This prayer breaks down barriers between us and our neighbours, and enables us to enter into the divine life to which we are called.

And finally, the Pope invites us to ask “God to strengthen in the interior of the Church unity, which is enriched by differences that are harmonized by the Holy Spirit’s action.” “We cannot forget Christ’s desire ‘that they may all be one’ (cf. Jn 17:21). (...) Even as we make this journey towards full communion, we already have the duty to offer common witness to the love of God for all people by working together in the service of humanity.” (FT 280)

The Eucharist is par excellence the sacrament of unity. Father Eymard was deeply convinced of the vitalizing force of the Eucharist to build brotherhood and unity, stating: “in the Eucharist we are all brothers with our first born [Christ].” (PP 43,2)

Here are some other expressions of his convictions:

“Worship of the Blessed Sacrament establishes everywhere (...) a fraternal bond of charity” (CO 1488,2). “The Eucharist is the fraternal bond of people among themselves; they are brothers at the sacred banquet, at the foot of the altar; this is nothing other than a family” (RA 19,7). “The Eucharist is bread, the common fare, linking all the children. Remove it and there is no longer brotherhood” (PP 36,1)

“Isn’t it the Eucharist that must also restore society? (...) It reunites friends, at this common table, the place of the heart’s outpourings. This is what makes the table divine: rich and poor meet here irrespective of privilege of standing, because we are all disciples of Jesus Christ. The Eucharist is thus the centre of people’s lives. Take away the Eucharist, there is no more a bond. See why brotherhood began in the Cenacle.” (PD 32,5)

For Father Eymard the fruit of communion is charity, love. In commenting on the text of the Gospel of St John, “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15,12), he said: “True charity can only come from God’s love; naturally a human being is selfish. Charity is the divine fruit of the Eucharist. The Church of Jesus Christ is the home of everyone, the paternal home; the meeting place of all members of the family. At Mass Jesus Christ gives himself, is immolated for all so that we may learn how to give ourselves, dedicate ourselves for our brothers, members of Jesus Christ. At Communion Jesus Christ gives himself entirely to each one to make us brothers, members of the one same body. This is where the charity of a Christian and the priest is inspired, where it is nourished each morning.” (PC 12,9)

A calling to the Eucharistic vocation is a call to unity. Father Eymard made this very clear to his nuns, the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament: “Your different characters, your different education, all this must express unity, you are the wheat of God, as Saint Ignatius martyr said it is necessary that you are ground so that all are made into the same flour and the same Eucharistic bread. (...) You should only form one heart and one soul [cf. Acts 4:32]; but if, sadly, you are not united by divine charity, if you fail to understand and support each other, oh! then that would indicate that you would not be the ones God chose, and then you would no longer be my daughters, but I hope that such a misfortune will not befall you.” (PS 49,2)

Father Eymard's interpretation given to bread, which Christ used in instituting the sacrament of the Eucharist, is appropriate in the perspective of fraternity and unity that we are called to build up.

“As a loaf is formed by many grains of wheat, so the Church's society consists of many members of the faithful who are pure and without mortal sin, bound together in unity by charity. By means of the bread, a threefold union is signified regarding brotherhood or bond of charity among the faithful:

1. The gathering of the finest and similar grains signifies natural fraternity, all born from one and the same father.
2. The moistening of flour with water to make it dough refers to the brotherhood of the sacraments, by which all become regenerated in the same sacrament of the Church.
3. The baking of the bread by means of the action of fire indicates the spiritual fraternity of all becoming united by the same spirit into the Christian religion.” (NP 61,8)

In a very individualistic culture the Church presents a kind of “antidote” that converts the faithful's minds and hearts and continually sows in them the logic of communion, service, sharing, making them resonate and resound with the music of the Gospel.

Pope Benedict XVI in the Apostolic Exhortation “*Sacramentum Caritatis*” wrote that union with Christ realised in the Sacrament opens up to us a newness in social rapports because the “mysticism” of the Sacrament has a social character. “All who partake of the Eucharist must commit themselves to peacemaking in our world scarred by violence and war, and today in particular, by terrorism, economic corruption and sexual exploitation. (...) Precisely because of the mystery we celebrate, we must denounce situations contrary to human dignity, since Christ shed his blood for all, and at the same time affirm the inestimable value of each individual person.” (n. 89)

Choose brotherhood in every circumstance

“Life, for all its confrontations,” Pope Francis wrote in his Encyclical Letter, “is the art of encounter” (FT 215) The music of the Eucharist is composed of the notes of communion, fraternity, being made up of genuine relations and bonds of fidelity. “Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfilment except ‘in the sincere gift of self to others.’ Nor can they fully know themselves apart from an encounter with other persons.” (FT 87)

During his sojourn in Rome when trying to negotiate for the Cenacle of Jerusalem, Father Eymard received a letter from Father de Cuers, his first companion. We do not know the content of this letter. But Father Eymard’s notes enable us to appreciate the extent of the distress and suffering provoked by this letter received on 9 March 1865. Father Eymard speaks of “the tempest that for an hour assailed him,” coming from this “dear confrere, who does not see beyond his old ideas.” It is only by allusions that we may discern Father de Cuers’ hostile attitude of towards Father Eymard, but they suffice to enable us to perceive the suffering he endured.

Father de Cuers was unsparing in reproaching Father Eymard for his slowness in dealing with the issue of the Cenacle of Jerusalem, and he was far from sharing Father Eymard’s vision of the Eucharist. Father de Cuers was rather for “a purely contemplative life,” the opposite of Father Eymard’s understanding about the Eucharist being “a hearth and flame” (cf. CO 1030), contemplation and apostolate.

Apropos Father de Cuers’ attitude Father Eymard began praying: “I cast myself down before our Lord’s feet. I prayed with him in the Garden of Olives: *May this cup pass from me* [Mt 26:39]. I repeated: *Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine.*”

Then, he adopted an attitude of silence in imitation of Jesus Christ. “I must become silent, suspending my judgment until I see the matter clearly in God, in the cold light of truth, in the peace of charity and

within the holiness of the law.” (NR 44,91) Father Eymard suspended every kind of judgment and tried to regard persons, events, issues through God’s eyes.

His notes make us understand how Father Eymard lived his relationship with the “dear confrere,” who made him suffer. He becomes for us a model to “develop a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and divisions.” (FT 215) “I thanked our Lord” – Father Eymard went on to write – “for this tempest that from time to time creates waves.” Even amid these most painful trials he remained grateful, maintaining a eucharistic attitude. “I had to recite the *Miserere* while prostrate with my arms in the form of the cross. What a turmoil! This cannot come from our Lord’s spirit and it would be for me the cause of many sins if God did not hold me in check, and for the Society the cause of much trouble perhaps. How hurt I have been, and grieved and stung by his manner, by his principles, by his contradictory words, all of which cannot justify a state of irritation, an inclination to humiliate him; that would be too personal.”

Father Eymard also examined what was going on in his soul, he tried to understand the motive of his reaction, the reason this letter gave him so much pain. He applied what the Pope wrote in his Encyclical about how to live out forgiveness and reconciliation in conflicts. “Each of us should realize that even the harsh judgment I hold in my heart against my brother or my sister, the open wound that was never cured, the offense that was never forgiven, the rancour that is only going to hurt me, are all instances of a struggle that I carry within me, a little flame deep in my heart that needs to be extinguished before it turns into a great blaze.” (FT 243)

After examining his attitude, Father Eymard turned his regard to his dear confrere. “Besides, he is acting and believes that he is doing the right thing. Here is a soul who grasps onto what he believes is best, and who is afraid to surrender at discretion. God does not give him this light; he is not responsible. I have been wrong in wanting to be far superior with him.” Thus, Father Eymard made the effort “to recognize

the other's right to be himself and to be different," as the Pope put it (cf. FT 218)

And finally he resolved to abandon himself, in silence, to prayer. He prayed and excuses: "What I must do is to become silent, awaiting occasions shown by divine Providence... This requires leaving the matter of others and observe only silence, patience, kindness, charity and by means of prayer obtain what I must not seek to obtain by the sword. But I must not reveal my little trial to anyone. This would be to strip the petals of the flower." (NR 44,93)

Even in this difficult relationship with Father de Cuers, Father Eymard did not weary of being fraternal; he did not let the fact of being the superior override fraternal love, meekness, but preferred to cultivate kindness (cf. FT 222).

In his Encyclical Pope Francis speaks of benevolence as the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22). He states that this expresses "an attitude that is gentle, pleasant and supportive, not rude or coarse. Individuals who possess this quality help make other people's lives more bearable, especially by sharing the weight of their problems, needs and fears. This way of treating others can take different forms: an act of kindness, a concern not to offend by word or deed, a readiness to alleviate their burdens. It involves speaking words of comfort, strength, consolation and encouragement and not words that demean, sadden, anger or show scorn." (FT 223) "Kindness ought to be cultivated; it is no superficial bourgeois virtue. Precisely because it entails esteem and respect for others, once kindness becomes a culture within society it transforms lifestyles, relationships and the ways ideas are discussed and compared." (FT 224)

During the days of "storm," in his path of choosing fraternity, Father Eymard was helped by the Virgin Mary. He invoked her assistance to overcome his suffering. In the same way the Pope wrote: "For many Christians, this journey of fraternity also has a Mother, whose name is Mary. Having received this universal motherhood at the foot of the

cross (cf. Jn 19:26), she cares not only for Jesus but also for ‘the rest of her children’ (cf. Rev 12:17). In the power of the risen Lord, she wants to give birth to a new world, where all of us are brothers and sisters, where there is room for all those whom our societies discard, where justice and peace are resplendent.” (FT 278)

Father Eymard reflected on the attitudes of Mary, who acted like her Son, her charity was the charity of Jesus. “She thought the thoughts of Jesus. She lived in a union of virtue and of work with Him; she busied herself interiorly only with Jesus or for Jesus or in Jesus. And then she was so gentle, so humble, so much at the service of everybody. She was aware of what Jesus was to suffer; she knew who were His enemies, His executioners, and yet she never let on that she knew; she was kind even to Judas. Hers was the charity of her divine Son. I prayed to this good Mother for the spirit of meekness, her meekness, her calm, her patient prudence and wisdom; I prayed to be delivered of this temptation. I took the resolution to think no more of my troubles or of their causes, to excuse him, to exonerate him, to praise his virtues, to act in all simplicity and *brotherly fashion*. And to confess my wretchedness before God. I am the one that is sick and in need of remedies, the one that is feverish and in need of pacifying, the one that is high-strung. A ruffled self-love is at the bottom of all this.” (NR 44,94)

Father Eymard resolved in regard to his confrere to act “simply and fraternally.” It was not a question only of excusing or justifying him, but also of appreciating his values. Again, the priority is brotherhood. “In this way (...) goodness leads to a peaceful conscience and to profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties and misunderstandings. Even when affronted, goodness is never weak but rather, shows its strength by refusing to take revenge.” (FT 243)

Father Eymard concluded this path of fraternity by contemplating Christ’s love in the Eucharist; he set himself to abide in this love. The centre of love consists in Christ giving himself to us in the sacrament of the Eucharist. “Oh! Yes, to be gentle I will look at the Eucharist. I

will eat this divine manna to have an abundance of sweetness, gentleness, as my day's provision that I greatly need." (NR 44,101) "I will look... I will eat..." wrote Father Eymard. We can think of contemplation and communion. The Eucharist teaches us love and kindness. The Eucharist must be regarded as being brimming over with this. Indeed, kindness, tenderness, as Pope Francis puts it in his Encyclical, "is love that draws near and becomes real. A movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands [...] Tenderness is the path of choice for the strongest, most courageous men and women." (FT 194)

Throughout the celebration and contemplation of the Eucharist we exercise the love that springs up in the heart and flows into our eyes, ears, hands; we make the music of the Eucharist resonate and resound, we always discover the strength to take part in constructing the universal brotherhood. Thus, following Father Eymard's example, we can become "stars shining in the midst of darkness." (FT 222)

15 December 2020

Father Manuel BARBIERO, sss

Translation in English by Fr Michael Parker

INDEX

Make the music of the Eucharist resonate and resound

Citations *Fratelli Tutti* (FT)

FT 271 - FT 272 - FT 277 - FT 274 - FT 275

Contemplate Christ 6

Jesus, brother of all of us 6

Citations *Œuvres Complètes* (OC)

NR 44,102 - RS 12,26 - RA 17,2

Jesus, the Good Samaritan 7

Citations *Œuvres Complètes* (OC)

PD 15,2 - PO 1,3 - PD 14,11 - NR 44,97

PE 2,19 - PD 15,2 - PD 14,14

Citations *Fratelli Tutti* (FT)

FT 56-86 - FT 77 - FT 78

The Eucharist: fraternal atmosphere and sacrament of unity 9

Citations *Œuvres Complètes* (OC)

NP 2,14 - PP 43,2 - CO 1488,2 - RA 19,7 - PP 36,1

PD 32,5 - PC 12,9 - PS 49,2 - NP 61,8

Citations *Fratelli Tutti* (FT)

FT 74 - FT 78 - FT 17 - FT 35 - FT 8 - FT 280

Choose brotherhood in every circumstance 13

Citations *Œuvres Complètes* (OC)

CO 1030 - NR 44,91 - NR 44,93 - NR 44,94 - NR 44,101

Citations *Fratelli Tutti* (FT)

FT 215 - FT 87 - FT 243 - FT 218

FT 222 - FT 223 - FT 224 - FT 278 - FT 194



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