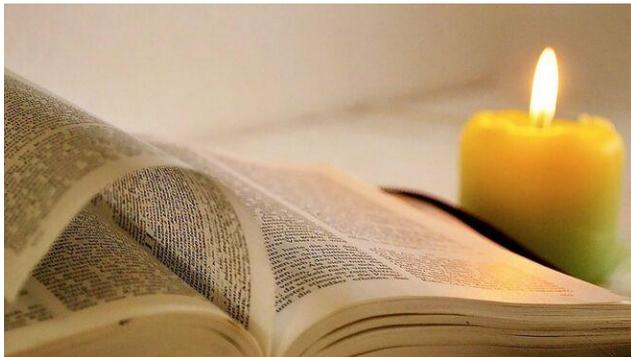


Fr. Manuel Barbiero, sss

***“The word of God is... one of
the greatest graces”***

**Holy Scripture
in the life and spiritual experience
of St Peter-Julian Eymard**



Original text in Italian
English translation: **MICHAEL GAUDOIN-PARKER**
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Pasch of the Lord Jesus!

Dear Charismatic Eymardian Family!

“Father Eymard is revealed as a mystic
nourished by the Word of God!”

As a true Easter gift, we place this important contribution from our Blessed Sacrament brother, Father Manuel Barbiero sss. into your hands. Inspired by the Apostolic Letter in the form of the *Motu Proprio APERUIT ILLIS* of our Holy Father Pope Francis, of 30 September 2019, which inaugurated the SUNDAY OF THE WORD OF GOD, Fr. Barbiero presents us a rich reflection on the power and importance of the Bible in the life and mission of Father Eymard.

We know how much Father Eymard studied and meditated on the Word of God throughout his life. The fruits of this intimacy he had with the Word can be seen in all his writings where quotations from the Bible abound as the basis of his teaching. We can say that Father Eymard’s biblical formation, acquired through his self-taught method, was the great impetus enabling him to go beyond the Eucharistic *devotionalism* of his time, while it led him to a Eucharistic witness and mission that founded his charismatic identity and his three foundations.

Make the most of these reflections presented here, to enrich the times of meetings, studies, community retreats and formation meetings. Those feeling motivated by this text are encouraged to produce new studies and reflections and share them with us, thereby fostering the spiritual and missionary growth of our Charismatic Eymardian Family.

Our gratitude to Father Barbiero and greetings to all Blessed Sacrament Brothers and Sisters.

Fr Eugênio BARBOSA MARTINS, sss
Superior General

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

The Word of God has, today, a most important place in the life of our Christian communities and of every disciple of Jesus Christ. We recall that in the month of October 2008 a Synod was held in Rome on the theme: “The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church.” Indeed, the Church is rooted in the Word of God, from which it springs and lives.

“It must be acknowledged” – wrote Pope Benedict XVI in the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* (30 September 2010), – “that in recent decades ecclesial life has grown more sensitive to this theme, particularly with reference to Christian revelation, the living Tradition and sacred Scripture. Beginning with the pontificate of Pope Leo XIII, we can say that there has been a crescendo of interventions aimed at an increased awareness of the importance of the word of God and the study of the Bible in the life of the Church, culminating in the Second Vatican Council” (n.3).

On 30 September 2019, the liturgical memorial of St Jerome, at the beginning of the sixteenth-hundred anniversary of his death, Pope Francis published an Apostolic Letter in the form of a *motu propria* entitled *Aperuit illis* (“He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” – Lk 24:45), by means of which he established that “the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time is to be devoted to the celebration, study and dissemination of the word of God” (n. 3).

Father Eymard lived in an epoch in which a great importance was not being accorded to the Word of God, especially in the Catholic Church. But we can state truly that the Word of God constantly nourished his life. In his writings, in his

notes, in his preaching, he systematically used biblical quotations, showing that he had a great familiarity with the Word of God. He is thus revealed as a mystic nourished by the Word of God.

In the “Complete Works” 17,830 biblical references have been identified.¹

On 2 March 1861, during the annual retreat, Father Eymard stated: “*Let us thank our Lord Jesus Christ for all the graces he has poured upon us so far, and particularly that of receiving his divine word*” (PR 12,1). And again: “*The word of God is a grace, and it is one of the greatest graces*” (PG 17,3).

The Word of God in Father Eymard’s life

Father Eymard was always attentive in listening to God in his Word. We find this attentiveness to God speaking in the Scripture, already at the beginning of his priestly ministry. In his notes at the time of the retreat in preparation for priestly ordination, in July 1834, he wrote: “always have a phrase from Holy Scripture at hand, some passage from Holy Scripture” (NR 7,5). This represents a valuable help about being always absorbed in a holy and useful manner.

As a priest in the diocese of Grenoble, Peter-Julian devoted great importance to the Scriptures; during a week of retreat at the shrine of Our Lady of Laus, in June 1837, he noted: “*He will meditate his law day and night [Ps 1:2]. A priest who spends one day without reading Scripture has wasted that day*” (21 June 1837, NR 9,7).² Outlining a rule of life for a priest, he

¹ At the end of this reflection there is provided a list of the main references to the Sacred Scriptures.

² Failing to pay attention to the Sacred Scripture seems to have been a recurrent problem in Father Eymard’s time. As a Marist religious he indicated: “Today, another reproach is

wrote: “Every day, read attentively and in an orderly way, at least two chapters of the Sacred Scriptures” (Rule of life for a priest, NP 34,1).

When he was a young parish vicar, he set out for himself methods for reading Sacred Scripture: every book of the Bible will be started and finished; the Old and New Testaments will be read together; a notebook will accompany the reading to record the difficulties encountered and then find a solution.

“Sacred Scripture must be read during the course of the year, using the pure Latin text. Take note of the difficulties that are met and resolve all of them on the fixed day of the each week (on Monday); this will prevent cutting into this precious study; and, in order to organize things, a separate notebook will be carefully kept. (...) The historical books, the Prophets (the choice of some books of Wisdom) etc., will not be broken up, but finished once they are started. (...) The order will that found in the Vulgate (it will open the day). (...) For the study of Sacred Scripture, the Old and New Testaments will not be divided, that is, 3 chapters from the Old and 1 from the New (...) the Psalms will not be included in the year-long course, they are treated separately” (March 1837, NV 3,33).

As parish priest of Monteynard, he wrote: *“We must use the doctrine of the Fathers: it is the Gospel explained; the same for the history of the saints: it is the Gospel put into practice; the same for profane history, but like mushrooms: very few and well-timed; the same for natural history, for comparisons, etc. In order of important, the Scriptures rank first: it is the foundation of the building”* (7 January 1839, NV 11,2)³.

made against the clergy; they say: the young clergy know everything, except the Bible and its theology – a reproach they really deserve” (PM 9,11).

³ A text from the Second Vatican Council may be cited as echoing this assiduous relationship to Scripture: “Therefore, all the clergy must hold fast to the Sacred Scriptures through diligent sacred reading and careful study, especially the priests of

Father Eymard's written statement we find in this period seems to me very interesting: "*All Scripture must be read in the same spirit that dictated it. With humility, with simplicity, and with faith*" (NV 3,34). For this passage recalls what the Second Vatican Council stated in the Constitution on Revelation: "Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred spirit in which it was written" (DV 12).

Pope Francis himself refers to this number of the document *Dei Verbum*: "The work of the Holy Spirit has to do not only with the formation of sacred Scripture; it is also operative in those who hear the word of God. The words of the Council Fathers are instructive: sacred Scripture is to be "read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit through whom it was written' (*Dei Verbum*, 12). God's revelation attains its completion and fullness in Jesus Christ; nonetheless, the Holy Spirit does not cease to act" (*Aperuit illis*, n. 10). And he adds: "When sacred Scripture is read in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written, it remains ever new" (*idem*, n. 12).

After entering the Marists, during the Corpus Christi procession on 25 May 1845, while carrying the Blessed Sacrament Father Eymard asked the Lord to give him the spirit of the letters of "*that great lover of Jesus Christ,*" St Paul, and made the commitment to read at least two chapters from them daily.

A little later, it was always St Paul who inspired Father Eymard in preaching on the excellence of the Word of God, as he put it: "Saint Paul indicates for us the excellence of the apostolic

Christ and others, such as deacons and catechists who are legitimately active in the ministry of the word. This is to be done so that none of them will become "an empty preacher of the word of God outwardly, who is not a listener to it inwardly" since they must share the abundant wealth of the divine word with the faithful committed to them, especially in the sacred liturgy" (DV 25).

word with these three words: 'It is the word of God, a living and effective word' [cf. He 4,12]" (PG 15,1). In this sermon Father Eymard would develop the three characteristics of Scripture: the apostolic word is the Word of God, a word of life, an efficacious word (cf. PG 15,2-6).

We shall return to this point later.

The Word of God nourished Father Eymard during his spiritual journey. We can recall another important moment of his life.

Father Eymard was in Rome (November 1864–March 1865) concerning the great matter of acquiring the house considered as the site of the Cenacle in Jerusalem and to request permission to found a community of the Congregation there, where according to tradition the Eucharist had been instituted.

As the matter dragged on. Father Eymard took advantage to undertake a personal spiritual retreat during the time available, deciding to spend it at the Redemptorist monastery, near the basilica of St Mary Major. He remained there for sixty-five days.

The Word of God of the liturgy of the day, the feast of the conversion of St Paul (25 January), began the retreat, opening the door with the question: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10)

Father Eymard set himself to listen to the Holy Spirit addressing him in his life.

We can detect a double movement, like an ebb and flow. Sometimes Father Eymard starts from a Scripture text on which he meditates and sometimes it is the Word of God that nourishes and confirms his own insights. At other times he puts together texts on the same theme. He feeds on the Word that he quotes by heart. The texts that he prefers are from the psalms, the prophet Isaiah, the gospels, in particular Saint John, and Saint Paul.

Apart from St Paul, who enters the scene already on the first day, other biblical figures illuminate his path: Abraham who leaves his homeland and is ready to sacrifice his son Isaac; Jacob always on route, the Servant of the Lord, the family of Nazareth, Mary at the time of the Incarnation and Saint Joseph, father, guide and protector, the one hundred and forty-four thousand who follow the Lamb on Mount Zion.

In the meditation on 24 February, Father Eymard reflects on the Word of God (cf. NR 44,63).

The Word of God is Jesus Christ, who himself is the Word, the Word of the Father. “[Our Lord] was the Word of the Father, *Verbum Patris* (cf. Rev 19:13). He repeated this divine word with respect: it is divine and holy. He repeated this divine word with love, for it was a grace, *the words that I speak to you are spirit and life* (Jn 6:63). He repeated it with authority, for it was meant to sanctify the world, to create it anew in the light of truth, to rekindle it in the fire of love, and to judge it one day. *Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road?* (Lk 24:32). The word of Jesus is spirit and life (Jn 6:63) it is all-powerful. *If My words abide in you, ask whatever you ask and it shall be done for you* (Jn 15:7). *He spoke and it came to be* (Ps 33:9). The words of Jesus Christ were the rays of this sun of truth. *I am the light of the world* (Jn 8:12). They were light in the midst of darkness.”

Father Eymard was not satisfied only to listen to God, to his Word. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, he understood that he had to allow this word to dwell in him until he became transformed and himself become the word of Christ for others: “That is what I must be for my brethren and my neighbor: the *verbum Christi* (cf. Col 3:16). That is what the Apostles were. *For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you* (Mt 10:20). *The Holy Spirit will teach you all things*

and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (Jn 14:26). Saint Paul: *Let the word of Christ dwell in your hearts* (Col 3:16). I must therefore listen to this interior word of Jesus Christ, understand and repeat it, listen to it with faith, accept it with respect and love, transmit it with fidelity and confidence, with meekness and power.”

The action of the Word of God is never separated from the Holy Spirit’s action. The Spirit, a gift of the Father, acts in us, brings about a revolution, a new creation, and a new birth. Father Eymard continues:

“Our Lord did only the actions which the Heavenly Father commanded and determined to the last detail, - *I do nothing on my own authority* [cf. Jn 8:28], (...) And why then should not I, His apprentice, do what He does, the way He does it, and for the reason He does it? (...) But that calls for a change of command, of leadership, of principle; a revolution is in order, one of sheer power that resorts to fire and chains and brings about the death of the ‘old self’. How should I proceed? - *The Holy Spirit will come upon you* [Lk 1:35] *and will clothe you with power from on high;* [Lk 24:49].”⁴

Father Eymard concludes this meditation by committing himself: “to read the word of God with a very deep respect and to pronounce with affection the liturgical prayers of Holy Church, inspired as they are by the Holy Spirit; it is the prayer of the Holy Spirit offered by His spouse” (NR 44,63).

Towards the end of his life (April 1868) the Word of God, read, meditated, prayed, and lived, becomes an experience of resurrection.

⁴ The connection of these two verses is interesting, the first concerning Mary, the second the apostles.

After a period in which he experienced God's silence, a long night of faith, Father Eymard rediscovered the God of love who speaks to him. God manifests himself, grants him "a hearing of mercy", bestows on him the grace of prayer, speaks to him, reveals himself, offers him proof of his love, because he treats him as "as a bosom friend" (NR 45,1) .

This experience of God's friendship recalls in some way what the Second Vatican Council declared: "The invisible God (see Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; Jn 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself" (*Dei Verbum*, n. 2).

God manifests his love by addressing men; his word creates a covenant, friendship, and communion.

The Word of God and Eucharist

In his preaching Father Eymard relates the Word of God to the Eucharist.

Jesus Christ "has incarnated and personified himself in his truth, and the word that reveals this adorable truth becomes his second body." In this passage Father Eymard quotes Tertullian ("When the Son of God gave us his living word, he also called it his flesh"), then Origen, who said that the Word that nourishes souls is a kind of second body with which the Son of God has clothed himself: "The bread that God the Word affirms to be his body, is the Word that nourishes souls" (PG 14,16).⁵

Father Eymard demonstrates his thorough understanding about the "two tables," the table of the Word and that of the

⁵ At the bottom of the page, someone else wrote this commentary: "I find this wonderful; (...) the word is like the host, Jesus Christ is hidden under the species of the word, as under the species of bread."

Eucharist. The Eucharist and the Word give us the whole person of Christ.

“In the pulpit of truth, he proclaims his law, and on the altar he sanctions it in his blood. Here, Jesus Christ has himself adored in the truth of his body, while there he has himself recognized in the truth of his doctrine. From one and the other of these two tables, he distributes to the children of God a heavenly food: on the altar, by the efficacy of the Holy Spirit and by some mystical words that make us tremble as we think of them, the gifts that are presented are transformed into the body of our Lord Jesus Christ; here, by the same Spirit and by the power of the divine word, the faithful of Jesus Christ are to be secretly transformed, in order to become his body and his members” (PG 14,17).

The Word of God is worthy of our respect and our love; to it is due the same reverence and the same love as is given to the Body of Christ.

“This divine word, my brothers, is therefore worthy of our respect and our love, and our gratitude to God should be great. Ah! Let us be careful not to desecrate it, because, as St Augustine says, ‘the one who neglects the word of God is as guilty as the one who deliberately allows the body of Jesus Christ to fall to the ground’. (...) And why? Because, says this great Doctor, the word of God deserves from us as much respect as the body of Jesus Christ (Sermo. 300, n° 2)” (PG 14,18).

Hence he concludes: “Love this divine word, my brothers, (...). Listen to this sacred word with faith, (...). Imitate Mary, who meditated constantly the divine words ...” (PG 14,18).

Benedict XVI, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, recalls that “the profound unity of word and Eucharist is grounded in the witness of Scripture (cf. Jn 6; Lk 24), attested

to by the Fathers of the Church, and reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council” (n. 54).

Furthermore, he states: “Word and Eucharist are so deeply bound together that we cannot understand one without the other: the word of God sacramentally takes flesh in the event of the Eucharist. The Eucharist opens us to an understanding of Scripture, just as Scripture for its part illumines and explains the mystery of the Eucharist. Unless we acknowledge the Lord’s real presence in the Eucharist, our understanding of Scripture remains imperfect. For this reason ‘the Church has honoured the word of God and the Eucharistic mystery with the same reverence, although not with the same worship’” (n. 55).

Pope Francis, in *Aperuit illis* (n. 8), stated: “The journey that the Risen Lord makes with the disciples of Emmaus ended with a meal. The mysterious wayfarer accepts their insistent request: ‘Stay with us, for it is almost evening and the day is now far spent’ (Lk 24:29). They sit down at table, and Jesus takes the bread, blesses it, breaks it and offers it to them. At that moment, their eyes are opened, and they recognize him (cf. v. 31). This scene clearly demonstrates the unbreakable bond between sacred Scripture and the Eucharist. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, ‘the Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures as she has venerated the Lord’s body, in that she never ceases, above all in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the word of God and the body of Christ’ (DV 21).”

The Word of God is alive and effective

I have already mentioned that Father Eymard, taking his cue from Saint Paul, had spoken of the Word of God as a living

word that is life-giving. It is not a sterile word, a dead word, but a word that contains the beginning, the very wellspring of life.

To recall some of his statements. “The divine word – the object of scandal and folly for the ungodly – is for the chosen ones, for us, the strength of God. It is our most precious treasure and the delight of our life. Ah! Jesus Christ used to say: Happy those who listen to the word of God and practice it [Lk 11:28]; they have found eternal life” (PG 15,1).

What makes the Word of God a living word “is that it is not a sterile word, a dead word, but it is a living word that contains the principle of life. What makes this apostolic word living? It is the grace that it contains, and that becomes the principle of our life. It is through this word of truth that God has given us birth as children of God, says St James c. 1: *He wanted to give us birth through a word of truth* [Jas 1:18]. It is this word that infuses in us the gift of faith, develops it, and nourishes it: *Faith is born from preaching, and preaching comes from the word of Christ* [Rm 10:17]. It is this word that St Augustine calls so well as the vehicle of grace. And this explains the mysterious words of Jesus Christ: ‘The words that I have given you are spirit and life’ (Jn 6:63), ‘he who listens to my word has eternal life’ (Jn 5:24)” (PG 15,4).

The Word of God in spiritual direction

The Word of God has a great importance even in the counsels Father Eymard imparted to persons who approach him as a spiritual guide. He invited them to read “*a bit more often*” the Holy Scriptures to love them.

“There is only one thing for you to do in order not to regress, but to advance; it is to give yourself to the spiritual life, to the life of recollection, to meditative readings, like Sacred

Scripture; you really ought to read it a little more often; buy the Bible of Carrieres. Keep this principle of life in mind; you will be happy in God's service only by an interior life of prayer and love" (letter to Natalie Jordan, 4 December 1863, CO 1323).

Father Eymard gives a precise indication about the version of the Bible: that of Carrières. Luigi Carrières, a priest of the Oratory, born in Angers in 1662 and died in 1717, became famous because of his literal Commentary on all the books of the Bible. It was an entirely new attempt of its kind, being an endeavour to explain the biblical text and put it within the reach of the simple faithful.

Giving directions about the monthly retreat, he writes to a person: "Love to read Sacred Scripture; this reading helps the soul aspire toward God, feeds it, keeps it delightfully occupied" (letter to Mrs Maréchal, 25 October 1866, CO 1859).

"I advise you to read sacred scripture often, both the Old and the New Testaments, and also whatever you can find in French from St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Jerome, such as his Letters. Read them; they will really help you. We must listen to the word of God in its divine source" (letter to Virginie Danion, 24 February 1867, CO 1924).

In preaching to the seminarians of the major seminary of Digne, he quoted the declarations of two Councils regarding the Holy Scriptures: "Sacred Scripture Council of Cologne: May the Holy Bible never leave their hands [and may they apply themselves to understand it]. Conc. Aachen [Aix-la-Chapelle] can. 2: The ecclesiastical doctor must shine both in his doctrine and in his life. In fact, doctrine without life makes him proud, and life without doctrine makes his useless" (PE 11,3).

In the Constitutions, Father Eymard, setting out instructions regarding studies to religious and to those who exercise the ministry of preaching and confessions, recalls the

importance of reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture, by which one must be nourished in order to fulfil one's service well.⁶

Finally, Sacred Scripture contains an inexhaustible treasure from which are drawn fitting words for prayer: "That's what scholars do: they take a text of Sacred Scripture and find there abundant material to praise the Good Lord; or choose some beautiful passage from St. John in the Apocalypse like: Glory, honour, and power to the Lamb that was slain [cf. Rev 5:12-13], etc. This pleases the Good Lord; we honour him by using the words that he himself inspired" (conference to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, 10 November 1866, PS 620,4).

Conclusion

A witness stated that Father Eymard's respect for the Holy Scriptures was remarkable: "He always carried on him the Gospel of Saint John."⁷

Father Eymard did not know an expression of modern exegesis, the "ipsissima verba Iesu" (Jesus' exact words), but he said: "when you find words that the Saviour has pronounced, say them with love, adoration, and almost kneeling! They were conceived, eaten, and digested by God. I know a holy man who carried on his heart, copied by hand, all the words that Jesus Christ had pronounced" (25 June - PP 63,4).

Today we practise the method of the "Lectio divina". One point of this method is called "ruminatio" [chewing over]. Though he did not know this method, but Father Eymard spoke

⁶ Cf. RR 78,14 78,25 78,26 79,2.

⁷ This gospel of Saint John can be seen in the permanent Expo at La Mure. Its frayed edges give the impression of how frequently Father Eymard read this gospel.

in a meditation to the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament about “ruminating”:

“You must always reflect (...). Look at what our Lord said at the Last Supper: If you remain in me and my words remain in you, reflect upon them, digest them, whatever you want will be done (cf. He. 15:7). How will this take place? Look at the Blessed Virgin: And Mary kept all these things in her heart (cf. Lk. 2:19,51), that is to say, she pondered them as if to see and savour them in her heart, if you wish, because the word of God is life, to be laid hold of. Reflect then, as Mary did. (...). And that’s why the soul which always reflects upon this word of God has an intrinsic, inexhaustible supply” (PS 641,8).

Fr Manuel Barbiero sss

Malmantile, February 5, 2022

Abbreviations used in the writings of Fr. Eymard
(*Œuvres Complètes*):

- CO** Correspondence
- NP** Personal notes
- NR** Retreats and personal Notes
- NV** Notes of the *Vade mecum*
- PE** Preaching to ecclesiastics
- PG** Preaching
- PP** Public Preaching
- PR** Preaching to SSS Religious
- PS** Preaching to SSS Servants

The list of the most frequent biblical references

Of the 5.086 references in this index, 101 references, namely 2%, by themselves alone total 4.061 quotations, or 23% of the 17.830 biblical quotations of the body. Here are the references that appear most often (more than 50 times):

- 1) 178 times Ga 2:20: "It is no longer I, but Christ living in me [...] He loved me and gave himself for me."
- 2) 139 times Mt 11:29: "Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."
- 3) 95 times Jn 14:6: "I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me."
- 4) 94 times Col 3:3: "You have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God."
- 5) 89 times Jn 15:5: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing."
- 6) 83 times Mt 16:24: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me."
- 7) 80 times Mt 28:20: "[...] teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."
- 8) 77 times Jn 6:56: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in that person."
- 9) 74 times Mt 11:28: "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest."
- 10) 74 times Lc 12:49: "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!"
- 11) 64 times Mt 6:10: "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven."
- 12) 63 times Jn 6:57: "As the living Father sent me and I draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will also draw life from me."
- 13) 59 times Ph 2:7: "[Christ Jesus] emptied himself, taking the form of a slave. [...]"

14) 59 times Mt 19:21: "If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, then come, follow me."

15) 57 times Jn 14:21: "Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and reveal myself to him."

16) 53 times Dt 6:5: "You must love [Yahweh] the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength."

17) 53 times Hos 2:16: "I will lead my beloved into the desert and speak to her heart."

18) 52 times Jn 14:23: "Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him."

19) 51 times Ac 9:6 (Vulg.) [Ac 22,10]: "What am I to do, Lord?"

Questions for personal consideration:

- * Which biblical quote do you think was the most significant in Father Eymard? Why?
- * What place does the word of God in the Bible hold in the course of your day?
- * Are there biblical texts that have played an important role in your life? Which ones and why?

Final Prayer:

"Your words, Lord, are spirit and life."

Father Eymard throughout his whole life drew strength and inspiration from this inexhaustible wellspring.

He lived intensely your Word, becoming thus for us an eloquent witness of your love. Enkindle in our hearts the ardent desire to know better what you have revealed to us and how to live from it as our daily nourishment.

Praise to you, Lord. Amen.

