

The Eucharist and St. Peter Julian Eymard

Adoration, Our Time Apart With Christ

by **Bernard Camiré SSS**

Perhaps it was on a torrid summer's afternoon with the disciples experiencing hunger and physical weariness that Jesus said to them: *"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile."* And, as Mark's Gospel tells us, *"they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves."* Though the Gospels mention it only occasionally, it was surely with some frequency that Jesus invited his disciples to spend some time apart with him in quiet repose and intimate conversation. Jesus used these special times, away from the hustle and bustle of public places, to provide more detailed instruction and spiritual sustenance for the disciples. These were times when he could open his heart to his intimate friends and reveal the mystery of his person.



Since the Middle Ages the Church has quite perceptively viewed Eucharistic adoration as opportunities for present-day disciples to share the benefits and delights of the original disciples during their times apart with Jesus. Today, we are fond of emphasizing – and with good reason – that the real and abiding presence of the Eucharistic Christ, outside the time of Mass, is one that flows from and leads us back to that profound communion we had with Christ at Mass. Our times of prayer before the Eucharistic Christ are wonderful opportunities to reflect on a love, Christ's love, that embraced a horrendous suffering and crucifixion; wonderful opportunities to lay bare our hearts to Christ and to reflect on our struggles with sin and our efforts – often grinding efforts – to return love.

Among the saints of the 19th century who understood the great value of prolonged prayer before the Eucharist, Peter Julian Eymard was second to none. With exceptional insight, he understood its value for the personal spiritual growth of the Christian and for the far-reaching benefit of the Church. The personal example and teaching of St. Eymard leave no doubt that he was a fervent man of prayer and an outstanding adorer of the Eucharistic Christ. Those who witnessed his appearance at Eucharistic adoration testified to his physical quiet and his steady, enraptured gaze at the Host.

It is difficult to summarize in a few words St. Eymard's teaching concerning Eucharistic adoration, but let us attempt to sketch a few distinctive features of that teaching. First of all, Eymard declares: *"Adoration is the glorification of the Holy Eucharist . . . (it) is the homage that the adorer gives*

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with the whole of his being, body and soul; it is adoration that is interior, exterior and public." Secondly, St. Peter Julian quite perceptively taught that the prayer that we offer in Christ's Eucharistic presence ought to reflect the aspects of prayer that unfold in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He states: *"The purpose that we propose in our little society"* – he's referring to his newly-founded Congregation – *"is to give honor to our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament by means of the four ends of sacrifice: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, supplication."*

But Eymard also stressed that behind the fourfold expression of praise to the Eucharistic Christ – whether that expression is interior or exterior – there must be present a genuine love. He wrote: *"Since the Holy Eucharist is the blessed fruit of the love of Jesus Christ to bring forth love, it is with love that we must adore and glorify him."* Lastly, it is important to point out that St. Peter Julian had no wish to straight-jacket the praying Christian, the adorer, into one restrictive method of prayer. He recognized that the prayer of the fervent Christian is something that develops, something that is swelled and moved along by the breath of the Holy Spirit. And so, he counseled that *"the best way of adoring Our Lord . . . is that which the Holy Spirit inspires and fosters in a humble and upright heart."*

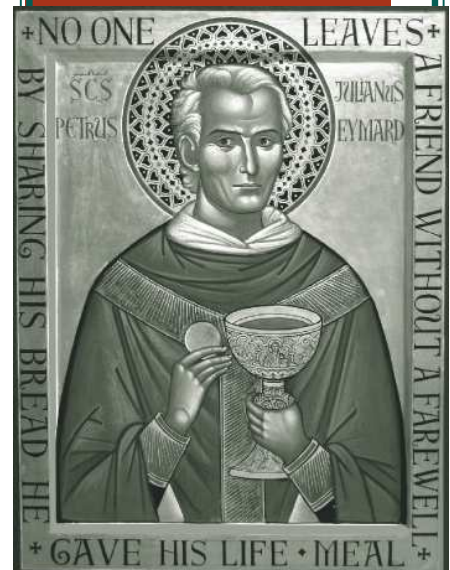
Many people, today, even among Christians, look for meaning and security in what is visible, tangible and immediately gratifying; they look to what produces quick results. This frame of mind, then, impacts negatively on their attitude to prayer, especially mental, contemplative prayer. True contemplative prayer is never a flight or withdrawal from reality, from the realities of daily living. Rather, it draws our attention into reality. True contemplative prayer helps us to overcome our temptations to flee our responsibilities; helps us to advance in a genuine sense of faith, trust, hope and love in our relationship with God. And if this is true for all authentic Christian prayer as such, it is particularly true for prayer in the presence of the Eucharistic Christ. Eucharistic adoration has been called a contemplative pause inserted between the celebration of Mass and the living of Christian life. It is that prayerful opportunity to internalize what we have celebrated; that opportunity to let Christ's example of absolute love of the Father and of his unbounded love for us shape and transform all aspects of our life.

"Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile." Those are words that Jesus continues to address to us, his present-day disciples, and what better place to rest in prayer than before the Eucharistic Christ. It is not necessary to spend a lot of time in adoration. Even fifteen minutes each day, or a few days a week, can be something pleasing to God and of great benefit to us. Time spent with the Sacramental Christ in adoration – if we truly let it engage our attention and affection – is bound to have a powerful impact on our lives. What Jesus did for his first disciples, he continues to do for us: he enlightens us, inspires us, nourishes us, strengthens us. If we purposefully and regularly dedicate some time to prayer before the Eucharistic Christ, we cannot but leave his presence as better, more fervent Christians and spirited members of his Church, as more effective signs and instruments of his Kingdom to the world around us. ❖

*Saint Peter
Julian Eymard*

Anniversary of
Birth:
February 4, 1811

We honor Saint Peter Julian Eymard, our saintly Founder on the 200th anniversary of his birthday and baptism. Peter Julian, throughout his life, celebrated the anniversary of his baptism rather than that of his birth.



Anniversary of
Baptism:
February 5, 1811