

RETREAT NOTES

St. Peter Julian Eymard

Retreat of Saint Maurice

April 27-May 2, 1868

From the French critical edition

Introductions: E. C. Nuñez, S.S.S.

Critical edition: E. C. Nuñez, S.S.S.

A. Garreau, S.S.S.

Translation: William LaVerdiere, S.S.S.

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NIHIL OBSTAT

Rev. Wilfrid Thibodeau, SSS
Censor Deputatus

IMPRIMI POTEST

Very Rev. Normand Falardeau, SSS
Provincial
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FOREWORD

On the occasion of the centenary of St. Peter Julian's death, His Holiness Paul VI honored him - and us - with an autograph letter, dated July 19, 1968. He praised our Founder and his life work, and expressed "wonderment at what, under the pressure of a certain supernatural instinct, he accomplished for the glory of God and for the good and honor of the Church." Furthermore, the Holy Father viewed this centenary as a providential occasion for our filial piety to honor our Legislator by greater fidelity to his way of life, to set greater store by his example and ideals, and above all to make the most of the spiritual legacy he has left us.

It remains for us to comply with the counsels of the Vicar of Christ by implementing them. I suggest that the best way to do. So is to *begin* by acquiring a more complete knowledge and deeper understanding of who St. Peter Julian is and what he stands for. We can get off to as good a start as any by familiarizing ourselves with St. Peter Julian's RETREAT NOTES. As he meant them for no eyes other than his own, he jotted them down with utmost candor and merciless honesty. Nowhere else does he reveal so clearly the key thoughts and sentiments which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, oriented his soul to God and to sainthood.

To understand these NOTES and profit by them, we should read and study them in the spirit in which they were written. They are not the studied expositions of a professor bent on exploring or solving theological problems; they are merely the authentic record of what St. Peter Julian experienced in his soul as he communed with his Eucharistic Lord and of what he resolved to do for Him. If only for that reason, these NOTES should prove of untold value and interest to us; for in committing them to writing, St. Peter Julian was unsuspectingly painting a faithful likeness of himself and of what a Blessed Sacrament religious should be.

We are all aware that although our sanctification and salvation depend on our free acceptance of grace, they are primarily the work of God. As St. Augustine has it, "God begins by moving our will to act, and while our will is acting, He perfects, its action by working with it."

The RETREAT NOTES read like a running comment on this Augustinian principle of "holiness in action." They tell us of the promptings, of the Holy Spirit in St. Peter Julian's soul and of the latter's active response. Neatly outlined for us to see are the ways and byways along which St. Peter Julian plodded resolutely to the summits of holiness. As we follow him step by step, we cannot help but wonder to what divine lengths God's love is ready to go to transform any clot of a man into a saint; indeed, the basic ills and problems of our Founder, as catalogued in these NOTES, are recognizedly very much our own. We need not think less of St. Peter Julian because of that; for much of what he had in common with us at the outset, he gradually transformed or discarded before crossing the finishing line. Neither for that matter should we think less of ourselves; we may be "of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot," but what is impossible to man can be the speciality of the "Designer Infinite" - if only we let Him knead and model the clay.

I profit by the publication of the RETREAT NOTES to express my sincere appreciation to those who have made it possible. I am referring first of all to Father Eugenio Nuñez, who devoted months to painstaking study of the original manuscript and to often thankless research into the history of these three retreats. I also have in mind Father William LaVerdiere; he alone knows the countless hours spent in trying to convey in English the exact thought of St. Peter Julian Eymard. To Fathers Nuñez and LaVerdiere, this has been a labor of love; perhaps that is what accounts for the excellence of their work. While congratulating them, I also pray that these meditations may be a source of light and strength to all our religious.

Roland Huot, S.S.S.
Superior General

Rome, August 3, 1968

RETREAT OF SAINT MAURICE

Contents

Introduction	1
1 - Topography and history of the house of Saint Maurice	1
2 - Our Founder at Saint Maurice	1
3 - The retreat of our Founder	2
4 - Actuality of the retreat of Saint Maurice	3
<hr/>	
<i>First day</i>	
First meditation: Grace of graces	4
<i>Second day</i>	
First meditation: Graces	5
Second meditation: Eucharistic faith	5
Third meditation: Eucharistic vocation	6
<i>Third day</i>	
First meditation: Cause - the mind	7
Second meditation: Gift of the mind	7
Third meditation: Silence	8
<i>Fourth day</i>	
First meditation: Humility and its enemy	8
Second meditation: Examen and nature of this enemy	9
Third meditation: Self-love	10
<i>Fifth day</i>	
First meditation: Virtue of positive humility of Jesus	11
Second meditation: Contrition	11
Third meditation: Life of prayer	12
<i>Sixth day</i>	
First meditation: The sin of pride, its nature	12
Second meditation: Serving God	13
<hr/>	
Appendix: Public Worship of Adoration	14
Appendix: Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament - our Patron	15

RETREAT OF SAINT-MAURICE

INTRODUCTION

1-Topography and History of the House of Saint-Maurice

“What is known as the ‘little chateau of Saint Maurice’ - an elegant structure, surrounded with a beautiful park and looking out on the Rémarde Valley and the dusky hills of Saint Chéron - was built by Mr. de Soye, who died in 1845. Some years later (1866) the Congregation of the Most Blessed Sacrament bought the chateau and established its novitiate there.... The official name of the Commune is Saint-Maurice-sous-Montecouronne” (*Saint-Maurice*, monograph on parish, by Father Boireau, Saint Cloud, printed by Girault, 1912, p. 8-9, 5. - In France, the smallest territorial division is called a Commune).

The description of the house and the history of the foundation are common knowledge, thanks to the biographies of our holy Founder. (See Troussier, Vol. II, p. 458-463; Trochu, p. 370-375.)

Father Tesniere wrote in 1909: “At the end of 1866 Father Eymard had the consolation of realizing two projects he had in mind for quite some time: the transfer of the novitiate from Paris to the countryside away from the noise and bustle of the metropolis and its distractions; and at the same time a house of solitude for the religious who felt called exclusively to a life of adoration without involvement in the ministry” (*Grande Vie du P. Eymard*, p. 1003).

Father Eymard himself wrote to Father de Cuers on June 28, 1866: “I am writing to break the news to you and your fathers and brothers that we have bought a house with a park two hours out of Paris.... It is a stroke of Providence, for we have there all we need for the novitiate and, later, the house of solitude” (Lett. I, p. 191).

The house was inaugurated on December 25, 1866, with Exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament at midnight. Father Michel Chanuet, Master of Novices, had been appointed its first Superior on December 22.

In his *Grande Vie* Father Tesniere adds: “The premature death of Father Eymard prevented him from making of Saint-Maurice a house of solitude properly speaking, which was to consist of professed religious dedicated to adoration only and to the following of a stricter Rule, in some respects, than that of other houses” (p. 1014). - (Awaiting the final resurrection in the cemetery of Saint-Maurice are the bodies of Fathers de Cuers, June 21, 1871, and Leroyer, March 3, 1879, and of the laybrother novice Antoine Ravannat, May 28, 1867.)

Father Tesniere informs us (p. 1008) that in 1866 the main section of the Commune of Saint-Maurice numbered “hardly a hundred families”; today (1967) the population is still about the same.

2 - Our Founder at Saint-Maurice

Father Tesniere goes on: “But whether as a novitiate or as a house of solitude, Saint-Maurice was a haven of all the delights of solitude enriched with the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament, and during the 18 months he (Eymard) had yet to live, he made of it his favorite spot” (p. 1014).

It was to this refuge of silence and solitude that our Founder withdrew on April 27, 1868, in order to make his personal retreat (Lett. III, p. 146).

The first part of the year 1868 had been a period of exhausting ministry, of illness and of crosses. Father Chanuet, Master of Novices and Superior of the house, wrote the following comment: “It was then that feeling the need of a more complete rest at the feet of our Lord, he came

to Saint-Maurice to make a retreat; his soul was much comforted thereby and even his body regained some strength” (Notes of Father Chanuet on the life of Father Eymard).

And Father Tesniere: “Three months before rendering an account of the stewardship of his life before the tribunal of God, Father Eymard, in spite of his weakened and suffering condition and of the works of the apostolate which kept multiplying as if to contend for the last hours of his toilsome life here below, managed to take time out for his annual retreat, which he had been unable to make for two years. He retired to Saint-Maurice in the silence and peace of solitude, in the warm and gladsome atmosphere of a house of adoration in all its fervor. He took the room which opened on one side towards the Blessed Sacrament exposed and he immediately felt immersed in the grace of the retreat, for which he blessed God with a hymn of thanksgiving.” (Father Tesniere inserted here a transcription of the first meditation of the retreat - *Grande Vie*, p. 1070.)

And Father Eymard’s own words: “I arrived here today for seven days to make my retreat and rest a bit at the feet of our Lord; this will do me good to body and soul” (Lett. III, p. 146).

He began his retreat at “3:00 in the afternoon” (Troussier, *Curriculum Vitae* of Father Eymard, April 27, 1868) and closed it Saturday, May 2 (Lett. III, p. 185; see also Lett. III, p. 396, IV, p. 79).

In the course of this retreat, our Founder spoke several times to the novices. According to Father E. Tenaillon’s notes, the following is the list of the subjects dealt with.

April 27 - Conference by Very Rev. Father Eymard: “The end of the Society. Go to Jesus Christ through Jesus Christ.”

April 29 - Chapter by Very Rev. Father Eymard on adoration, “Our vocation, our *raison d’être*.”

April 30 - Notes of a conference by Very Rev. Father Eymard on the “Month of May.”

May 1 - Retreat by Very Rev. Father Eymard. Two talks on humility.

May 2 - Conference by Very Rev. Father Eymard: “Contemplation.” Sermon by Very Rev. Father Eymard: “Contemplation.”

3 - The retreat of our Founder

Except for the few lines transcribed by Father Tesniere with occasional quotations from the text and for the certainly slanted pages of Father Trochu (p. 397-8), the Retreat of Saint-Maurice has never been, to our knowledge, the object of serious study. In the first edition of his life of St. Peter Julian, Father Troussier allotted 14 pages to the “Great Retreat of Rome” (p. 529-542, Ch. 12, “On the Summits of Divine Union”) but disposed of the Retreat of Saint-Maurice in a few lines - the same we may now read in the edition extant. The lack of a reliable text may in large measure account for this neglect.

We have no intention of making of this retreat a study in depth which, by possibly lacking due objectivity in its interpretation and orientation, could lessen the full import of the text itself.

All we shall do is to offer a few indications and norms which, we believe, may help us to study this important document with historic objectivity and relive it in our own lives.

To begin with, the Retreat of Saint-Maurice was a real retreat, structured and organized as such. In this it differs from the “Great Retreat of Rome” which, as stated in its introduction, was an “occasional” retreat. Since, as Father Tesniere informs us, Father Eymard had been unable to make a retreat for two years, we may reasonably infer that he determined beforehand the nature of this retreat and, in doing so, selected topics we should consider as of some moment in his spirituality.

Possibly the most significant point about this retreat is that Father Eymard made it only three months before he died. He had then attained a degree of spiritual maturity, a level of sanctity, where an intense and profound life of union with God had grown into something of a workaday reality, a

normal experience in his life. He lived in their fullness the baptismal grace and the theological virtues, and his soul responded to the compelling action of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

That is why the Retreat of Saint-Maurice - and we say “mystical” in the strict sense of the word - takes on a mystical character that is impressive by its richness and realism. In the few studies and references to be found in this or that biography, we note a tendency to consider this retreat as a retreat of the “dark night of the soul,” in which our Founder did nothing other than suffer spiritually from aridity and mystical anguish. There is no doubt that some of its pages are indicative of such a state, but it seems to us that to stop at this one consideration is to view this retreat in a perspective that is both incomplete and insufficiently objective.

We are of the opinion that in the Retreat of Saint-Maurice our Founder was favored with a vivid experience of God’s love and of his response to that love through eucharistic service as a vocation. At the very opening he wrote: “He wants to treat me as a bosom – friend”; in the first meditation of the second day: “God has given me so many graces up to now; how He has loved me! To excess”; in the second meditation of the same day: “Yes, my heart has always loved Jesus-Hostia; no one else has ever possessed that heart”; and in the second meditation of the third day: “I have never understood as I do now in what consists the gift of the mind to Jesus.... How good He has been to reveal this to me!” We could go on quoting other texts in the same vein.

But on the other hand, this experiential grace of enlightenment, concerning God’s love for our Founder, was so intense, so clear that his soul was distressed and felt a real mystical anguish at the sight of his ingratitude, of his failure to correspond; set against this divine light, his imperfections took on undue proportions and were for our Saint the reason and cause of acute suffering and deep sorrow, even to the point of tears, as he himself jotted down. Moved by grace and mystical sensitivity, Father Eymard painted in very dark colors this state of his lack of love for God, of his ingratitude, of his abuse of grace, of his “guilt complex,” as we would put it today.

We do not think that in drawing this somber picture, somewhat “pessimistic” in tone, Father Eymard acted from a certain morbid disposition, but that in the light of the radiant splendor of the love of God in His eucharistic Presence, he believed subjectively and sincerely that he was such as he described himself to be in his psychological and spiritual self-analysis.

If on the one hand it is true, according to Father Trochu (p. 398), that “plunged into the ‘dark night,’” Father Eymard found himself “worse than before” - and Father Trochu follows up this statement with quotations from St. John of the Cross - we should, on the other hand, keep in mind the valuable testimony of Father Chanuet, Superior of the house of Saint-Maurice, who was standing by during this retreat and wrote very simply: “He (Eymard) came to Saint-Maurice to make a retreat; his soul was much comforted thereby.” And referring to this retreat, Father Tesniere stated: “This period of rest close to God, so keenly enjoyed by his (Eymard’s) soul” (p. 1081).

That is why, if we consider the Retreat of Saint-Maurice as a whole, we may say that our Founder was blessed with an experience of God’s love and of the greatness of eucharistic service - surely the fundamental and principal grace of the retreat - and that this experience, by its illuminating grace and the close union of Father Eymard with God, led him to magnify the imperfections of his soul to a degree that seems excessive and exaggerated.

4 - The actuality of the Retreat of Saint-Maurice

We shall shortly celebrate the centenary of our Founder’s death, as also of the Retreat of Saint-Maurice, the text of which is now (1868) being published.

In his message on the occasion of the centenary of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul, His Holiness Paul VI said: “What moreover makes it a duty for Us to call attention to this centenary is the now universal custom of commemorating persons and events that have left their mark on history. Viewed in the distance of the years elapsed and in the closeness of the memories still

attaching to them, these events offer profitable lessons on the value of human things to whoever ponders them wisely and relives them after a fashion. These lessons are often clearer to the posterity that now valorizes them than they were to those who lived through them without always being able to understand their full import. In view of the present emphasis on the 'sense of history,' we are more readily given to this sort of speculation. At the same time reverence for sacred traditions, which is one of the chief elements in Catholic spirituality, can but intensify the evocation of memories, fill the mind with fervor and inspire resolutions whereby an anniversary becomes a celebration replete with joy and piety. As a result we truly desire to relive these ancient and revered events, and our vision takes in the entire horizon of the past and of the future, unified as it were according to some hidden plan whereby that vision receives its ultimate significance in the Communion of the Saints" (Doc. Cath., March 19, 1967, col. 483).

Meditation on this retreat and the actualizing of it in our lives should help us "celebrate" the centenary of our Founder.

For the Catholic Church, the Year of Faith is the concrete formula for the celebration of the 19th centenary of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul; for us a year of faith in the grace of the Founder could constitute, in the light of the Retreat of Saint-Maurice, one of the forms of celebrating our centenary.

Likewise, just as the post-Conciliar era must be a time of constructive self-examen and of generous sincerity, so the Retreat of Saint-Maurice, with its examens, its sincere resolutions, its plan of action, can be for us a program and a grace. For to all has been granted "sufficient" grace to live in their fullness the authentic values of our vocation in the Church: contemplative eucharistic adoration, the apostolate of the Eucharist through the Eucharist.

May the Retreat of Saint-Maurice, from which we learn how much our Founder suffered, contribute to the "appropriate renewal" called for by the Church, by helping us to work at it in depth, in a spirit of faith and of sacrifice – the indispensable conditions of the love of God, of "perfect charity," and the soul of all "appropriate renewal."

Rome, Christmas, 1967
E. C. Nunez, S.S.S.

RETREAT OF SAINT-MAURICE

April 27-May 2, 1868

April 27 - First meditation

Grace of graces

1 - By offering me the grace of a retreat, God gives me the greatest proof of His love for me; since He is pleased to admit me into His presence and grant me a hearing of mercy, He wants to forgive me; since He gives me the grace of prayer, He wants to hear my prayer and sanctify me; since He wishes to converse with me, to reveal and manifest Himself to me in prayer, He wants to treat me as a bosom friend. The grace of a retreat is then one of God's greatest favors.

2 - I have a very great and pressing need of a retreat.

I feel that my soul is distraught and tempted, my heart empty and discouraged, my will sluggish in duty, my body slothful and sensual.

I feel that my conscience is vague and doubtful, my piety languishing and superficial, my resolutions worthless and ineffectual.

The reason is that I am all taken up with exterior things, devoted entirely to my neighbor, to what flatters my nature and my vanity.

I feel that God is not too pleased with me, that His service of adoration is suffering, that I am neglecting His glory and His grace. So that I am a useless servant, an unfaithful religious, a negligent and scandalous Superior. Everything suffers from my remissness.

I am therefore in a state that leads to tepidity, to sin, to my ruin. Oh! How I need this retreat!

I shall give myself entirely to it, to it alone, to every part of it. *Benedictus Deus qui non amovit orationem meam et misericordiam, suam a me* (Blessed be God, because He has not rejected my prayer or removed His steadfast love from me - Ps. 66, 20).

Second day - First meditation (from 6:00 to 7:00)

Graces

God has given me so many graces up to this day!

How He has loved me! To excess!

What has He refused me? Nothing. What is He not giving me presently!

I love Him little and He loves me tenderly.

I dishonor Him by my life, and He honors me all the more by His gifts.

I serve Him so badly, and He keeps me at His service as if I were a devoted servant.

I am lax and so unfaithful to my duties, to the honor of His glory, and He leaves me the honor and power of it.

He has entrusted me with the glory of the Society. Alas! I rob this glory and barter it! And all my Master is left with is a faithless servant and a slothful minister.

Which of us two will tire of the other? Shall it be I?

What has been the reason for my corresponding so poorly with His grace?

I have never given myself absolutely, totally! I have served God for my own glory.

I have served God from self-love.

I have never taken up the practice of the humility of Jesus resolutely and perseveringly. I wanted to be “somebody” with Him, through Him; that is the “old nature” at its worst in me.

O Mary, you have led me and given me to Jesus; you must now give me once again to Jesus whom I have lost.

Second day - Second meditation (from 10 to 11)

Eucharistic faith

The greatest grace in my life has been a lively faith in the Most Blessed Sacrament from my childhood.

The grace of Communion, my desire when eight years of age to direct everything towards the Blessed Sacrament.

The grace of devotion, daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

The grace of my vocation, at Fourvière, our Lord alone in the Most Blessed Sacrament, without a religious body to watch with Him, to honor Him, to procure His glory! Why not found something, a Third Order?

At La Seyne (St. Joseph), grace of gift of self, of union, of happiness which lasted until the Apostolic Approbation - so heartening.

Grace of the apostolate, faith in Jesus. Jesus is there, therefore everything to Him, by Him, in Him.

Renewal

I asked our Lord to renew this first grace in me. Jesus is there, alone, forsaken by His own, left idle in His Sacrament.

I prayed ardently for a return of this grace; the state of my soul, now for three years so distressed, so sad, so desolate.

Yes, my heart has always loved Jesus Hostia; no one else has ever possessed this heart. But my mind, my exterior life, my all too natural, too expansive relationships, seeking to be praised for my vocation, to find consolation in souls that seemed to love Jesus, that could glorify Him in me - *there* is the grave of that first grace!

O Jesus, *de profundis clamavi ad Te* (out of the depths I cry to You - Ps. 130, 1); *ressuscita in me gratiam primam* (rekindle in me the first grace – See II Tim. 1, 6; Apoc. 2, 4).

Second day - Third meditation

Eucharistic vocation

1 - Our Lord has called me to His eucharistic service in spite of my unworthiness.

He has chosen me to work for His Society in spite of my incompetence and my poor health.

He has led me from death and by death to the life of the Society.

Everything that was thought impossible happened easily and in God's good time.

To God alone be love and glory!

2 - Evidence of graces.

God has led me gradually to the Society. He showed me its sacrifices a fraction at a time. Finally, at La Seyne, He demanded all of them, unto separation, unto the cross, unto disownment.

How gladly I said *yes* to everything after that wondrous Mass! And God accepted everything, brought everything to a successful end.

So much serenity, which lasted so many years and ever on the increase through the Eucharist, tells me God's *yes*.

The strength it generated, like the flower its fruit, assures me of God's love. Then the sacrifices of death at the thought of this project, of Rome (Father Favre). Death to the Society of Mary, so painful; death at the reception by the Archbishop of Paris after 13 agonizing days; death to self when deserted, left all alone; death in Paris when the Cardinal was minded to get rid of us (St. Theresa); death from my subjects; death at Rome on the occasion of the Decree.

The most distressing death of all (separation from my first companion); death from the loss of the esteem of Bishops because of Nemours, loss of esteem of my own brethren because of ...; death of self from the most painful trials since the - to the - (?)

And yet life follows death; it is the life of the Society and mine.

Third day - First meditation

Cause - the mind

My spiritual life is weak, sickly, dried up in me, and has been so for a long time. What is the positive cause of it? My mind.

It busied itself too much with exterior things and became absorbed in them *naturally*.

It acted by itself, beyond its natural and spiritual strength.

What was flattering to its vanity caught its fancy; what was humiliating vexed it; what it could not itself finish depressed it, overwhelmed it, paralyzed it.

Entangled in problems, it then lost the habitual presence of God; poorly nourished, piety lost its unction, its sustaining power; neglected by the mind and no longer strengthened by the heart, daily virtue ceased progressing, contented itself with observing the proprieties, keeping up a certain routine, and heeding only the warnings of conscience.

My physical health suffered much from it; my over-active mind prevented sleep, upset my digestion, and made pious exercises very trying. Activities of zeal and of exterior ministry seemed to be the virtues of the moment; they were but an escape from duty or from self, disguised under a semblance of good.

The mind wanted to do without God, to substitute for His grace. It is, then a Lucifer, a deadly enemy; I therefore declare war against it, *qui non odit animam suam* (if anyone does not hate his own life - Luke 14, 26); war against the spirit of the "old nature," against the life of its ego. Your life, O Jesus, will be the law of my thoughts, of my meditations, of my actions. - Quid vis? (What will You have me do?)

Thanksgiving

I made it on the subject of my meditation. Our Lord gave me to understand clearly that all the evil-doing had always come from the mind, and that this war of every instant would be very demanding:

that I should fight this war with the patience of humility, ever invoking the Spirit of Jesus in me;

that His divine Spirit would grow and gain strength in me in proportion to the decrease of my own spirit;

that in all things I needed first the patience of truth and the virtue of liberty of the Spirit of God to battle with all my strength this wretched spirit of independence in my undertakings, to put up with difficulties, to listen with charity to uncongenial people and not to manage by ill-timed sacrifices or good-riddance devices to be done one minute sooner than the moment willed by God.

I offered myself to our Lord in order to begin this civil war, and I asked for His grace. The sight of it all frightens me, but *ubi Spiritus ibi et libertas* (where the Spirit is, there also is freedom - See II Cor. 3, 17; *ubi spiritus mundi, ibi servitus et peccatum* (where the spirit of the world is, there also are servitude and sin).

Third day - Second meditation

Gift of the mind

I have never understood as I do now in what consists the gift of the mind to Jesus, the necessity of that gift to live the life of Jesus and to procure constantly His glory in us. How good God has

been to reveal this to me! How mortified and afflicted I was over the loss of so much glory for Jesus and of so many graces for the Society, over so much infidelity on my part.

As long as the mind is not given, neither are the heart nor the will.

Since the mind is the center, the light, it is through the mind that the devil is so powerful, through the mind that a latent concupiscence stirs up so many rebellions by conniving with everything in us that was sold out to it from the start, or with what the heart and the will inherited from Adam.

It is through the mind that the world, enemy of Jesus Christ, gets in touch with me. Therefore:

1 - Lord Jesus, I commit myself to waging a continual war against my mind by battling the thought, the desire, the memory of creatures, even under the guise of repentance, of humility, of self-examen. A habitual sanction will be the strength of this commitment.

2 - You will be my truth, my standard of judgment, the divine criterion of my examens, the law of my will, and when you are silent, I shall wait for a sign from You.

3 - But, Lord Jesus, the gift that I make of my mind is on my part a gift of death and of self-contempt. I will look on my mind as my most cunning and perfidious enemy. I curse it and will keep on cursing it since I can no more destroy it than I can the devil, and it is mine. *Odit animam* (He who hates his life - John 12, 25).

Third day - Third meditation

Silence

1 - Silence is a necessity for a life of recollection: *in silentio et quiete* (in silence and in repose - Imit. Bk. I, Ch. 20).

Silence is the guardian of purity: *in multiloquio non deerit peccatum* (when words are many, transgression is not lacking - Prov. 10, 19), against humility, or charity, or truth, or wisdom, or prudence.

Silence in time of trial and of joy is the sign of great virtue.

Our Lord talked little; the Most Blessed Virgin likewise; any prayerful soul has to make an effort to talk.

2 - In order to speak wisely, we must consult interior grace, the Holy Spirit, like our Lord who repeated the word of the Father.

Alas, I have committed so many sins against this virtue! And how will I be able to practice it?

I must consider myself only as a servant before his Master, a servant that speaks only when bidden to do so.

I shall have to think according to the grace and virtue of Jesus Christ, who is my word; His truth with His wisdom, His humility united to His charity, His simplicity joined to His prudence.

But I shall have to apply myself to sacrificing something in every conversation. *Pone Domine custodiam ori meo* (Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord - Ps. 141, 3). *Doce me silere* (Teach me how to be silent).

Fourth day - First meditation

Humility and its enemy

I have been and still am without natural, Christian, religious, priestly humility and, above all, the humility of a superior.

I have a spiritual and religious pride that thrives on the gifts, the graces and the triumphs of God in me and by me.

I have robbed Him of His glory, checked the outpourings of His tenderness, depleted the source of His graces, paralyzed the gifts of the foundation, gifts that accompany every foundation.

I am a disgrace to our Lord's choice of me, to the Blessed Virgin's offering of me to her divine Son, to the Society for its having such an unworthy Superior, to all my brethren whom I deprive of the graces of the Society since these graces must pass by the Superior to reach them.

And to boot, what has become of my vaunted virtues? My good works? All those sufferings? For whom? And to what purpose? Must one be that stupid, that cruel to him-self ! Such are the fruits of the life of my mind, of my basic ego!

Such is the reason why I have always labored in vain, without depth, on the sand, on ephemeral success.

It is high time I start burrowing beneath the surface at 57 years of age - after 11 (years of eucharistic vocation), 28 (of religious profession), 34 (in the priesthood).

At thanksgiving, act of reparation, prayer and offering. I have begun to experience the sensitiveness of such an old abscess.

Fourth day - Second meditation

Examen and nature of this enemy

A good and inspiring meditation.

I understood in this meditation that my whole retreat should bear on humility and that the best retreat is the one that concentrates only on one main virtue and the practice of it.

Natural humility is based on natural truth; it excludes all falseness of pride.

Christian humility is based on grace which comes from God alone, to whom be all honor and glory. It is therefore a heretical pride to claim the fruits of grace for oneself.

Religious humility consists in donning the royal humility of Jesus Christ and professing it, in dying in Him. To garb oneself only with the royalty of the evangelical profession is to be a pharisee that disgraces his Master, is to use that glory as Lucifer used his in heaven.

The humility of an adorer. It consists in honoring, imitating and glorifying the eucharistic self-abasement of our Lord Jesus Christ and not in decking oneself with the glory of His worship, with an austere liturgy, with the excellence of adoration; all that is but vanity unless eucharistic and personal humility goes with it; it is an insult to the sacramental state of our Lord, a lure for devout souls that take me for a true adorer.

Humility in the apostolate. It condemns what glorifies the disciple at the expense of the self-abased Master; such as flattering oneself with being a fine speaker, with explaining better, with being more eucharistic, with revealing the truths and graces hidden in the Most Holy Eucharist and

having the gift and grace to do so; being presumptuous and daring in one's statements, opinionated in discussion, appealing to one's own authority; seeking to win the confidence of eucharistic souls, a special reputation.

Oh! So much wretchedness concealed in a still more hidden abyss of vanity!

Humility of a Superior. He ought to be the most humble since he is the closest one to our Lord Jesus Christ, His prime minister, His confidant, the man of His heart and of His glory.

Profiting by my position to frequent persons of rank and flatter them; playing the aristocrat, the scholar, the man of experience, the patronizer, the man with influence, the much sought after and longed for; granting a favor; seeking only the exterior success of the Society, and stressing only the

exterior qualities of its members, the exterior aspect of the Society! All that, I must admit, is *vanitas vanitatum* (vanity of vanities - Eccles. 1, 2). And yet such is my vanity.

I wept over it at the feet of our Lord. Is it possible to fall so low? To live under such a spell? To betray Jesus Christ?

Oh! Never would I have dared think of it, or believe it, or own up to it had I not seen and experienced it!

That is where my possessive ego is in hiding.

Fourth day - Third meditation

Self-love

Self-love is what fosters pride and vanity; self-love, our original heritage, increases or decreases according to the increase or decrease of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The love of Jesus must have greatly decreased in me if I judge by the condition of my life for the last two and a half years.

My mind used to thrive on truth, on work for Jesus, on sacrifices for His glory; it was free and strong and happy; troubles did not affect it interiorly. But now it is deluged with interior troubles; it suffers from the brethren to the very depths of its being - almost like a continual temptation; the self-love of the mind is hurt, humiliated, vexed - which would not be if Jesus were its life.

And so my heart is restive, seeks human consolations, is easily influenced by expressions of esteem and of devotedness. It is too complacent when its vanity or its paltry virtue is, flattered.

Ali! When Jesus filled this heart, it did not even think of airing its troubles; nothing of them transpired; it had room but for Jesus alone. When trials arose from without or from within, a quarter of an hour before the Blessed Sacrament used to strengthen and pacify me, but today hours leave me desolate.

I find it difficult to recollect myself, to explore spiritual realities, the interior of Jesus, my own interior. I am like a sick man who can talk only of his pains or of his disappointments. I am in the negative.

And therefore interior sentiment in my adorations. is dead; my soul is ice-cold. Jesus no longer makes His beautiful sun shine upon me. What a drudge I am!

But how has the love of Jesus diminished in me? By the decrease of the life of prayer, of adoration. Its light weakened little by little from lack of fuel; the warmth of prayer cooled off from the rareness of it.

Insufficiently nourished in my travels and in exterior ministry, my soul had but a superficial life, or a life that lived in the past and not at all in the present, existing on others, off others, and by others.

Then heavy trials struck and I failed to rise above them and sanctify them in prayer.

Creatures rebelled and I went on sleeping like Peter in the Garden of Olives.

Others have pitied me or over-esteemed me, and I listened too much to them. My innermost heart longs for God. *De Profundis clanzavi* (Out of the depths I cry - Ps. 130, 1). That is the truth.

Fifth day - First meditation

Virtue of positive humility of Jesus

Jesus espoused humility. He honored it and loved it in everything. It is by humility that He will cure us, sanctify us, and glorify us; it is the sign of the divine Covenant, the norm of our union with Him,

His exterior humility manifested itself in the poverty of His condition. He loved what was ordinary, poor, lowly.

He kept to perfection the humility of silence for 30 years; and in His evangelical life, He spoke only in obedience to His Father, in the absolute humility of His human nature.

Such are the three rules of exterior humility that I must practice.

A poor and ordinary exterior. Examine what I have for personal use: a tendency to own things that are too fashionable under futile and vain pretexts. The longer wear of finer materials is a religious heresy, a specious pretext of vanity. I have to amend on this point.

Silence of humility. Never speak well, and still less, speak ill of myself; never allude to myself in my sermons or in my directions, for humility has no part in all that; be simple, serious, godly in conversation, and not *jocosus*, *garrulus*, *vanus*, *pedagogus* (jocose, garrulous, vain, pedantic); all that is prejudicial to holy recollection and disturbs the soul; one cannot pray after that.

But how acquire this humility of Jesus? Through Jesus, with Jesus, for Jesus.

Fifth day - Second meditation

Contrition

Here is a distressing truth: what pride contaminates, it destroys forever; it is like the fire of a conflagration, eradicans genimina (burn to the root all my increase - Job, 31, 12). *Deus superbis resistit* (God opposes the proud - James 4, 6; 1 Peter, 5, 5).

Hence it follows that the merit of good works is destroyed by the pride which does them, that graces paralyzed by vanity are lost forever, and that God will be forever deprived of the glory which an active humility would have given Him.

It follows too that for God and for man pride is the sovereign evil, deserving of supreme contempt and hate, and that hell is neither terrible nor lasting enough to exterminate it.

Reverting to myself and to the sad effects of my vanity, I grieved much over it all before God - but the thief has escaped, taking everything with him forever.

I examined the losses which spiritual pride inflicted upon me, the sure and imminent dangers to which it exposed me and into which I would have fallen but for an extraordinary grace from God, who blinded me that I might not see, threw me into a torpor that I might not feel, left me in my illusion that I might not see what was evil. That is more than enough to make one want to flee from this danger, to open one's eyes, to gape in wonderment and to abandon oneself to God's good pleasure.

Life of prayer

My soul looks outside itself because it suffers interiorly. It suffers from the silence of our Lord. This long silence distresses it and causes it to flee from its interior. That interior is drying up. *Aruit tanquam testa virtus mea* (My strength is dried up like a potsherd - Ps. 22, 15).

Just as a slight coolness between friends keeps on ever increasing by their mutual silence, and they end by avoiding each other and dreading to seek the reason why.... Such is the state of my soul with our Lord. So that it has no courage for duty, no confidence in what it does, and would while away its time outside itself in order to keep its mind off what ails it.

Oh! How I could do just now with prayer of repose at the feet of the Master; *venite seorsum in desertum locum et requiescite pusillum* (Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while - Mark 6, 31); a repose at the feet of Jesus that craves for His grace, His goodness, His mercy, one look of love from Him; a quiet and peace for my whole being, a loving and refreshing repose. I enjoyed a brief moment of that repose.

How I long for that other prayer the Savior speaks of: *Ducam, dilectam in solitudinem et ibi loquar ad cor ejus* (I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her - Hosea 2, 14).

As soon as I tried to enter that "wilderness," the evil one got into a dither, and disturbing images came. I gave battle and fought back frantically. There is an old leaven in this heart of mine, and not enough purity, peace and thanksgiving.

I accepted that as a well deserved suffering. I would be too happy.

The sin of pride - its nature

Initium omnis peccati superbia (Of all sin pride is the root - Sirach, 10, 15 - Knox; The beginning of pride is sin - Ibid. 10, 13 - RSV; Knox notes that the order of these verses varies in different manuscripts and that their sense cannot be certainly established).

Sins of the mind. - Personal vanity.

Sins of the heart. - Confidence sought, conceitedly held on to and bragged about. Weakness in obliging others.

Sins of the will, - Sloth in duties that balk self-love, that interfere with a congenial task, that humiliate.

Sins in exterior relationships. - Too much eagerness when they are congenial, too little when they are boring.

Contrition

Glory of God thwarted; ingratitude; unfelt sorrow; the "old nature" is unyielding, possessive, seeks to gratify itself.

How humiliating! Such is the dimension of these pharisaical virtues that seek only to be in a thankful mood.

Our Lord does well to keep me in this unfelt sorrow, in this unfelt humiliation. It shows me how very puny is the "new nature" in me, like a little child that does not realize what it loses by the death of its father and assists with indifference at his funeral or his agony.

Alas! I must learn to understand the harm done by the levity of my mind and how everything in me suffers from it.

Sixth day - Second meditation

Serving God

I must have order in my life; order is the law of justice.

The service of Jesus Christ before all else; the spiritual life of my soul before any work of charity.

The family before the neighbor; the Society before the individual.

Consolidate before extending and perfecting; the foundations before the roof; beware of temptation to the contrary.

Make of adoration the very center of my life; prepare my adoration as one prepares a meal, an important address.

The soul of my adorations: the gift of self, the virtue that glorifies His eucharistic self-abasement.

Add to the hourly invocations the renewal of the three flowers of my retreat: humility, purity, fidelity.

Important resolutions

Pray exclusively: is out of place and diabolical every thought of something to be done, of decisions to take, of counsels to give that may come to me at Office, at prayer, at adoration.

Work in peace and liberty; without servility as without haste; indifferent to annoyance, to success.

I am God's handyman.

With my neighbor: endeavor to get others to talk and to talk little myself, and reproach myself even that little, and chastise myself if I have talked about myself.

APPENDIX

Public Worship of Adoration

A function performed in the very name of the Church

Letter of Pope Paul VI to the Very Rev. Roland Huot, S.S.S.

To Our Beloved Son:

Inasmuch as it contains truly, really and substantially the very Author of grace, the saving sacrament of the Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church. It so dominates the minds of the faithful that they understand less from lengthy argument than from a certain insight that the worship of adoration should be offered to it. Indeed, through the worship of latria of the Eucharist is fostered and intensified the virtue of religion, by which the faithful soul acknowledges the transcendence and dominion of its Creator over nature and strives in all humility to keep its rightful place as a creature.

This adoration is also manifested by the body, which is offered “as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Rom. 12:1); as St. Thomas Aquinas says, “Because in all acts of religion the external act is referred to the internal act as to the more important, exterior adoration is performed because of interior adoration; in other words, the bodily signs of humility which we perform increase our desire of submitting to God” (*11-IIae, Q. 84, a. 2*).

By making it their duty to adore Christ the Lord, present in the divine Sacrament, the religious of the Congregation you govern, Beloved Son, and of other like Societies, greatly strengthen the Catholic faith against those who deny God by their doctrine or their way of life, or who make light of the faith and belittle it while pretending to defend it.

But in order to set things in their true perspective, we should remember that adoration is not to be separated from the total Sacrament or Mystery of salvation “which is Christ ... the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27); in other words, the Eucharist should be considered not only in what pertains to the Real Presence, but “in all its fullness, both in the celebration of the Mass and in devotion to the Sacred Species which remain after Mass and are reserved to extend the grace of the sacrifice” (*Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, no. 3g*). Wherefore, adorers prolong Eucharistic worship even outside the sacrifice in order to gather more plentifully the fruits deriving from it and to share in it more effectively. But if our daily life is to benefit from a more copious flow of this heavenly strength, we must also practice the virtues; in point of fact, when we offer devout worship to Christ hidden in the august Sacrament, we receive an increase of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, which dispose the soul more fittingly, “with all due devotion, to celebrate the Memorial of the Lord and receive frequently the bread given us by the Father” (*Instruction, no. 50*).

Moreover, this adoration - which, as already said, extends the grace of the Eucharistic sacrifice - is beneficial to the entire community of the Church. The prayers addressed to Him who is “Emmanuel” (*God with us*), exposed on the altar, are truly “catholic” inasmuch as they concern the universal Church and the whole world. We know this from history. For the prayers which the churches of Rome took turns in offering to this august Sacrament for 40 consecutive hours, in the year 1592, were approved and encouraged by Our Predecessor, Clement VIII, precisely to implore heavenly assistance for mankind in most difficult times (*Bull. Rom. V, 1, Rome 1751, p. 142*). Eucharistic adoration cannot therefore be satisfied principally with the furtherance of personal piety, but it “impels the soul to cultivate a ‘social’ love by which we give preference to the common good over the good of the individual, make our own the interests of the community, of the parish, of the Church, and extend our charity to the whole world because we know that everywhere there are members of Christ” (*Mysterium. Fidei, no. 69*).

Entrusted by a special and Church-approved charter with the mission of offering public worship of adoration to the sacrament of the Eucharist, let these Institutes and Societies keep in mind that they are performing a most excellent function, and are doing so in the very name of the Church. If

these religious live up to their vocation devoutly, faithfully and constantly, their life, no less than that of those who are dedicated exclusively to contemplation or to works of the apostolate, “appears as a sign which can and ought to attract effectively all the members of the Church.... To all men it shows ... the surpassing greatness of the force of Christ the King and the boundless power of the Holy Spirit” (*Cons. on the Church*, no. 44).

There is no reason therefore why the religious engaged in this super-excellent service of adoration should lose heart in our day as though - we hear it said time and again - such a service were an “obsolete devotion” and sheer waste of time when there is much more pressing work to do. Let them be assured that the Church stands in as great a need as ever of those who “worship ... in spirit and in truth” (*John 4:23*). And let them as much as possible endeavor with all due diligence to observe faithfully the rules and precepts We have laid down in this matter, whether in the encyclical *Mysterium Fidei* or in the *Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery*.

Accordingly, We hope that in the coming Roman Convention of those who are to take part in a special study of the worship of the Eucharistic Mystery, the excellence of the service of adoration will be rightly appreciated and even be seen, so to speak, in a new and brighter light, that appropriate resolutions will be adopted, and that spiritual energies, so very vital to the life of the Church, will be roused to action.

With these wishes, We cordially impart to you, Beloved Son, to the religious family you govern, and to all those who participate in this Congress, the Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of supernatural strength and consolation and as evidence of our benovolence and affection.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the 10th day of the month of January, in the year 1969, the sixth of Our Pontificate.

Pope Paul VI

APPENDIX

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament

Principal Patron of the Congregations of the
Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament and of the
Servants of the Blessed Sacrament

DECREE OF POPE PAUL VI

For the record in perpetuity

In a conversation with his religious on the subject of *Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament*, St. Peter Julian Eymard, the indefatigable apostle of the Eucharist canonized last year by Our Predecessor John XXIII, declared that although this title was recent, the reality of it was very ancient. With a keen spiritual insight, fostered by a life of close union with God, the author of this significant title had fully understood the many sublime and hidden relations that unite Mary with the Sacrament of love and, in consequence, he added this new name as a precious jewel to Mary's crown.

Doubtless, he had often pondered over the Church's invocation to the Eucharist as “the true Body, born of the Virgin Mary.” Indeed, when on earth, the Virgin was the living tabernacle of Jesus Christ whom she had borne and adored, and then offered and revealed to mankind. It seems then only right that she should be revered and invoked as a model of perfect worship by every adorer, and especially by priests who are the appointed ministers of this great Sacrament. On the strength of these considerations, St. Peter Julian opened a rich wellspring of piety to the religious

Societies he had founded; and shortly before his death, he left them Mary as a heavenly patron to be invoked under that title. He moreover directed the religious of his Congregations, whose purpose is the worship of the Holy Eucharist, to honor the name, the person and the virtues of Mary, who was the first to adore the Word of God made man. We note with satisfaction that the Congregation of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament has been, and remains, faithful to this prescription of their Father Legislator.

Recently, Our beloved Son, the Procurator General of the Society, at the request of its General Council and in the name of all its religious, humbly begged Us to give solemn and public approbation to this patronage of *Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament*. We resolved to comply with this request, confident that these religious, with the help and under the patronage of the glorious Mother of God, would thereby attain the perfection proposed to them and would endeavor to the best of their ability to promote the reign of Christ.

Having therefore consulted with the Sacred Congregation of Rites, with secure knowledge and after mature deliberation, in the full exercise of Our Apostolic Authority, by virtue of these Letters and for all time, We declare and constitute the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, as *Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament*, the principal and heavenly patron before God of the Congregation of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament and of the Society of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, with all the honors and liturgical privileges attached by law to the principal patron of associates, everything to the contrary notwithstanding.

We publish and determine and decree that the present Letters are and will be final, valid and binding in perpetuity; that they shall define and secure their effects in their fullness and integrity; that they shall benefit to the fullest extent, in all things and through all things, those presently concerned as also those to be concerned in the future; that they ought to serve as a norm in making and clarifying decisions; and finally that if any authority whatever should, knowingly or not, attempt anything contrary to these Letters, its decisions are null and void. Given at Rome at St. Peter's under the Fisherman's ring, the 12th day of September, 1963, the first year of Our Pontificate.

Secretary of State
A.J. Cicognani