

## **Mr Sami Adrien Poda**

*Senegal*

A chartered accountant and financial expert in Dakar, Sami Adrien Poda assists companies in ensuring the reliability of financial information, improving internal control processes, consolidation and performance management.



His career has also been marked by a spiritual calling, received as part of the Christian Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCCR), inviting him to serve the Lord at the heart of the Church.

Sensitive to the vision, spirituality and Eucharistic charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, he joined the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament as an associate member and is involved in the *Jeunesse Eymardienne* (Eymardian Youth, the youth branch of the association within the Province of *Our Lady of Africa*). He is also in his second year of formation at an Institute of Theology for Lay People, with a view to uniting faith, theological reflection and commitment in the world.

---

## **Seduced by Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament**

*original in French*

**K**nowing how distant I am from prayer groups, a very good friend came to see me one evening in May 2022. Raising several questions, he touched on the subject of faith. After discussing the subject, he said to me: “Brother! We have formed a movement called *Jeunesse Eymardienne* (Eymardian Youth), a group whose spirituality is based on Eucharistic adoration. I would be delighted if you would take part in our next event, which is an Eymardian day”.

It was the first time I had heard of Eucharistic adoration. So as not to discourage my dear friend, I said “okay” and changed the subject. Knowing how stubborn I am, he reminded me every day of the date of the next meeting. To please him, and so that he would leave me alone, I decided to take part. The meeting began with a teaching session, followed by a Bible quiz and a fraternal meal, and ended with Eucharistic adoration.

### **An unexpected encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist**

My faith? I had a little. Catechism, first communion, even confirmation, Sunday Mass, and as a bonus, the rosary; nothing more. While I attended this meeting so as not to frustrate a very good friend, an encounter took place.

The place where the meeting was held was discreet. Inside, about twenty young people sat in silence. Some prayed on their knees, others with their eyes closed. In front, on the altar, a host was displayed in a golden monstrance. At the time, I didn't know that this was what was called “Eucharistic adoration” because it was my first time.

I sat at the back, feeling a little uncomfortable. It wasn't a Mass. There were no speeches. No loud music. Just a deep silence. A silence... filled with presence. And that's when I felt something I had never experienced before.

I can't explain it. It wasn't spectacular. There were no voices, no mystical thrills. But in that silence, in front of that strange, motionless host, I felt a presence. Someone. Someone who had been waiting for me for a long time. Someone who knew me.

And without realising it, tears welled up in my eyes. Not tears of sadness. Tears... of truth. As if, for the first time, I was really seeing myself. And that gaze upon me, that silent gaze from the altar, was not judging me. It loved me. Just as I was. With my escapism, my emptiness, my failures.

Time passed without me noticing. When the music slowly resumed and the host was returned to the tabernacle, a strange peace came over me. My friend came over to greet me, smiling. He didn't ask me anything about the experience I had just had. He just said, "Would you like to join the Eymardian Youth?" After that, he introduced me to a priest who accompanies this movement and to the leaders.

### **School of Formation, School of Prayer and Social Impact**

At the end of this meeting, the priest who had presented the movement introduced us to the Eymardian Youth. He argued that this movement was intended to be a school of formation with a view to strengthening our faith in the face of the danger posed by what many preachers say on social media. The Eymardian Youth also aims to be a school of prayer through adoration. In addition, it aims to be a fraternal space, a place where members get to know each other, help each other, but also carry out actions for the well-being of people in need.

Given that after the sacrament of confirmation, there is no real place for Christians to deepen their faith, this setting was an appropriate place for me.

### **Curiosity leading to a slow inner journey**

In the days that followed, I returned to worship, not really out of faith, not yet. More out of curiosity. Or perhaps out of a sense of longing. What I had experienced that evening, that inhabited silence, that feeling of being connected to my truth, I had not found anywhere else. Not in my TV series, nor even in my discussions with my friends, however sincere they were.

So I came back. Discreetly. Always in the background. Always without knowing what to do. At first, it was strange. I asked myself a thousand questions: "What am I doing here? Do I speak? Do I pray? And if I don't really believe, does it make sense?"

I often sat with my hands folded, my gaze lost in the monstrance. Sometimes I looked at the others. They seemed so comfortable, so devout. I thought about the match I had refused to play in order to be at adoration, about what I was going to eat when I got home... But something held me back. A peace. A simplicity. A presence.

Little by little, I began to stay longer. I went to church more often, sometimes between noon and two. I would open a psalm at random. I would whisper from the bottom of my heart, “Lord, if you are there, teach me to know you”. And He would respond silently. Not with words, but with the way I felt when I left the chapel. Less scattered. Less hard. Less hurried.

I had many questions, which the priest of the Congregation to whom I had been introduced was happy to answer. He welcomed me simply. He listened to me without judgement, and at the end, he said something to me that I will never forget: “You don't need to understand everything right away. Keep coming. The Lord works in silence”. He even recommended some books that could help me better understand what I was going through.

Since that day, worship has become a reference point for me. It is the perfect place to submit my concerns to my friend Jesus, a time when I can let go without fear, knowing that I am being listened to and understood.

### **From disciple to witness**

The comfort, the peace, everything I felt during those moments was so immense for me. I had only one regret: “Why didn't I know this sooner?” Faced with this question, I felt the same way as the four lepers after they found the Aramean camp empty (cf. 2 Kings 7:8-11). I had to help spread the word about this treasure.

So, when I was invited to join the Eymardian Youth office, I gladly accepted because, “just as I adore, I want to make others adore”. With

the office and the help of several members of the Eymardian Youth, we were able to carry out our programme of activities, which included times of formation, times of prayer, times of fraternal encounters, but also social activities.

“For God does speak, perhaps once, or even twice, though one perceive it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, (when deep sleep falls upon men) as they slumber in their beds”, says the word in Job 33:14-15. It was in response to the incessant reminders of an annoyed friend that I finally went to a time of exchange and sharing, which was followed by a time of worship. Yet it was at this moment that Jesus chose to touch me in a special way.

My brother, my sister, do not tire of inviting your acquaintances to your times of prayer and worship, for this may be the channel God chooses to draw people to Himself.

