

## **Father Fiorenzo Salvi, sss**

*Province Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament*

Fr. Fiorenzo was born on 27 March 1954 in Albano Sant'Alessandro (Bergamo). He made his first profession on 29 September 1975 and was ordained a priest on 20 September 1980.

After studying Liturgy (Licentiate and Doctorate) in Rome, he served as Novice Master from 1984 to 1993; he was then Provincial Superior from 1993 to 1999 and Superior General from 1999 to 2011.

From 2012 to 2025, he was Director of the *Centro Eucaristico* publishing house in Ponteranica.

Since 2011, he has been Coordinator of the *Commission d'Etudes sur le Fondateur et son Œuvre* (CEFO, Commission of Studies on the Founder and his Work).



In his contribution, Father Salvi addresses the subject of prayer outside Mass, presenting it as a privileged form of prayer. Drawing on the Eymardian tradition, he presents this prayer as a welcoming of God's love, which transforms a person's life through faith, thanksgiving, repentance and intercession. The author will assist us with methodological suggestions on how to make the most of this form of prayer.

# Praying in the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist from Father Eymard to us Suggestions

*original in Italian*

Although love has really no fixed method,  
according to St François de Sales,  
yet it is good to follow a natural flow,  
so as not to get lost and lose our time.  
(PG 356,2)

## INTRODUCTION

In this contribution, I will try to offer some suggestions on “how” to live our time of prayer in the presence of the Eucharist, what we traditionally call Adoration. We know well that it is part of our spiritual heritage and that we are called to be “masters” in this form of prayer. This contribution therefore focuses on what we might call the “method”, starting with Fr. Eymard and continuing up to the present day.

In the first part, Fr. Eymard's proposals for Adoration will be presented, while in the second part, some practical suggestions for us will be offered.

We must not forget that this prayer can be personal and communal. While these two forms draw on the same vision and faith in the sacrament, they have their own characteristics and dynamics.

## Part I

### The “practice” of Eucharistic Adoration according to Fr Eymard - Excursus and relevance

There are many aspects related to Eucharistic Adoration in Fr. Eymard's thinking, both in terms of method and of making it a way of life. Remaining within our theme, I will limit myself to summarising the “concrete way” (“method”) and the suggestions he proposes, with some reflections on their relevance for us today.<sup>1</sup>

#### I. A RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF HIS TIME

Eucharistic adoration occupies a prominent place in the life of his Institutes (Religious and Servants of the Blessed Sacrament) and lay associates. It not only expresses the faith of the Church and his own faith in the Eucharistic mystery. For him, it is an effective way to evangelise and respond to the needs of his time. He expresses himself with the theological vision of his time and is part of the great Eucharistic movement that developed in France in the 19th century. The spread of the Forty Hours and the growing success of Eucharistic adoration are giving rise to a true spiritual renewal among the people of God. In 1864, he founded the magazine *Le Très Saint Sacrement*; in his first article, he defined his era as “*the century of the Eucharist*”:

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<sup>1</sup> We cite some publications by our religious who have dealt with the theme of adoration according to the method (and methods) proposed by Fr. Eymard. A. TESNIÈRE, *Manuel de l'adoration du T. S. Sacrement*, Paris 1899; A. LETELLIER, *Conférences sur l'Adoration*, Brussels 1921; *Catéchisme sur l'Adoration*, written by order of the Most Reverend Superior General of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, Montreal 1922; A. BETTINGER, *Le Bx Pierre-Julien Eymard et sa méthode d'adoration selon les quatre fins du Sacrifice*, Brussels - Paris, 1925; J. ARRATIBEL, *El método de los cuatro fines del sacrificio*, Tolosa 1934; E. C. NUÑEZ - J.-F. BÉRUBÉ, *La Spiritualité du P. Pierre-Julien Eymard*, Rome 1956, pp. 196-202. 331-380; E. C. NUÑEZ, *La preghiera in S. Pietro Giuliano Eymard*, in R. Boccassino (ed.), *La Preghiera*, Vol. II, Milan-Rome 1967, pp. 703-731.

- We can call the nineteenth century the great century of the Eucharist [...] Never have past centuries equaled ours in its worship of the Most Blessed Sacrament.
- We must save France through adoration; we must adore day and night; we must raise for Jesus Christ a throne of reparation and salvation.
- This cult is necessary to stimulate true piety, alas! too long withheld at the door of the sanctuary where Jesus is always ready to bless us, and open his heart to us. [...] It is necessary in order to save society. (PG 241)

He was aware of the challenges of his time, marked by unbelief, rationalism, materialism, and the cult of money (it was the age of industrialisation!). It was therefore necessary to bring the faithful back to the person of Christ himself, to his love revealed and present in the mystery of the Eucharist; Eucharistic adoration was a providential means to this end.

#### **For us**

In his Retreat to his religious in 1867, he said: “As a matter of principle, I place the grace of the Society as a grace of prayer, and that, on this point, we should distinguish ourselves among the other religious congregations. This grace is your dowry; naturally, and even instinctively, you should have the spirit of prayer.” (PR 114,1).

After the Council and the liturgical reform that restored the centrality of the Mass, adoration first underwent a kind of downgrading, if not abandonment. It then saw a revival, sometimes promoted by groups with a nostalgic theological vision of the past. Our task, in fidelity to the Founder, is to propose this form of prayer with all the richness and dynamism of the vision of the Eucharist that the Church has handed down to us and continues to recall through her magisterium. We not only have the grace to do so, but we have the duty, as it is an integral part of our mission.

“We wholeheartedly desire to hand on the Tradition and teaching of the Church on this sacrament. We seek to further the progress of eucharistic theology and practice.” (RL 36)

## II. CONSECRATED TO THE “EUCHARISTIC SERVICE” OF JESUS CHRIST

The religious of his Congregation consecrate themselves to the “service” of Christ truly, really and substantially present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.<sup>2</sup> Fr. Eymard simply calls this service to Christ and his Kingdom “Eucharistic service” (*Service eucharistique*)<sup>3</sup> which is expressed in two ways: “service” rendered to the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament through *worship* (contemplation); and “service” rendered through *the apostolate* (action). These are the two aims of his Congregation, as expressed in the Constitutions of 1864:

### **Concerning the basic goal of our Institute**

This family, the smallest of the families of the holy Mother the Church [...], that dedicates itself with all its soul and all its strength to these two goals, namely:

1. To render above all and by all its children a *solemn cult of perpetual adoration* to Our Lord Jesus Christ living perpetually in the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, out of love for men.
2. To *dedicate themselves* to the love and glory of this most august Sacrament by the *apostolate* of each of its members, who, under the auspices and guidance of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, should apply themselves in the measure of their grace and of their virtue. (RR 78,1)

The service of worship, in turn, is expressed in three forms: solemn exposition, celebration in common and in the presence of the Sacrament of the Divine Office, and adoration performed personally and in turn by the religious.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. RR 78,2.

<sup>3</sup> In Fr. Eymard's terminology, “service” is used in the sense of dedicating oneself to Christ in his Sacrament with the self-denial of a “servant”, being at his complete disposal (“faithful servant”), dedicating oneself exclusively to him through prayer of adoration. Naturally, this is both an external and internal service. On “inner service”, cf. the meditation of 11 February 1865 (NR 44,34).

The main goal of the Society is the service of the adorable person of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar through *adoration, the divine Office, worship, and Eucharistic apostolate.* (*Project of rules* 1863, RR 47,2)

Certainly, adoration constitutes for him the proper and principal form of the “Eucharistic Service” rendered to Christ in his Eucharistic presence. While exposition and the Divine Office must simply follow the guidelines of the Church's Ritual, adoration constitutes the proper and characteristic form of the Congregation, not so much in itself – many others practise it – but in the way it is lived and because of the central place it occupies in the life, spirituality and mission of its religious. I will limit myself to briefly presenting the concrete indications that Fr. Eymard suggests on “how” to live adoration.

## 1. Exposition

For him, the solemn exposition for the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is an effective response to the needs of the Church and society of his time. Here are some of his statements:

- Exposition is the *powerful arm* of the Church and of the faithful.
- Exposition was *the grace of salvation* for Paris and France, as it had been for Rome.
- We are not afraid to affirm this: the cult of exposition is *the need of our times*; it needs this public and solemn profession of the faith of people in the divinity of Jesus Christ and the truth of his sacramental presence.
- The solemn cult of exposition is necessary to *revive the sleeping faith* of so many honest men who no longer know Jesus Christ because they are no longer aware that he is their neighbor, their friend, and their God. (PG 241; italics are ours)

The manner of exposing the Sacrament in Fr. Eymard's time was the result of the final stage in the transformation of the altar and the tabernacle. It was Matteo Gilberti, Bishop of Verona (1524-1543), who began to place the tabernacle at the centre of the high altar; this

practice was favourably received in other dioceses, first and foremost in Milan, thanks to the work of St. Charles Borromeo, and gradually became common practice until the liturgical reform of Vatican II.<sup>4</sup> It was a way of affirming Catholic doctrine against the challenges of the Reformation.

Above the tabernacle, a small temple – sometimes grandiose – was used to house the monstrance during solemn exhibitions.<sup>5</sup> It was the community of Marseille that inaugurated the particular form that would characterise the exhibition in many of our churches around the world: the monstrance, placed on top of a globe, wrapped in a royal mantle. This image would become the emblem (logo and official stamp) of the Congregation.

### **Chapter III. What we must observe in Exposition**

1. Exposition of the most Blessed Sacrament will be done only after the consent of the Ordinary of the place.
2. The exposition of the august Sacrament shall be done at the main altar, where there will be no relics nor pictures, so that nothing might distract our eyes from the Blessed Sacrament.
3. The cult of exposition shall always be festive, more so on great feasts.  
[...]
4. Twelve candles of pure wax shall always burn during exposition. [...]
9. The monstrance should be at least gold-plated silver. [...] (RR 78,3)

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<sup>4</sup> In 1614, Paul V's Ritual imposed it on the churches of his diocese, recommending its adoption to others as well. By the mid-18th century, placing the tabernacle at the centre of the altar was common practice in almost all churches, so much so that Benedict XIV, in his Constitution *Accepimus* (16 July 1746), declared it “current practice”. It was universally imposed by the Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites of 16 August 1863, which prohibited any other form of custody. See PONTIFICAL COMMISSION FOR THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE CHURCH, Report by His Excellency Monsignor Mauro PIACENZA, *La custodia dell’Eucarestia. Il Tabernacolo e la sua storia*, Casamari, 31 July 2004.

<sup>5</sup> For the history of the location of the tabernacle and the small temple above it, see M. RIGHETTI, *Storia liturgica I*, Ancora, Milan 1950<sup>2</sup>, pp. 419-428. This arrangement had its own coherence, naturally derived from the Eucharistic practice of the time. Overlapping, we find: the altar table, the tabernacle and the small temple for exposition. The exposed sacrament (monstrance in the small temple) comes from the Eucharistic reserve (tabernacle), which is the fruit of the celebration of Mass (altar table).

### **Chapter V. Concerning the observance of the sacred Rites**

1. Since it is only the Holy See that determines and regulates the holy worship due to Our Lord Jesus Christ, all the members of our Institute shall observe with affection, as being the supreme and inflexible law of their life, all the liturgical laws, the decrees and sacred observances of the holy Roman Church. (RR 78,5)

Now that liturgical reform has restored the altar to its centrality and proper form, the appropriate place for exposition is the table of celebration: the Eucharistic bread that is adored comes from the celebration and is destined for communion.

Therefore, Fr. Eymard's call to fidelity to the liturgical practice of the Church today is fidelity to the form of exposition of the sacrament according to the spirit of the liturgy and the indications of the liturgical books.<sup>6</sup>

“By drawing our attention to the signs of the Sacrament, exposition of the Holy Eucharist calls to mind the celebration of the Memorial of the Lord.” (RL 31)

The involvement of the body

Eymard gives due importance to the body and the participation of the whole person. Religious will adore on their knees (on a kneeler). This expresses the attitude of *a servant* before his King.

The adorer shall make his adoration kneeling, head uncovered, dressed with a surplice, and, if he is a priest or deacon, with a white stole; he should never be seated during his adoration, rather he should retire. (RR 78,4)

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<sup>6</sup> “In expositions, care must be taken to ensure that the worship of the Blessed Sacrament is clearly shown in its relationship with the Mass. The plan of the exposition should carefully avoid anything which might somehow obscure the principal desire of Christ in instituting the eucharist, namely, to be with us as food, medicine, and comfort” (*Eucharisticum Mysterium* EM 60; HCWE 82).

Adore Our Lord first in his divine Sacrament, through the external homage of the body. Kneel down as soon as you see Jesus in the adorable Host. Prostrate yourself with great respect before him, as a sign of your dependence and of your love. Adore him in union with the Magi Kings, when they prostrated face to the ground and adored the Infant-God, lying in a humble manger and covered with poor clothing. (PO 35,2)

In the presence of the Lord, he suggests that worshippers make their own the acts of faith and dispositions of the characters in the Gospel: the Magi, the first worshippers; the Samaritan woman, who learns how to worship 'in spirit and truth'; the man born blind who prostrates himself before the Lord; Mary of Bethany with her bold and loving gesture; Mary Magdalene and her loving search; Thomas and his act of faith: "My Lord and my God".

## 2. The Divine Office

For Fr. Eymard, the Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours) is an integral part of public worship.

The office is sung with psalms before the most Blessed Sacrament exposed, with all the ceremonies of the choir; we recite Matins at 8 in the evening; Lauds and Prime upon rising at 5:15; Tierce, Sexte and None at 11:30; Vespers and Compline at Benediction at 4 PM.

The office is said standing before the most Blessed Sacrament exposed. (RR 53,1)

The priests and the brothers shall recite the divine office in choir and before the most Blessed Sacrament exposed according to what is proper for the clergy of Rome, and according to the apostolic concession. (RR 78,8)

The Office, therefore, constitutes worship as a religious community, as one body and as a family gathered around the throne of the living and immolated Lamb. Unlike monastic orders, which pray it in choir,

it is celebrated in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed. If, as we shall see, praying according to the four ends of sacrifice is proposed because it is the Church's way of praying, the Office is already "the prayer of the Church". Prayed in the presence of the Sacrament, it gives further value to the adoration of the members of the community who pray it in the name of the Church and as the Church. In this way, Fr. Eymard also links the Office and the Eucharist in the liturgical sign.

The divine office sung in psalmody in choir before the Exposition and at the canonical hours, is like the public worship of adoration, by the Society as a body. (RR 46,2)

The religious should consider the Holy Office as the most solemn and the holiest exercise of adoration; they shall recite it, as the Church desires, worthily, that is, with a pure heart, attentively, recollected in prayer, devoutly, and in the fervor of love. (RR 39,5)

The Divine Office for the Society is a solemn adoration, etc., *as a body*. This is a canonical prayer that is the most beautiful, the most holy and the most efficacious of prayers, since it is the Holy Spirit who inspired it. (PR 73,9)

This is now wisely affirmed in *the General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours* and in *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass* (RCEW), which confirm the goodness of celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours in the presence of the Sacrament.

The Liturgy of the Hours extends to the different hours of the day the praise and prayer, the memorial of the mysteries of salvation and the foretaste of heavenly glory, which are offered us in the eucharistic mystery, the centre and culmination of the whole life of the Christian community. The Liturgy of the Hours is in itself an excellent preparation for the fruitful celebration of the Eucharist because it fosters those dispositions necessary, such as faith, hope and love, devotion and a spirit of sacrifice. (*Liturgia Horarum iuxta ritum romanum* LH 12)

Part of the liturgy of the hours, especially the principal hours, may be celebrated before the blessed sacrament when there is a lengthy period of exposition. This liturgy extends the praise and thanksgiving offered to God in the eucharistic celebration to the several hours of the day; it directs the prayers of the Church to Christ and through him to the Father in the name of the whole world. (HCWE 113).

The liturgy of the Hours, the prayer of praise of the entire Church, and particularly the Morning and Evening Prayer, is an important moment in the life of our communities.

Its celebration, by nature communitarian, is the voice of the Church praying to Christ and, through him, to the Father. (RL 23)

### 3. Adoration according to the “four ends of the Eucharistic sacrifice”

Fr. Eymard reminds us that the best “method” for prayer and adoration is that which is inspired by the Holy Spirit, by love and according to the grace of each person. Therefore, it is important to follow the inspiration of the moment.

... the best way of adoring the Lord is the one which the Holy Spirit inspires and favors in a simple and humble heart. Let each one then be faithful to his grace, and make progress at the feet of the Lord in the recollection and the virtue of sacred love, as having received the best part with Mary. (RR 78,4)

...enter into *your subject*. As I told you, if a thought strikes you, set aside your dark bread, and take what our Lord gives you. Remember well what I’m telling you: You must come with *a prepared thought*; then if another one comes that strikes you more, set aside quickly all others, and take it, because it has the characteristic of a good adoration that is true recollection. (PS 620,6)

However, when inspiration is lacking, it is important to have a “method” available to help develop prayer and not waste time.<sup>7</sup> Among these, the “four ends of sacrifice” stand out, to which other suggestions are added.

### The method of the four ends of sacrifice

Fr. Eymard adopted and promoted the method of the four ends of sacrifice and gave his reason for doing so: it is the form of prayer of Christ and the Church in the Sacrifice of the Mass and therefore should also be instilled in the faithful. Here are two important texts from the Constitutions published in 1864:

#### **Chapter IV. How should our religious make adoration**

4. The adorers shall apply themselves during their adoration at honoring the *four ends of sacrifice*, namely: to offer perpetually to God the Father through Our Lord Jesus Christ, a host of *praise* and *honor*, of love and *gratitude*, of *propitiation* and *impetration*, for the greater service and greater reign of Jesus Christ in his Sacrament; for the Sovereign Pontiff, for all the religious orders, for the priests and princes, for the destruction of all heresies and schisms; that the Jews may see the light, that pagans adore their Savior; finally, that all may come to love Our Lord Jesus Christ and welcome him in his Sacrament of life. (RR 78,4; italics are ours)

This method echoes the attitudes of Christ that made his life and death the true worship pleasing to the Father (sacrifice), a pure offering that is renewed and perpetuated in the celebration of Mass and involves the assembly that participates in it.

As we can see, in this text Fr. Eymard refers to the most genuine tradition of the Church's prayer, as expressed in the Liturgy: it is addressed to the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Today we would say that it reflects the dynamic of the Eucharistic Prayer, “the centre and summit of the entire celebration” (GIRM 78)<sup>8</sup>. A prayer that is sacrifice (*une hostie*), therefore prayer and action. Of course,

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. PG 356,2

<sup>8</sup> GIRM = General Instruction of the Roman Missal .

Fr. Eymard did not have at his disposal the wealth that the Church later benefited from with the Liturgical Movement and the many publications and studies on the Eucharistic Prayer that we know today.

### **For us**

Fr. Eymard's insight is an invitation to value in adoration prayer the way the Church prays in the Liturgy and, in particular, to relive with Christ his prayer and offering to the Father as expressed in the Eucharistic Prayer, an eminent school of Christian prayer.<sup>9</sup> This encourages us to develop Fr. Eymard's proposal by going beyond the limits of his theological-liturgical vision and that of his time. We must not be afraid of “healthy creativity”, always in the school of the Church's prayer.

In this second text, also taken from the Constitutions of 1864, Fr. Eymard describes this form of prayer.

### **Chapter X. Concerning the form of our Prayer**

Since the form of prayer is the rule of our life, that of the society shall be the form of prayer of holy Mother the Church in the exercise of the four ends of sacrifice.

1. They shall adore Jesus Christ our Lord and our God in the praise and love of his own perfections and of his own excellence, to him be all honor and all glory.
2. They shall glorify his divine goodness, boundless source of all grace, and of all gifts. They shall glorify him in himself first, and in all creation.
3. They shall pour out bitter tears for their own sins and the sins of others, offering to God the Father, in expiation and honorable satisfaction for so many evils, the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ, with the personal penitences, united to the sacrifice of the Cross, the grace and salvation of all.
4. They shall pray without ceasing for the establishment and the spread of the reign of Jesus Christ in the entire world, so that all, recognizing him in faith, may follow him in love and live from his life. May all our men then dedicate themselves generously to the glory of Jesus in his

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<sup>9</sup> See the eight elements of the Eucharistic prayer in: GIRM 78.

sacrament of love, to the point of giving their freedom, and even to the sacrifice of their life.

5. They shall recommend to all this method of the Church, and strive to show them the meaning and especially the virtues that it contains and the precious graces that flow from it. (RR 78,10)<sup>10</sup>

We see that now the prayer is addressed in part to Christ, our God, and in part it is a prayer-offering addressed to the Father. In fact, it will be above all the prayer directly addressed to Christ that he develops and favours, as we see, for example, in the various “Subjects of Adoration” suggested to the Aggregates (RA 20:8-19) and in the famous text of 1867 that will be published and widely distributed (PO 35).<sup>11</sup> His spirituality and vision of the Eucharist is strongly Christocentric, and the presence of the Lord is a presence as a “person”.

May all realize clearly that they have been chosen uniquely, and have made profession only to *dedicate themselves to the service of the divine person of Jesus Christ, our King and our God*, truly, really, and substantially present in his Sacrament of love. (RR 78,2; italics are ours)

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<sup>10</sup> In copy AGRSS 0-16, Eymard considers this article superfluous for the following reason: “This chapter should be omitted because its content is essentially covered in the chapter on “worship”; and also because it belongs more to a spiritual guide than to the Constitutions”. Nevertheless, it remains his most authoritative text on the method of the four ends of sacrifice (cf. E. C. NUÑEZ - J.-F. BÉRUBÉ, *La Spiritualité du P. Pierre-Julien Eymard*, p. 375).

<sup>11</sup> The emphasis on prayer addressed directly to Christ during Eucharistic exposition is also continued in post-conciliar documents. “The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, for which either a monstrance or a ciborium may be used, stimulates the faithful to an awareness of the marvelous presence of Christ and is an invitation to spiritual communion with Him. It is therefore an excellent encouragement to offer Him that worship in spirit and truth which is His due” (EM 60). “During the exposition everything should be so arranged that the faithful can devote themselves attentively in prayer to Christ our Lord” (EM 62). On this very important “*unice vacent*”, see note 21, p. 827 in A. BUGNINI, *La riforma liturgica (1948-1975)*, Edizioni liturgiche, Rome 1983.

## Embracing the whole Eucharist

Fr. Eymard's concern – within the limits of the vision of his time – is to take in the *whole* Eucharist, not just one aspect, but the whole mystery, the heart of the life of the Church. This is why he is the “Apostle of the Eucharist” and not simply of Adoration. This concern marks his mission and that of his Institutes and is the reason why he proposes this method which, according to him, captures *all aspects* of the Eucharistic mystery without exception.

The purpose which we are setting for our little society is to honor our Lord Jesus Christ in the most Blessed Sacrament by the four ends of Sacrifice: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition. - or a perpetual mission of prayer. We take *the whole Eucharist*. (CO 690)

My Sisters, you know that we honor *the entire Eucharist* by the four ends of the sacrifice: not by only one; we take all four of them. These four are: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and intercession. [...]

We take on all of that, the four ends, to have *the entire Eucharist* in the perfection of its service. Other religious have their own end and grace; that's very good. We want the Eucharist *in all that it has and all that it is*. That's why we choose the four ends of the sacrifice and these four ends are practiced. (PS 393,1)

Reparation adores, but with us it's reparation: without doubt there is honorable reparation; you are making reparation through one of our goals, but there is *the entire Eucharist*; you take all that it is. (PS 423,3)

### For us

We have seen how this method was already known and, in some ways, practised. The originality of Fr. Eymard lies in having affirmed with such conviction that, among the many ways of praying before the Eucharist, none equals the value of this one, because it is rooted in Christ, in his Paschal mystery and in the prayer of the Church. Having proposed it in such a clear, simple and accessible way makes his proposal for adoration a “novelty”.

“Embracing the whole Eucharist” is a very important element in proposing, guiding and animating prayer before the Sacrament. Today,

we must start from a complete vision of the Eucharist according to the Church of the Second Vatican Council, the liturgical books and the current magisterium. This requires a commitment to knowledge, study and deepening of the fundamental texts on the Eucharist.

*For us, the Eucharistic service must be all of these:*

Our knowledge and study: sacred liturgy is vast, Eucharistic theology sublime, heavenly and admirable; it includes of knowledge of piety and adoration. We should become *masters* – constant study is needed therefore; we have the grace, mission, and aptitude; that is our area, *To know Jesus and Jesus Eucharistic* [cf. 1Co 2:2]. (*Retreat of the religious of Marseille*, 30 September 1866, PR 73,10)

### **A prayer nourished by the mysteries of Christ and the Saints, and in harmony with the Liturgical Year**

Concretely, how can we nourish and give content to the time of adoration marked by the four verbs?

Fr. Eymard teaches that everything can become a “theme” (*sujet*) for prayer:

Concerning the choice of *subject*, anything can become a fruitful subject of prayer. That depends on the present disposition of our soul, of our state, of our impressions; but especially on the grace of the moment, a ray of light that seizes the soul and penetrates it deeply. (RA 20,5)

However, it is important to go to prayer with a “theme” already prepared and to remain on the subject, despite difficulties.

The remote preparation is meant to prepare the subject and the order of ideas that we will express to the King (RA 20,4)

Once our prayer has begun, we should not easily change the prepared subject: this would constantly expose ourselves to inconsistency and sterility; we should then stick to our subject and force our mind to return to it, unless the spirit of grace changes it for a better one, but we should not give in too quickly, it must be tested: this rule is very important. (RA 20,5)

Among these themes, priority should be given to the mysteries of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the virtues of the saints. But everything must be seen in the light of the Eucharist.<sup>12</sup> This also helps to overcome routine and boredom, especially when prayer is prolonged.<sup>13</sup>

We must honor our Lord in all his mysteries, in all his virtues, in all his sacrifices, as well as the most Blessed Virgin and the saints; but the Holy Eucharist must always be the grace and the end. Be attentive, meditate and reflect as men of light, but think, reflect and reason in the form of a dialogue with our Lord. Then, it will be meditation and affection at the same time. (PR 73,13)

The adorers shall prepare themselves carefully to the exercise of adoration, in order to avoid the harmful effects of routine and lukewarmness. May they learn to honor and somewhat revive in the supreme worship of Eucharist, all the mysteries of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to glorify all his virtues in the supreme gift of his love. They should also celebrate to the honor and glory of the hidden God, the feasts of the most Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the Saints. (RR 78,4)

In order to avoid routine or aridity of mind as well as of heart, let the adorers be inspired by their attraction of grace or by the various mysteries of the life of our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, or by the virtues of the saints, so as to honor and glorify the God of the Eucharist through all the virtues of his mortal life, as well as through those of all the saints, of whom he was the grace and the end, and whose crown of glory he is. (RS 12,13)

In harmony with the liturgical year:

It is in the spirit of the Holy Church to honor the Holy Eucharist through the feasts of the various mysteries of Our Lord since they are its wonderful continuation and goal of love and grace. (RR 39,3)

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<sup>12</sup> For example, in the text for the Aggregates, it offers a series of “subjects” and “themes” on various aspects of the life of Christ and his mystery of salvation (RA 20,11-18).

<sup>13</sup> The Constitutions provided for three hours of adoration: two during the day and one at night (RR 78,4 [1.]).

But what subjects are preferable? I already told you: The four ends of the sacrifice, and the mysteries, according to the seasons. For example during Advent consider the time of expectation of the Blessed Virgin, and then Christmas. Put these two mysteries together: the birth of Jesus in the manger, and his Eucharistic birth. See, Love born not only for the love of men, but to be their redeemer and model. There follows the adoration of the magi. During Lent meditate on the passion: see it in the Eucharist. Then will come Easter, and the rest.

My good Sisters, always make one adoration on the mystery of the season [...] there is a big advantage when you make your adoration on the mystery of the season, because you have the special grace of the season.

Follow the regular life of the Church: weep with the passion, rejoice with the magi. When our Lord ascends into heaven, go with him. (PS 620,2)

Dividing the hour into “four quarters of an hour” can help to overcome boredom.

It is good to foresee the [routine] to divide into four quarter-hours the four parts of our subject; in this way the hour passes fruitfully and delightfully, and we might often be surprised to be finished; because the soul, by varying its acts, will always be in abundance and seemingly in a new state. (RA 20,8)

Not every prayer or reading is suitable for nourishing Eucharistic adoration.

The adorers should avoid during their hour of service reciting prayers foreign to adoration itself, especially the *rosary*. They should, as far as possible, carry out by themselves the various considerations and the various acts of the exercise of adoration, and should only use *books* to set themselves in interior movement towards Our Lord, or to combat spiritual or physical lethargy. (RS 14,4)

#### 4. Other suggestions

As for other “methods” or suggestions for living Adoration (*Their worship must always be fresh, just as the grace and love that are poured out in it*, RS 10,19), here are some of his suggestions in summary.

A first suggestion – which echoes the one suggested to accompany the celebration of Mass – is to retrace the *Via crucis*, applied to the Eucharistic life of Jesus (his humiliation, sacrifice, gift of self..).

Another method is to observe the Stations of the Cross in relation to the Eucharistic life of Jesus.

One could dedicate adoration to this, especially on Good Friday and the Day of Reparation. (RS 10,20)

#### Paraphrasing the *Lord's Prayer*:

One can also paraphrase the Lord's Prayer in a very Eucharistic way. (RS 10,20)

Adoration should be like **meditation**, that is, reflecting on and deepening the chosen subject (*sujet*) to find light, involving affection to inflame the heart. The danger of meditation is that it can turn into study, and then it is no longer prayer.

The exercise of adoration must be done like a meditation.

In order to follow well the natural order of ideas and feelings, we must imagine that we have a royal visit to make; this visit has three duties: the preparation, the subject to be treated, and the conclusion. (RA 20,4)

The important point of the meditation and of the adoration, is to know clearly our subject, to draw from it some natural affections and some practical acts of virtue. (RA 20,5)

After considering the subject, the affections follow; these are the flames in the furnace; it is the love of truth and of the known goodness, now being expressed in various sentiments. (RA 20,7)

Adoration can also be experienced in that form of prayer which spiritual tradition describes as a “**loving gaze**” directed towards the Lord present in the Eucharist (we all know the famous story told by the Curé d'Ars about the farmer who prays in this way before the tabernacle at the end of the day). It is a simple prayer that everyone can do: loving presence and abandonment to the Lord. Fr. Eymard describes it as adoration that is transformed into “contemplative rest”.

Earth's vegetation needs the night, human beings need sleep. Sleep often on the heart of our dear Jesus as St. John did. Oh! How many things we learn in this gentle sleep of the soul's interior silence in Jesus! How courageous we are on awakening! (CO 99,1)

In this effort of love, don't always speak, but be silent at the feet of Jesus, be happy to see him, look at him, hear him, know that you are at his feet. The true word of love is more interior than exterior. (CO 240,1)

Aspire to the spiritual repose of recollection at the feet of your good Master: the silence of love is perfect love. (CO 1183,1)

Often, too, God gives us an anointing of grace, a recollection so sweet that it overflows even on the senses: it is like a divine charm. Be very careful not to take them out of this contemplation, this sweet peace, and for this reason, remain in your hearts, for it is only there that God speaks and resides.

When you feel this sensible grace falling, wanting to depart, hold it back by more positive acts, even call upon your spirit for help, so that by the virtue of recollection you may redeem what God has begun within you through the sweetness of his grace. (RS 12,20)

Well, this prayer of recollection, this sweet “rest” on the Heart of Christ, is a special grace that God gives.

That is the great secret of prayer and the delights of adoration, contemplation through recollection, through silence, and through acts of union.

Oh! happy the soul that understands this mystery of love, who desires it, who asks constantly for it, and exercises it without let up; it has conquered the Reign of God in itself. (RA 26,8)<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

Father Eymard did not invent either adoration or the method of the four ends of sacrifice, and he was aware of this. Many others before him had tried to graft one onto the other, but by emphasising one aspect or placing these four attitudes among the many others of devotion. His originality, at least as I see it, could be summarised in these four points:

First of all, he proposes these four attitudes (which characterise the life, prayer and sacrifice of Christ) not as one of many possible ways of living the prayer of Eucharistic adoration, but as the most appropriate and consistent way, because it is the same as that of Christ and has been adopted by the Church.

Secondly, Fr. Eymard has the merit of having made this method simple, understandable and accessible to all; this is certainly one of the reasons for its success and widespread use, particularly thanks to the printing of the booklet after the preaching in Nantes (PO 35). This way of practising adoration will be called simply: 'according to the method of Fr Eymard'.

Thirdly, he proposes this method as the most suitable because, even in the prayer of adoration, we must take the whole Eucharist, not just a single aspect, which would impoverish the richness of the Paschal Mystery.

Fourthly, attention to the liturgical year and the Divine Office should not be underestimated: adoration prayer must be in synergy with the liturgical journey and the prayer of the Church. These two elements

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<sup>14</sup> See two beautiful texts in RA 25,7; 26,8.

give ecclesial breadth to this form of prayer, overcoming its excessively personal dimension.

All this certainly does not lead to the conclusion that we should simply reproduce Fr. Eymard's proposals as they are. We are not in the 19th century, and the Church's vision of the Eucharist is certainly not that of Fr. Eymard's time. His example invites us today to be as proactive and creative as he was for the Church and society of his time. That is, to draw on the rich and renewed understanding of the Eucharist of the Church of our time. Only in this way can we avoid the risk of “betraying” Fr. Eymard, under the illusion of being faithful to him! He himself encouraged his religious to be “creative” in giving concrete expression to “Eucharistic service”, that is, the Eucharistic mission that the Church has entrusted to the Congregation. This is how he expressed himself during the retreat for the religious in Marseille on 30 September 1866:

An artist always strives to perfect himself, a scholar wants to penetrate the heights of science. For us: we must always aspire to a better service, ever new, by taking more perfect means. That is what happens in the world: we don't serve always the same food to a prince. We study ourselves to be always new: *They go from strength to strength* [Ps 83:8]; *Come up higher* [Lk 14: 0]. There's a reward for a new invention. (PR 73,10)

The Rule of Life outlines for us the horizon in which to proclaim the Eucharist, pray and animate prayer in the presence of Christ.<sup>15</sup> This is the message that comes to us from Fr. Eymard!

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<sup>15</sup> See H. VAN SCHIJNDEL, *A Theology of the Eucharist according to the Rule of Life. An essay of synthesis*, in: Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, *Rule of Life. 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary*, August 2024, pp. 16-25 [version ENG].

## Part II

### Suggestions and proposals for adoration (personal and communal)

In this second part, some practical and concrete suggestions are offered on *how* to live the prayer of contemplation and adoration in the presence of the Sacrament. They are rather paths to stimulate creativity in giving content and method to adoration.<sup>16</sup> As Fr. Eymard reminds us, every “method” proposed is always and only an aid, especially when we do not know how to begin prayer or when we find it difficult to give it content and dynamism.

It is important – especially for personal prayer – once we have entered into prayer, to follow the Spirit wherever he leads us. Every proposal, suggestion or “method” leaves room for and stimulates better ideas. Those proposed, therefore, are rather “suggestions” for those who find them useful.

After some clarifications on the Church's prayer, four proposals follow.

#### I. AT THE SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER

##### Three characteristics

The first characteristic of Christian prayer is its *Trinitarian dimension*, in light of the exemplary prayer that Jesus gave us and that the Church has made its own: it is addressed to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>16</sup> Valuable suggestions on this aspect can be found in A. McSweeney, *Commentario alla Regola di Vita*, [Italian edition], Prato 2011, pp. 581-655 (this is a commentary on RL 28-32); D. MISCHLER, *L'Adoration Eucharistique*, Éditions Saint-Augustin, Saint-Maurice 2000.

The place of Jesus Christ is central, so much so that we can speak of *the Christocentricity* of Christian prayer. Christ, in fact, is *the teacher* and *model* of prayer: he teaches us to pray to the Father. He is *the mediator*: he prays and intercedes for us. He is *the subject* of our prayer, because he, the true worshipper, prays in us and with us, both personally and when we are gathered in his name. He is also *the object* of Christian prayer: he is invoked and prayed to as our God.

The certainty that our prayer is a dialogue with the Father or with Christ comes to us from the gift of the Spirit who comes to our aid, inspires and purifies our prayer. Every authentic manifestation of prayer is the fruit of the Spirit.

A second dimension of Christian prayer is its *ecclesial and universal character*. We are part of the people of God, the community of Christ, his Body. We pray as the Church and in the name of the Church. Not only that, but we are also part of humanity. Christian prayer, whether personal or communal, always embraces our brothers and sisters throughout the world, taking on their destinies and expectations, with broad horizons.

A third dimension: it is *an incarnate prayer*, just as Jesus' prayer was. Nothing human remains foreign to prayer. Feelings, joy and pain, victory and failure, fear and trust, amazement at grace and contrition for sin... everything becomes prayer in praise, supplication, offering, intercession.

Even time, history, the present and the future, space, things, nature, the seasons, work and rest... enter into prayer with their load of hopes and fears. Everything becomes an occasion and a reason for prayer, *kairòs*: a place of revelation and intervention by God.

## Attitudes

Christian prayer has its own types and characteristics, shaped by biblical and ecclesial tradition. However, it is above all “the prayer of the Church”, that is, liturgical prayer, which is the privileged source of the attitudes of authentic Christian prayer. This is particularly true of Eucharistic adoration, which must be modelled on the celebration of the Eucharist because, as Fr. Eymard teaches, our way of praying before the Eucharist is the Church's way of praying.<sup>17</sup>

Here are some typical attitudes of Christian prayer, which are also an essential reference point for prayer of adoration and contemplation. Starting from these, it will be easy to identify concrete and well-founded ways to live the time of prayer before the Eucharist.

A first attitude of Christian prayer, when the community gathers, is the dialogue between God and his people, a dialogue that arises from *listening to his Word*.

Whenever the Church gathers in prayer, it reserves a privileged space for the proclamation and listening to the Word of God, meditation and contemplation of his wonders and his actions for us. Therefore, reading and listening to the Scriptures is a structurally essential element of ecclesial prayer.

This also applies to our prayer of adoration.

A second attitude of Christian prayer is *praise and thanksgiving*.

In the light of the Word of God, which reveals to us who he is, adoration, praise and exultation for his wonders flow forth.

Grateful for what he has done and continues to do for us, we give him thanks and praise.

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<sup>17</sup> «Comme la forme d'oraison est la règle de la vie, celle de la société sera la forme d'oraison de la sainte Mère l'Église» (RR 78,10). «Vous savez que dans la Société la méthode d'oraison, d'adoration, que nous avons acceptée, c'est la méthode de l'Église, celle du saint sacrifice de la messe» (PS 620,1).

Adoration, praise and thanksgiving are woven into the Psalms (the prayer of the people of Israel), the prayers of the Church (in particular the Eucharistic Prayer), the Hymns and Canticles of the New Testament, and the prayer of Jesus himself.

A third attitude of Christian prayer is *invocation and supplication*. In prayer of petition, the Church confesses the mercy and omnipotence of God, in whom she trusts confidently. The request for what we need is a manifestation of faith and flows spontaneously as a consequence of praise and thanksgiving, as Jesus teaches us in the 'Our Father'.

A fourth attitude of prayer is *repentance*, from which *conversion* and *self-offering* spring.

Praying also means recognising one's own sin and that of the world, asking for mercy and forgiveness. Recognising the distance that still separates us from living as children of God prompts us to abandon ourselves with renewed vigour into the hands of the Father to fulfil his will consistently, like Jesus, especially in his Paschal mystery.

Only a renewed *abandonment* - overcoming our reluctance - makes praise true, supplication consistent, and repentance authentic. This is the *gift of self* of Fr. Eymard. Just as Christ sealed his entire existence, lived in an intense atmosphere of prayer, with the *gift of himself* (*sacrifice*), so our prayer, in order to be authentic, must flow into the *gift of self*, into sacrifice, into the offering of our own lives, out of love. Every celebration of the Eucharist involves us with Christ in the offering of ourselves in total abandonment, particularly in the Eucharistic Prayer (GIRM 79f), and also in the prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, especially Lauds and Vespers.

A fifth element of Christian prayer is *intercession*: praying for others, praying for everyone, guaranteeing with our own lives what we ask for.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> We think, for example, of *the Universal Prayer* of the Mass (Prayer of the Faithful), the *Intercessions* of the Eucharistic Prayer, and Lauds and Vespers.

Jesus teaches us this in his prayer. Intercession is an eminent form of charity and is part of our mission, as the liturgical prayer of the Church and the Rule of Life (RL 29) remind us. Intercessory prayer expresses our solidarity with the ecclesial community scattered throughout the world, with all humanity, and becomes a requirement for our concrete commitment.

## Conclusion

- If the liturgical prayer of the Church is the model and norm for all authentic Christian prayer, then our prayer of adoration and contemplation must also learn from the prayer of the Church, as Father Eymard teaches us. In particular, since our form of prayer is intrinsically linked to the celebration of the Eucharist, it must be inspired by it, as the Rule of Life reminds us (RL 28-32). Above all, we must learn from the Eucharistic Prayer, “the central moment and summit of the entire celebration” (GIRM 78), the model for all Christian prayer.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, a good initiation into the prayer of adoration requires a rich understanding of the celebration of the Eucharist as handed down to us by the Second Vatican Council, the liturgical books, and the Rule of Life.

- Prayer is an “art” that requires patient learning, exercise, and practice. Taking into account the tradition of the Congregation, the following proposals are structured in four moments, which could correspond to four times of an hour of adoration (RL 29), but without rigidity.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. L. DELLA PIETRA - G. CAVAGNOLI, *“Rendiamo grazie al Signore nostro Dio”*. *La Preghiera eucaristica, modello della preghiera cristiana*, Centro Eucaristico, Ponteranica (BG) 2022.

- It is important not to give in to the temptation to “fill in some way” the time of prayer, for example, by daydreaming or turning adoration into a time for reading a book (however devout!). In other words, we must not give in easily to laziness!

The following suggestions are deliberately simple and essential<sup>20</sup> and can be adapted for personal and community prayer.

## II. SUGGESTIONS AND PROPOSALS

### Entering into prayer

Whenever we begin to pray, it is good to have already chosen a theme (*sujet*) or how to live the time we will spend in the presence of the Lord. In simple words, as Fr. Eymard teaches, we must go to prayer knowing how to nourish it. Prayer is like a fire, but it will not burn if we do not feed it!

From the moment we set out for the place of prayer, we prepare our minds and hearts, disposing ourselves to encounter the Lord who wants to speak to us and live a time of intimate communion with us.

Once we enter the church, we express our faith and love for the Lord present in the Sacrament with a profound gesture of reverence and adoration. Let us do this calmly, without haste, involving our whole person.

Once we have reached our place, we assume a position that helps us to express our faith, our respect, and our awareness of being in the presence of the Lord our God with our bodies (kneeling, standing, bowing slightly or deeply...).

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<sup>20</sup> I am essentially reproducing the text already presented as an aid to trainers – at the request of the General Council to CEFO – with a few adaptations.

This initial moment is very important.  
We take all the time we need to attune ourselves to the Lord.

Once we have found calm, peace and inner silence, we invoke the Holy Spirit to guide our prayer and bring us into communion with the Lord. We can ask the Father for this as a gift, or ask Jesus Christ himself, or invoke him directly.

### I. A prayer nourished by the Word

*If adoration prolongs Christ's action and takes shape from the liturgical celebration, the Word of God, preferably that of the day, must have a central place.*

*Approaching the Word takes on particular significance if worship precedes or follows participation in the celebration of the Eucharist.*

*There are many ways of approaching the Word in a context of prayer that tradition has handed down to us. The most famous is certainly Lectio Divina, the fruit of monastic experience.*

*However, welcoming the Word in the Eucharistic presence of the Lord on the altar takes on its own dynamic, form and grace. It is a Word that arises from communion with him (like the Communion Antiphon, which takes up the text of the Gospel) or that leads to communion with him in the celebration.*

*The dynamic is dialogical, the same one that characterises the liturgy of the Word: when God addresses his Word, he always waits for a response, and for what is heard to be put into practice in life.*

*The primacy of listening does not eliminate, but rather stimulates speaking, addressing God.*

See Suggestions for **Entering into Prayer**.

## **1. Listening**

Let us put ourselves in an attitude of listening.

As in the Liturgy of the Word, we sit at the feet of the Master.

Let us turn our gaze to the Lord.

Let us ask him for a heart that is free to listen, intelligence to understand, the will to adhere, and constancy to live according to his Word.

Let us ask not to be hard, stony ground, infested with weeds and thorns, but good, receptive ground in which the seed of his Word can take root ever more deeply and produce ever more abundant fruit.

Let us make Peter's faith our own: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68).

## **2. Speak, O Lord, your servant is listening**

Now let us open the chosen page of Scripture, preferably the Gospel of the day.

Before we begin reading, let us be aware that the one who is speaking to us is present here. He has come close to us, as he did with the disciples of Emmaus, to enlighten us.

Now, let us read the text of Scripture calmly.

Let us welcome it and listen to it from the living mouth of Christ, who speaks to us today, now, here where we are, in the situation we are living.

Let every word resonate with the voice of Christ.

The words he addresses to us are full of love: that Bread is he who continues to give himself and offer himself with all the love he is capable of.

Let us remain in receptive, welcoming and grateful silence.

Without haste, let his words gently sink into the depths of our being, like rain that penetrates and fertilises the earth.

Let them resonate, let us tune in with our whole being.

### **3. Give me understanding**

It is not enough to listen. We must understand.

Let us now ask the Lord to open our hearts to the intelligence of his Word, as he did with his disciples.

Let us ask him to reveal to us too the profound meaning of his teaching. Let us ask him to give us a glimpse of the new light it kindles, to taste the wisdom it contains, to understand the horizons it opens, to grasp the newness it contains.

Let us remain in imploring silence.

Now, let us calmly return to the text.

Let us pause and savour every word, every sentence, without haste, as we do with good food, in order to grasp and enjoy its full flavour.

Let us take all the time we need.

### **4. A Word that transforms**

Now let this Word “touch” our lives, lay bare our thoughts, desires, actions, our way of life, what is currently occupying or worrying our hearts, our day.

It reveals how much what stirs within us is not in accordance with - if not opposed to - our identity as children of God, to the Word and to the life of Christ.

Let us pray that new paths may open up and new attitudes may arise.

We ask that Christ's life and his faithfulness to the Father become our own life.

Let us ask that we may not only be listeners or proclaimers of his Word, but disciples who conform our lives to it.

Let us ask that his Word “take flesh” in us, that it make us like him, with him and in him, bread broken for love.

Let us also ask this for our brothers and sisters, for our family, for our parish...

Let us conclude our prayer by making a concrete commitment.

## II. At the school of Eucharistic Prayer

*The Founder's intuition was to propose a way of praying in continuity with the mystery celebrated (the sacrifice of the Mass). In particular, he proposed adoration based on what theology called the four ends of sacrifice. In simple terms, this means reliving and making our own the attitudes of Jesus towards the Father during his life and, in particular, at Easter, in his sacrifice on the cross; attitudes that he now perpetuates in the Eucharistic sacrifice. Father Eymard proposes them not only for prayer but as a Eucharistic way of living every moment of the day.*

*They are summarised in four verbs: to adore, to give thanks, to ask for forgiveness, to intercede.*

*A prayer that can be addressed to the Father, through Christ, or to Jesus Christ himself, in the Holy Spirit.*

*These are four attitudes that we find in the Eucharistic Prayer, the prayer at the heart of the celebration of the Eucharist.*

*The Word of the Day, an aspect of the spirituality of the liturgical season we are experiencing, a news item, a particular aspect of the mystery of Christ... can give these four verbs-attitudes a particular tone, colour, and content.*

*We do not live a "generic" prayer, but one focused on a particular aspect.*

See the suggestions for **entering into prayer**.

### 1. Let us worship

In the Bread placed on the table, Christ is present and continues to offer himself as the Bread that gives true life.

Let us begin with a simple act of faith: we recognise that in him, God has visited us. We recognise that, alive and risen, he remains with us in many ways, but in a completely unique and extraordinary way in this gift he has given us.

He remains *with us*, but his most ardent desire is to live *in us* and transform us into him, so that we may live as true children of God. Let us adore Him as our Lord, our God, our Saviour.

Let us calmly perform acts of faith and worship.

## **2. Let us give thanks**

In the presence of such a great gift, let us express our gratitude to the Lord Jesus who became man to share our life, with its joys and sorrows, its hopes and disappointments, and helps us to live it together with him, in communion with him.

All this reaches its highest point when we approach Holy Communion. Let us thank him and express our gratitude for his love, his closeness, his passion for humanity.

Let us repeat our grateful thanks.

## **3. Let us ask for forgiveness**

We do not know how to live faithfully to our vocation as children of God (and religious); we do not allow ourselves to be fully moulded by his love, by the Holy Spirit whom he communicates to us in Eucharistic Communion.

We live superficially, easily forgetting that he and he alone is our way, truth and life.

We make wrong decisions, we perform actions and gestures contrary to the Gospel, we allow ourselves to be influenced by feelings and desires contrary to mercy, we do not respect the dignity of others.

Our days are not illuminated by his words and example.

We prevent him from growing in us: this is our sin.

Like the sinners who go to Jesus, we too ask for forgiveness, we ask for the grace of true conversion, to become docile to his Word, to remain in communion of life with him.

We also ask forgiveness for the sins of the world, of this generation, of our brothers and sisters, communities, the Church...

#### **4. We intercede**

Fr. Eymard calls intercession the most fruitful apostolate, charity lived in prayer, participation in the mission of the Lord who, alive and risen, continues to intercede for us.

Let us now implore the Lord's help for ourselves, for those with whom we live, for everyone.

Let us pray for those who seek the truth, for those who do not find love and tenderness, for those who implore peace and live the tragedy of war, for those who are hungry...

Let us pray for all those who suffer in the world, that they may find comfort, understanding and solidarity.

Let us pray for those who courageously fight for justice and freedom.

Let us pray for ourselves, that the faith kindled on the day of our baptism may not be extinguished.

Pray for those we love that they may not abandon the faith...

Intercession is a great act of charity.

### III. Praying based on an event in life

*When faced with a decision to make, an important situation in life, a difficult event to accept, a bereavement, a disappointment, a wound... we need consolation and light; we need to know what to do, how to deal with this situation without being overwhelmed, crushed, or destroyed.*

*We are like the many people in the Gospel who go to Jesus to ask for help, liberation, light, on very concrete aspects of their lives.*

*Prayer in the Eucharistic presence of the Lord is a time of grace to ask for and receive his help, to “make discernment” on what we are experiencing, to regain trust, courage and hope.*

*It is a moment of grace to entrust ourselves to him and his Word.*

See Suggestions for **Entering into Prayer**.

#### 1. In his presence

We are in the presence of the Lord, who welcomes us in this time of prayer.

He also cares about what has happened to us, the pain we are suffering, the event that has disrupted our lives, the new situation that has arisen, the decision we have to make, the disorientation we feel...

We have all the time we need to tell him what is in our hearts, as we do with those who love us, and we feel understood and accepted.

Of course, he already knows everything, but we need to be able to express and tell him, and he is willing to listen to us, without haste or impatience.

Like the many characters in the Gospel, we tell him *why* we are there in his presence, what we need, the importance of his help, his light, his Spirit of wisdom.

## **2. Recognise**

Next, we focus our attention on the effects that this event or situation has on us.

Let us allow the emotions and passions that stir within us to surface, without feeling judged. In simple words, let us give vent to our feelings, affections, and emotions, which may be of opposite signs: sadness and joy, darkness and light, fear and hope, hardness and tenderness, peace and anger, compassion and aggression...

Let us not hide the inner struggle we are experiencing, the battle raging within us, the feeling of being torn between opposing forces, not knowing what is right to do, how to deal with what we are going through...

If we need time and someone to listen to us, we have both at our disposal.

## **3. Discern**

But it is not enough to recognise and express what we feel; we now need to “interpret” it.

In other words, we must understand what the Lord is calling us to do in this situation.

His presence on the altar reminds us that he too, in his prayer in the Garden of Olives, faced with his passion and the cross, asked himself what the Father's will was.

This is the most delicate moment of our encounter with him.

We are aware of our fragility and the external and internal influences to which we are subjected.

We ask the Lord again to help and enlighten us. How?

A simple way is to take a page from the Gospel, preferably the one for that day: it is the Word of the Lord for us today.

Let us examine how we are living in the light of the demands of the Gospel, of the commitments we have made before the Church, before the Congregation...

Let us make this discernment in an interior dialogue with the Lord. It is a prayerful discernment.

Just as everything gradually takes shape at sunrise, so the Word of the Lord and his Spirit gradually illuminate our night and enable us to see things in *his* light.

We must not be in a hurry. Let us allow the Lord to enlighten us, to dissolve our anxiety, to bring forth new feelings and new horizons of peace and goodness.

#### **4. Deciding**

In the light of what the Lord has made us understand, let us take a direction, decide what to do, how to behave.

Let us free ourselves from the temptation not to decide or from the fear of making mistakes!

We cannot delegate to others or procrastinate our responsibilities, hiding behind easy excuses.

Let us make a decision free from negative impulses, from external and internal conditioning, from what others do, think or expect of us.

Let us respond positively to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, embrace the cross as he did and with him, forgive with mercy those who have hurt us or caused us discomfort, and become with Christ fragrant bread, broken and offered with love and for the good of all.

Before the Lord, let us make the decision to make a new beginning that translates into concrete and liberating attitudes.

#### IV. Praying with the Liturgy of the Hours

*The Liturgy of the Hours, or Divine Office, is the prayer of the Church that sanctifies time, in obedience to Jesus' command to pray always, without ceasing.*

*It is the voice of the Church which, moved by the Holy Spirit, prays to Christ and, through him, to the Father (cf. RL 23; SC 84; GILH 15)<sup>21</sup>. It extends the prerogatives of the Eucharistic mystery to the different hours of the day: praise and thanksgiving, remembrance of the mysteries of salvation, supplication and anticipation of heavenly glory. But it also prepares and arouses the dispositions necessary for fruitful participation in the Eucharist: faith, hope, charity, devotion and the desire for self-denial (cf. GILH 12). For this reason, it harmonises very well with adoration and becomes a privileged form of it, being principally a prayer of praise and supplication, a prayer of the Church with Christ and to Christ (cf. GILH 2).*

*Fr. Eymard affirms that the Office celebrated in common and in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament is the most solemn adoration of the community, because it is done with the very prayer of the Church. If this is true for the celebration in common (cf. RL 23), it is no less true for the parts left to personal prayer, which is always done in the name of the Church.*

*“Christ prays for us, prays in us, and is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our priest. He prays in us as our head. He is prayed to by us as our God. Let us recognize therefore our voices in him and his voice in us”, says St Augustine (GILH 7).*

*The following suggestions are mainly for personal prayer of the minor hours, assuming that Lauds and Vespers are prayed in common.*

See the suggestions for **Entering into Prayer**.

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<sup>21</sup> GILH = General Instructions of the Liturgy of the Hours ; SC = Sacrosanctum Concilium.

## **1. Sanctify time**

The Liturgy of the Hours is a prayer linked to time (the hour of the day), recalling a salvific event or a mystery of Christ.

With the initial invocation (*O God, come to my aid. O Lord, make haste to help me!*), we enter into prayer. The sacramental presence of the Lord on the altar is already a response to our invocation.

The hymn illuminates our prayer with an event of salvation, a mystery, or the example of a saint who is being commemorated.

Now we express our gratitude to Christ, or to the Father (with Christ and through Christ), for his presence in history, for his faithful love towards humanity.

We embrace all men and women in the world, what they are doing (working, resting...), their life situation (young, old, healthy, sick, poor, rich, free, persecuted, oppressed...). Our prayer is the voice of the Church, the body of Christ, and becomes the voice of humanity and its expectations.

## **2. Praying with the Psalms**

With the Liturgy of the Hours, rather than focusing on our personal situation, we make the Church's prayer our own, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (cf. Rom 12:15).

The Psalms [and Canticles] are inspired prayers that express all the situations of human life.

In the Psalms, it is Christ who addresses the Father, or the Father who speaks to the Son, or the very voice of the Church, of every believer, of every human creature (cf. GILH 13).

Let us value what is offered to us as an aid to understanding and praying the Psalm [or Canticle] from a Christian perspective, that is, with reference to Christ or the Church (*Antiphon, Title, Sentence*).

These are precious aids: let us not rush through them.

Now let us make the prayer of the Psalm or Canticle our own.

Then let us return to the text calmly, savour it, internalise it, dwell on the passages that touch us most...  
Let us pray it with Christ, as Christ, who in the sacrament of his love associates us with his prayer.

### **3. Welcoming the Word**

For each hour of the day, the Divine Office offers a short reading. A longer reading, followed by a text from the Church Fathers, is offered by the Office of Readings.

[The text of the Liturgy of the Word for the day could be used instead of the short reading.

It is important to avoid improvisation: let us make a choice and follow it for a specific period of time].

It is God who speaks to you and addresses you.

Let his words resonate in your heart.

The *Responsorial Psalm* [in the case of the readings of the day: the Responsorial Psalm or the text of the Gospel Acclamation] is a valuable aid in transforming an important aspect into prayer.

The presence of the Lord in the sacrament of his Passover reminds us where fidelity to the Word leads: to the gift of ourselves, with him, in him, for him!

### **4. Praying and interceding for the world**

The Liturgy of the Hours, like Eucharistic adoration, even when celebrated personally, is always prayer on behalf of the Church, embracing the world and the history in which we live.

Now let us invoke Christ, or with him the Father, interceding for the brothers and sisters of our generation; let us pray for world peace, for justice, for the Church...

The invocations and intercessions of Lauds and Vespers, or simply the concluding prayer, are a valuable aid and inspiration.

We conclude the prayer as suggested by the hour of the Office.

## CONCLUSION

These suggestions are just a few examples of how we might live and nourish our time of prayer. An invitation to our creativity!

As a task, let us take to heart these words that Fr. Eymard wrote a few months before his death, during his last retreat at St Maurice. They sum up well the value that prayer in the presence of the Lord in his Sacrament has for him and for us.

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.

(Saturday, 2 May 1868, NR 45,16)

10 December 2025

