

EYMARDIAN FAMILY

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Meeting of the International Commission of Study on the Founder and his work (CEFO) from 7 to 13 July 2025

Gathered at La Mure from 7 to 13 July, the members of the CEFO from many countries held their first meeting with all members present except Fr. Sagara Jayamanne from Sri Lanka, who was excused for academic reasons. This meeting was introduced by Fr. José Antonio Rivera Ruiz, a General Consultor who is in charge of the Commission.

The session began with the reading of a letter from the Superior General, Fr. Benzy Romician, who expressed his gratitude to the members for their availability, willingness, and commitment to dedicate time in order to deepen their understanding of the writings of the Founder, St. Peter Julian Eymard. He emphasized the importance of this Commission, tasked with endeavouring to preserve the historical and spiritual heritage of the Congregation.

This reading was followed by the intervention of Fr. José Antonio, who expressed the General Council's and his acknowledgement and gratitude to the Commission for forming experts on Fr. Eymard, especially to Fr. Thaddée Mupapa for his warm welcome; as well as to Frs. Fiorenzo Salvi and Manuel Barbiero for their initiative and the thorough preparation of this meeting.

Contents:

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Then, Fr. Fiorenzo, the coordinator of CEFO, outlined the objective of the week, which was envisaged as a "little novitiate" that would bring about deeper understanding regarding the history, life, thought, vocation and charism of the Founder, as well as the spirituality of the Congregation, perceiving as a valuable legacy of Fr. Eymard.

After Fr. Elibien Joseph was appointed as secretary of the meeting, the members of the Commission reflected on Pope Francis' letter, followed by a time for sharing. The letter in question, entitled "Letter on the Renewal of the Study of Church History", dated 21 November 2024, and addressed to "dear brothers and sisters" in general, encourages the cultivation of the richness of tradition to contextualize better the different periods of history and adopt their import. It invites developing a habit of critical reading, which impels asking apt questions to deepen understanding. In this context, the internet is presented as a valuable tool of research, offering access to a vast library of resources for historical and critical analysis.



This week of work was impelled by a dynamic of prayer (Eucharistic celebration, Morning and Evening Prayer, adoration), learning, reflection and planning within the framework of the study of Fr. Eymard and the history of the Congregation. So, guided by experts in the field, in particular, Fathers André Guitton, Fiorenzo and Manuel, without forgetting the valuable contributions of Fr. Thaddée and Marie-Thérèse, an associate of the Congregation, this meeting **further enriched us concerning Fr. Eymard's spiritual and Eucharistic richness.**

The history and editions of the Founder's writings constitute a living tradition of Eucharistic spirituality within the Congregation. The first editions of his texts, published at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, were primarily works of piety intended for the edification of the faithful. Thus, **the progressive development of Fr. Eymard's Eucharistic thought and spirituality** is articulated around three major axes: *the Word of God, the Liturgy and the events of history*. These dimensions still challenge our pastoral and formative action today, inviting us to read every human, social, political and cultural reality in the light of the Eucharist (cf. RL 34).

In this perspective, the three great retreats of Father Eymard, as founder in Rome and at Saint-Maurice (1863, 1865 and 1868), constitute a fundamental and inexhaustible spiritual source for the Eymardian Family. They enable us to discover the depth of the Founder's personal and spiritual journey in all its originality, following the logic of the **writings collected in the edition of the Complete Works** (correspondence, retreat notes, personal notes, sermons and Constitutions), writings which have an inestimable value for better understanding the life of the Founder, the history of his vocation and the Eucharistic spirituality that he transmitted.

The last day of the meeting was devoted to providing formation in the basic ideas regarding the proper use of the Complete Works website: www.eynard.org, which is a veritable treasure comprising the entire thought and message of Father Eymard, notably through the publication of all his writings. This workshop showed how to access and handle the Founder's Complete Works through the search tool available on the site. Historical criteria, criteria of literary genre, the advanced search, etc. are used through practical examples.

As regards the range of work for the coming years, the Commission is committed to continue deepening the knowledge of Father Eymard in the light of the programme, drawn up by Fathers Fiorenzo and Manuel, which is to be carried out over three years encompassing the following dimensions:

- Knowledge of the biography written by Father Guitton and of Father Lauréat Saint-Pierre's book *"L'heure du Cénacle"*;
- Knowledge of the studies done by Father Donald Cave and of Fr Manuel's book *"Prier 15 jours"*, as well as of some volumes of the collection *Etudes sur les origines de la Congrégation du Saint Sacrement* [Studies about the origins of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament];
- Work based on Father Eymard's texts, learning how to use the Complete Works;
- **Finally, the CEFO is planning a new publication** on the theme *"Counsels concerning the spiritual life"*, drawn from Fr Eymard's letters. Each member of the CEFO is required to select at least ten letters, from one year's correspondence (from 1856 to 1868), to be studied in order to draw out a relevant spiritual message. Virtual meetings will be arranged to enable sharing the fruits of this work.

At the end of this meeting, it was clear that the Commission had accomplished its objectives. Warm gratitude was expressed to all CEFO members, particularly to the coordination team, for the quality of the organization, the rich level of discussion, and the depth of the work carried out regarding Father Eymard's writings and thought. Each member is an envoy with a concrete mission in their respective conferences or provinces.



Fr Vergel, Mrs Anne Marie, Fr Albert, Fr Fiorenzo, Fr Elibien, Fr José Antonio, Fr Manuel, Fr Jesu Raja
Sr Teresa, Mrs Mercedes, Mrs Mary, Mrs Marie-Thérèse

Fathers Fiorenzo and José Antonio in their final message reminded us of the importance of our mission at the core of the Congregation, as well as the work it involves. On behalf of the General Council, Father José Antonio encouraged us to follow this path of study, taking advantage of the tools available so as to deepen the understanding of Saint Peter Julian Eymard's work with the support of the General Council.

Father Elibien Joseph, sss
Secretary of the meeting

The joy of gathering in the Vietnamese Province

Every July marks a special time for the priests and religious of the Vietnamese Province of the Blessed Sacrament. It is not only a season of fraternal reunion but also a time to draw deeply from the spiritual wellspring of communion and the grace of the Eucharist. This year, the sequence of gatherings began with a three-day ongoing formation program (July 3–5, 2025), followed by two annual retreats for perpetually professed religious.

DEEPENING IDENTITY – RENEWING MISSION

The formation program offered a precious opportunity for the religious to deepen their vocational identity and rekindle the spirit of mission amid a world in constant flux. As stated in the Rule of Life No. 61: "The rapidly changing world makes ongoing formation more necessary than ever."