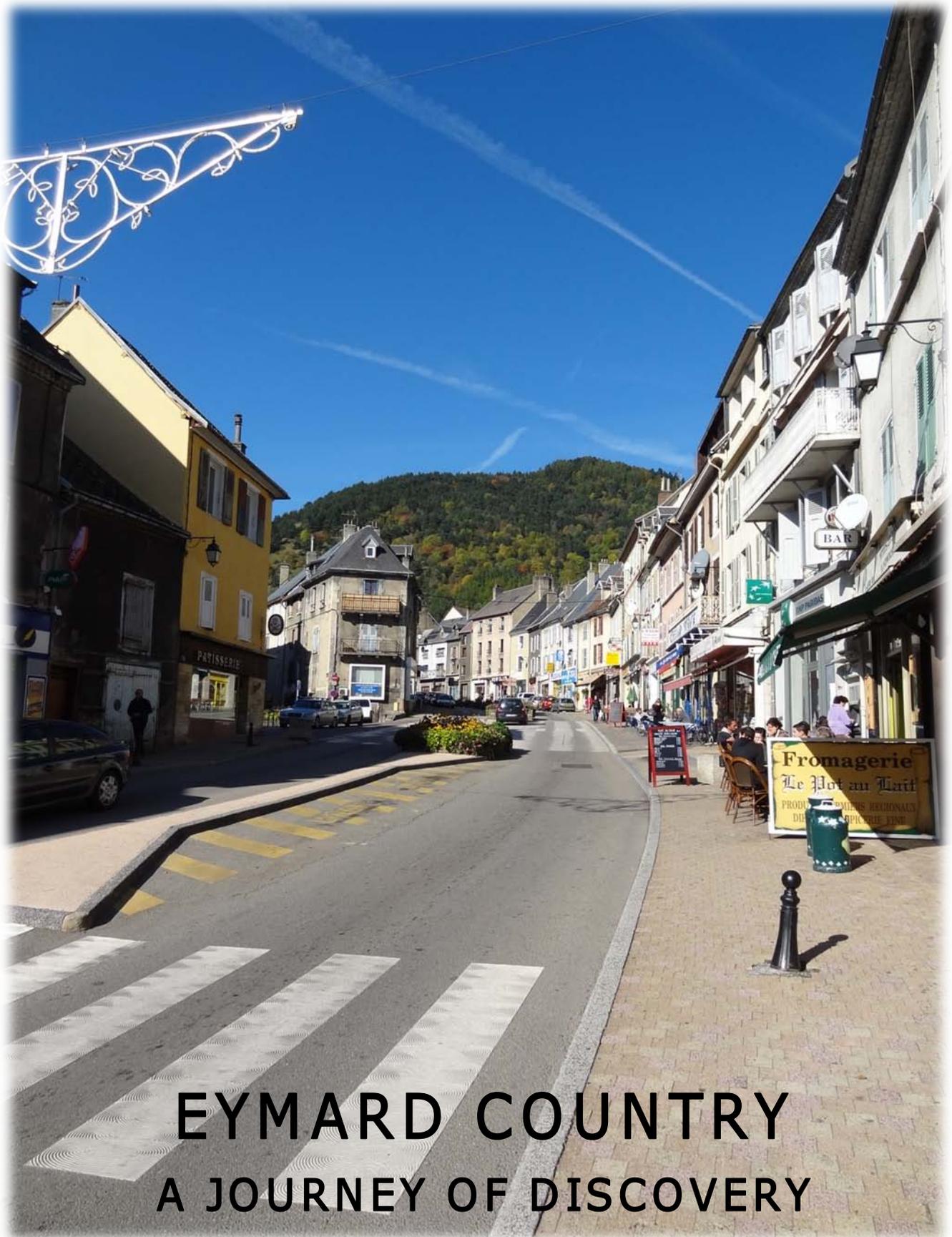




The Vineyard

Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament – Australia – Province of Holy Spirit **SPECIAL EDITION** December 2011



EYMARD COUNTRY
A JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY

EXTRACTS FROM PAT NEGRI'S DIARY

15 October

The train journey from Paris to Grenoble was delightful. It was a fast train but it moved very smoothly. The seats faced each other with a table in between. That enabled us to engage in conversation as a group. There was even some recitation of remembered snippets of poetry some of them quite hilarious.

We arrived at Grenoble about midday and were met by father Manuel Barbiero who drove us from Grenoble to La Mure. The part of Grenoble we saw was unimpressive as a city. La Mure however is charming. The hospitality given to us here was a lovely surprise. A meal of steak and vegetables was waiting for us when we arrived. We were then shown to our rooms by Manuel. They are clean and comfortable, just what a weary traveller needs.

We wandered around the township in the early afternoon getting to feel the place where St Eymard was born and died. Having made the journey from Paris to La Mure by swift modern transport I can't help but wonder how a man in Eymard's condition (dying of a stroke) could have made it. In the evening we went to Mass in the Eymard Chapel - just up the street from where we are living. It was beautiful. The people sang in harmony and the sounds reverberated in the high ceiling. We were welcomed as pilgrims with much enthusiasm and tried to speak with the people after the Mass but, of course, we struck the inevitable problem of not knowing the language. After Mass we strolled home and had dinner with the SSS community. Then to bed!



This morning Mass was celebrated in the old church which is the site of St Peter Julian's baptism and his first communion. It is also the place where he is supposed to have been found - as a child - behind the tabernacle, listening to Jesus. The church was damaged during the so-called religious wars and it has been re-modelled. The sanctuary is French modern, but the



font is still there even though it has been re-positioned in a side chapel.

Once again, the people sang beautifully. After Mass we were introduced to a woman called Brigid who is to lead us on tomorrow's program. Father Dominic then took over, pointing out the aspects of the church relevant to Eymard. Unfortunately he read from a booklet and made no personal comment. After this we were free to wander around this beautiful township until lunch at midday. At lunch Fr Manuel joined us and in French (translated by Tony McSweeney) answered many of our questions. We were then free to have a siesta until 2.30 pm when we were due to meet with Fr Dominic who would prepare us for a visit to the township's Calvary beloved of Eymard. I thought I had set the alarm correctly and so went peacefully to sleep only to be awakened by a knock on my door at 2.35. I dashed down to the meeting room, forgetting to put on my glasses.

Fr Dominic then read to us an English text most of us had already read. After a while Tony McSweeney brought the painful reading to an end by suggesting it was time to visit the Calvary. I think even Fr Dominic was relieved. The Calvary is situated not far from the house but you have to climb a steep hill to get to it. At my age and lack of fitness I have trouble climbing steep hills. By the time I reached the summit I flippantly remarked that I had been nailed to all three of the crosses! However, the scenery was so beautiful I could understand Eymard's fascination with the site. After resting on a seat below the Calvary for while, Fr Dominic then showed us the "old township" which is very interesting. Then we were free to wander as we wished until prayer at 7 pm.

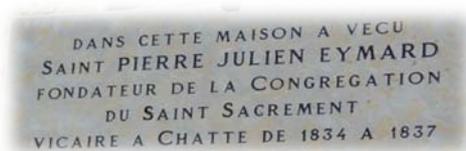
16 October

An early start today! Fr Manuel was waiting with the van outside the Eymard Chapel at 8.00 am. The trip included a visit to Notre Dame de L'Osier where Eymard said his first Mass, to Chatte where he was a curate for three years and to the Calvary and Chapel at St Romans where he had

an increased sense of God's love. The journey was fairly long but it was through mountainous country of exquisite beauty. The Shrine of Notre Dame de L'Osier has fallen on hard times the local presenter suggested. In my opinion no clear reason was given for this.

The story of a local Protestant farmer cutting willows in the seventieth century and seeing them bleed as he cut them - not sap but blood - and seeing the Virgin some three years' later encouraging him to turn his life around and become a Catholic may, I think, present some difficulties to the modern agnostic mind. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate abandoned the shrine a few years ago due to lack of numbers and though a group of dedicated lay people continue to greet pilgrims, the place has the air of desolation. I celebrated Eucharist there - not at the shrine itself but in a conference hall attached which had heating. The altar was against the wall and I had to squeeze in behind it in order to face the people. We sang the people's parts but nothing like the local parishioners at La Mure. We had no cards with the new English translation. None of us could remember the new Gloria or Creed, so Mass lacked its usual Sunday fullness. After Mass we visited the shrine which is quite pleasant although the vaulted ceiling needs some attention. In the sacristy there are a few items of interest especially the zucchetto of Pius VI who was being hounded by Napoleon. It was a gift to a local family who had accommodated him. I noted it was beautifully made.

Chatte was something of a revelation. I had always imagined it to be a poor village. Today it looks very prosperous. The church - built since Eymard's time - was locked. We looked at the window of the parish house where he lived when he was at Chatte. Underneath there is a newly placed plaque which acknowledges the saint. Fr Manuel read from Fr Eymard's diary where he condemns himself for wanting to find carnal satisfaction with a certain "B".



He commits himself to seeking God's love and his alone. I suggest over lunch at a Vietnamese restaurant that I would write a novel in which the reader will discover who "B" is. After lunch we travel on to Saint Romans. We climb the hill to the Chapel which has been restored by a Canadian member of the SSS. There are three stained glass windows: one of Eymard in the apse and two smaller windows on the side - one of Madame Jourdin, a good friend of Eymard whom he regarded as his spiritual equal even though he was her spiritual director. She it was who encouraged Eymard to hold on to his increased understanding of God's love. At the Calvary overlooking the fruitful plain we read sections of Eymard's writings on the glories of God's creation. Most of us felt, I think, that this was a choice moment on the pilgrimage.



17 October

Today we had to be at Eymard's chapel by 8.00 am to begin what turned out to be an almost three hour journey through mountains of extraordinary grandeur wreathed in mist and later when the mist lifted washed with warm Autumnal colour. The air was crisp and almost every turn revealed another vista which made you gasp. This was the journey to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Laus which St Peter Julian first made on foot when he was a boy of eleven. It would have taken him at least three days. We moderns have difficulty getting our heads around that. We were reminded that in the nineteenth century French people regarded making a long pilgrimage of this kind a perfectly normal thing to do and assisted the pilgrim by offering food and a bed for the night. We have all those things and sped our way to the sanctuary glimpsing but not experiencing in depth - as Eymard would have done - by moving slowly and meditatively through this exquisite



landscape. This was his home country after all and he met it without fear. He was making the pilgrimage to Laus to prepare for his first communion and to receive the unexpected privilege of being given permission to receive communion once a week.

We arrived in full sunshine and had to shed a layer of clothing. The shrine is high in the mountains. The air is crisp and refreshing. We were shown where the toilets were, then had a period of preparation in a class-room like hall with hard squeaky chairs. Then we attended the pilgrim's mass. Nuns in full white habits and movements which seem to

indicate they had rubber wheels rather than feet, met us at the door and handed us a mass book. With high-pitched, pure voices they led the assembly in song. Two of our number concelebrated with the presider who, I am happy to report, had a twinkle in his eye. Before Lunch, we had time to stroll in the grounds or visit the bookshop. We had a splendid lunch in la grande salle a manger. Laus is in Provence!

After lunch we were told the story of Benoite Recurel by an English-speaking nun from Germany. Benoite we were told was led by the Virgin Mary by a sweet smell to a chapel in a malodorous place on the plain. She, Benoite, was to restore the chapel and make sure it became a place of pilgrimage. The nun took us down the hill from the great Basilica to a simple dwelling where Benoite had lived. Whilst there, I was conscious of a sweet smell. It came back when we entered a small chapel further down the hill. No explanation is possible.

After a drink at the bar and a chance encounter with a French lady who had lived in New Zealand, we returned to the class room to discuss Eymard's connection with the shrine and to share our experiences of the day. Then we began the long journey home.

18 October

We started a little later today: 8.30 am. Marilyn and I arrived far too early and went to spend some time in the Eymard chapel. Three members of the local SSS community were there dressed in albs and in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. The window of St Peter Julian glowed brightly in the morning sun. His work continues. We left before the recitation of office because the bus was due to leave.

Once again, like yesterday, the trip was through and up the mountains. The views, however, were even better than yesterday: high ridges of ragged limestone, the lower reaches warmed by lush growth and intense autumn colours. The road was windy, but at every turn you came across vistas of glorious beauty. We were off today to visit the shrine of Our Lady of La Salette which St Eymard loved and which he visited many times, climbing the steep hill to the sanctuary mounted on an ass. For us in the bus the journey from La Mure took about two hours. On the way we stopped at a Canadian memorial to fifty Canadians who were killed in an air crash in 1950. It was a sculpture of Our Lady and the two visionary children Melanie Calvat and Maximin Giraud made from the wreckage of the aircraft. It was impressive in the morning light and the cold mountain air. We arrived at the shrine in bright sunshine but it was still cold. Inside the vast accommodation centre it was warm of course and there was the inevitable shedding of our outer garments. Mass was held in a modern chapel with a view



of some of the peaks and deep crevasses of the landscape. It was a pleasant modern building with very good liturgical furnishings. It was marred a little by a large arrangement of artificial flowers placed in front of the altar. The presider had a bit of the wanders and talked too much. He

asked Tony McSweeney to translate his fairly lengthy homily into English for the benefit of us Australians but as Tony demonstrated his memory of what Father had said, Father looked at his watch!

After mass we had a video in English about the meaning of the visions at La Salette. It was aimed at a modern audience, talking about relationships and reconciliation but it was also aimed at tugging at the heart strings with sweeping shots of the mountains, close ups of Our Lady's weeping face, the surging music of stringed instruments and a mellifluous voice-over commentary of both male and female voices. Not cheap to produce, but in a dark warm room it has the tendency to put me to sleep.

Lunch was held in a large dining room, but as they have to deal with such vast numbers - up to 400 at a time - it was cafeteria style. As we arrived we were told to have deserts first! It immediately reminded me of how we feed mother in the nursing home. What they meant, however, was to take a tray and walk in line from the sweets to the entree. They were momentarily short of meat as we moved along. When it came it was half-cooked chicken which most abandoned.

After lunch we had a session on Eymard's connexion to the site. He believed in the visions from the start but waited until the Bishop of Grenoble had given his approval before he publicly endorsed them. The theme of reparation for sin appealed to him and the call to prayer and penance. We said a prayer then went on a tour of the places of the vision now marked by bronze statues. Manuel told the story of the visions and how the shrine developed. Marilyn and Sue asked, "What happened to the children?" Manuel replied, "Oh mal" He said Melanie entered the convent, but she was not happy with convent life. Maximin ultimately lived a dissolute life but his heart is buried in the shrine. When we went into the sanctuary, we saw the memorial plaque in memory of Maximin. It stated that here the heart of Maximin was interred along with the heart of his friend Le Conte Narcisse de Penalver. The Latin inscription read: "Those who delight in each other in life shall not be separated in death." It seems to me that more research needs to be done on the lives of Melanie and Maximin.

19 October

St Peter Julian said "There is nothing to see in Grenoble." So at 8.15 am, we were in the van travelling to Grenoble. We knew we would be celebrating the Eucharist in the chapel where Eymard said his last Mass, but what else was to occupy our day - at least for me - remained a mystery.

When we got to the centre of the city of Grenoble it was clear that there was a lot to see. Even shop windows attracted our attention. There was a lady, Edith Grimand, waiting for us in the carpark when we arrived. She had the keys to the Reparation Chapel where we were to celebrate the Eucharist. Tony knew her well from past associations so there was much animated conversation that was incomprehensible to us non-French speaking members of the group. Not that that mattered, for it is always pleasant to see people relate so happily, even from the sidelines. She was anxious to let us know that she had intended to accompany us today but, unfortunately, there had been a death in the family and she had to attend a funeral.

Keys in hand, Manuel led the way up a couple of streets to what seemed to be an insignificant building. To my surprise he unlocked the door and we stepped inside an unlit foyer. Manuel found the light switch and then unlocked another door which opened onto the Reparation Chapel. Suddenly I was aware of a strong scent. "My, God," I thought, "Don't tell me I have to deal with mystery smells again!" but there was no mystery. In front of the altar was a large vase of fragrant lilies now somewhat the worse for wear. These were removed by Ken Boland who was to preside. Manuel revealed he had brought a Eucharistic travel kit with a small by nicely shaped chalice and paten and two small bottles, handsomely bound in black leather, containing the water and wine. The Mass was simple but, I thought, quite beautiful. We sang the people's parts and Ken gave a fine homily about Judaism & Islam looking to a place for worship whereas, for us, we are centred on the simple elements of bread and wine. Eymard had insisted on celebrating here even though he had already suffered a stroke and had to be supported at the altar. What lay ahead for him on a hot summer's day was a carriage ride - next to the driver outside the coach! - to La Mure, the place of his death. I, for one felt sad, considering his suffering which was heightened when we visited the Cathedral where a burial service was taking place and, after lunch, a funeral at the church in central Grenoble where the SSS had worked for twenty years only to abandon it two years ago through lack of numbers. It could happen to us!



In the mid-afternoon we journeyed again into the mountains to visit La Grande Chartreuse. Before proceeding to the Monastery, we visited the church of St Hugo which has been decorated in its entirety by the modern artist Arcabas. It was overwhelmingly beautiful. I think all of us were deeply moved. When we got to the museum of the Carthusians, the lack of decoration and the utter simplicity of their form of life made me say, "Je n'ai pas la vocation." Home then to La Mure through a thick fog and a happy, spirited meal, ending with the liqueur the monks of Chartreuse produce.

20 October

Our last day in La Mure! We were up early though to get to adoration, morning office and Mass where we Australians sang in French! The principal cantor said, "You have to." So sing we did. Meanwhile on this very cold morning we watched as the sun gradually strengthened and turned the stained-glass windows into glowing abstracts. The people who honour St Peter Julian in this church of his baptism sang beautifully as usual and the time spent in worship passed swiftly.

After Mass we gathered in the room where St Peter Julian died. Manuel led us on a reflection of Eymard's last days and hours. This passed quickly too, for the very bed on which he died stood there serenely as a witness. Manuel suggested we spend the rest of the morning in quiet prayer, visiting the grave, the church and this room of Eymard's death, even though we had visited them before. Marilyn and I, however, took a little time out to purchase gifts for Laurence our housekeeper and Manuel to be presented to them this evening.



I spent some time trying to renew my Internet connection, but again my credit card was refused. So, although I will continue writing up the daily events this may be the last time I will be able to send these missives home.

We presented Laurence with her gift of a potted Singapore orchid at 5.30 pm as she was about to leave work. Marilyn made the speech of thanks translated by Tony. As the adage goes, there wasn't a dry eye in the house. At 6.30 pm we met for a review of the La Mure visit. A couple of minor things were looked at but on the whole the assessment of our time here was very positive. We leave very early tomorrow morning for Ars and Lyons. We don't know what to expect. All we know is that we will miss La Mure.

21 October

We had to be ready to leave by 7.30 am. The bags had to be in the back room by 7.00 and Manuel would be at the back of the house by 7.30. The keys were to be left in the rooms we were told. It didn't take long to load the van. We all got in. Manuel suddenly disappeared. He came back to tell us that some keys were missing and named three rooms. One of them was mine: Notre Dame du Laus! I reached into my pocket and there they were.

Order in the world having been restored, we got on our way. It was very cold and the sun was just beginning to rise. Traffic was heavy and there was a slow tractor ahead of us on the narrow road, but we eventually began to speed up - on our way to Ars. When we got to Ars about two hours later it was bitterly cold. Standing outside was a penance. Manuel picked up a key for a room next door to a piety goods shop which we could use for the period of our stay, then we had a session on Eymard's connection with St John Mary Vianney. It had puzzled me how St Peter Julian could maintain a friendship with a man who lived so far away. But not far from Ars is the township of Belley where there is a Marist school. St Peter Julian had been stationed there for a couple of years during the early days of his membership in the Marists. That's how they got to

know each other and when Eymard was deciding to found the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament he went out of his way to seek the Cure of Ars' advice. He also sought him out when the proposed foundation at Marseilles met with such heavy opposition.

Manuel dealt then with Eymard's strong desire to help secular priests, especially those who found themselves in trouble. I read St Peter Julian's words where he expressed his disappointment in those who condemn these men and who make their lives impossible. Manuel spoke with feeling about this aspect of Eymard's mission.

Mass was held in the extended church at 11.00 am. There were nuns here - the same Congregation as those at Notre Dame du Laus, but there was a laywoman who led the singing. The clergy procession included Tony and Manuel as well as the presider and a young deacon (We are not used to young clerics!). There was also a tall acolyte dressed in a white alb with a grin and a moustache on his face who looked for all the world as if he had escaped from a production of Faust in the role of Mephistopheles. After the Mass they sang None. The nuns conducted this and, like at La Laus, they had a zither. It must be part of their normal equipment. We had lunch at a Franciscan establishment - a very pleasant meal indeed: a salad with croutons and a great dressing followed by fish and risotto, cheese, red wine and a chocolate pudding. It's no wonder we had difficulty staying awake during the video on the Cure of Ars in a darkened room and a lengthy commentary. At one stage Ken began to snore! I dozed off momentarily a couple of times but it eventually ended and the lights came up.

It was what followed that produced confusion in me. We had expected a priest who could speak English would take us around the church. We met him but it was obvious from the beginning that he had no intention of speaking English nor, it began to become clear, of taking us into the church! Marilyn stood there shivering and he asked, needlessly, "Are you cold?". "Yes!" she said through gritted teeth. "I am too," he replied, "I freeze." Then back to French he went, with us all shivering in the icy wind. We learned some supposed facts about the saintly Cure such as his tendency to change the structure of the church to fit in a statue of the archangel Michael which he had purchased without bothering to measure. There was a smile on his lips and what can only be assumed was a twinkle in his eye as he told us these things (translated by shivering Tony) but in the COLD light of day it took on a tone of incredibility. Marilyn was appalled to hear that he put in a door to hear the confessions



of those who were in a hurry and for pregnant women whose confessions he heard from 1.00 am in the morning! Are we so lacking in faith that we find such behaviour eccentric? When we eventually got out of the cold (We never did go inside the church) by going into the presbytery, there were still facts which gave one pause, such as the Cure having a pot of potatoes cooked for him at the beginning of the week which was OK to start with but quickly deteriorated by the end of the week. Another statement, however, namely, that he never ate much here but took his meals at the orphanage indicated that we were to take the potato story with a grain of salt! The exhibits were grimy, especially his ordination alb made for him by his mother, his clerical hat and boots. Apparently, in the nineteenth century there was not much known about the science of conservation.

The tour over, Father took his leave and we headed for the van in the car-park - except for Sue, who headed back to the church to get a photograph of the Archangel Raphael. When she returned to the van, we were quickly on our way, headed for Lyon. We had no idea of what sort of accommodation awaited us in Lyon, so we were pleasantly surprised when the van turned into a gated property which was once a seminary but is now a conference centre and a place of lodging for pilgrims. It has been beautifully renovated with en-suites that look a bit like rocket ships! There is free access to WiFi which means you'll get this missive.

22 October

Well, the rocket ship bathroom works perfectly. I didn't think it had a hole in the floor for the shower water to flow out, but there it was, beautifully designed, once I moved the shower curtain.

Breakfast was taken at a different dining area this morning. It was pleasant enough, although the jam I put on my bread somehow got all over my fingers and on the floor!



After breakfast we had a session on Eymard's connexion with Fourviere. It was here that his need to found a group of religious men whose life centered on the Eucharist became clear and from then onwards ever more insistent. We left in the van at 8.00 am, thinking the trip would take a lot longer. It was the trip back that was long, as I shall mention later. Our Lady of Fourviere is a massive basilica on top of a high cliff overlooking the city of Lyon. It is a soaring edifice, highly decorated outside and inside. Almost every inch of the exterior is carved and the interior is covered with large mosaics with lots of gold which honour the Virgin Mary, but also La Belle France - exquisitely made, but triumphalist in intent. I went hunting for the font and had to swallow my pride and ask the man at the book stall. He explained that there is no font. The Basilica is dedicated to prayer to the Virgin. There are no baptisms, no marriages, no ordinations. I didn't find this strange as this is what we have been used to at St Francis' and St Peter Julian's since the first days of the SSS presence there. There was a fair amount of time to fill in before we attended Mass in the small church which is the

only church Eymard would have known. Marilyn and I filled in the time by looking at various aspects of the Basilica, visiting a piety shop and on Jeff's recommendation spending some time in prayer at a small chapel dedicated to the English martyr Thomas a'Becket, where there was perpetual adoration. We also visited a piety goods' shop which I'm afraid usually bores me because I never see there anything which appeals to me. On the other hand we passed by the museum which, according to my reading of the French text had, at the moment, an exhibition of Matisse's chasubles. I dashed into the foyer to ask if that were indeed true and on being told "Yes," said, "I'll be back!"

We had coffee and then at 11.00 am attended Mass in the original chapel of Our Lady of Fourviere. As we made our way to the pews, Manuel showed us the plaque on the wall acknowledging St Peter Julian Eymard. It was in Lyon, and connected with this site as well as other churches in the city that Eymard made contact with a number of important religious thinkers of his day. What strikes me is that although he was influenced by them he maintained his independence.

Back to the Mass: It was a very low key affair. There was very little singing and there was no greeting of peace in the assembly. Odd really! However, there was a layman who assisted at the altar as an acolyte. In most other places we've been to one of the priests acts as acolyte, thus diminishing the active participation of the laity. Nowhere have we witnessed communion from the table. It is always from the tabernacle. After Mass we took the opportunity of visiting the museum where some of the Matisse vestments from Vence were on display. I had been aware of them for many years, so it was great to see them with my own eyes. Matisse was a great artist and these creations were an act of gratitude to the Dominican sisters who looked after him when he was ill. I noticed, however, that compared with some of the other vestments on display they were more showy and perhaps needed to be seen in the chapel of Vence for which they were designed.

Following this we hurtled down from the heights of Fourviere in the funicular - quite an experience. Once on level ground, as it were, we visited the city's cathedral. This is a soaring Gothic structure but it charms in a way the shrine of Fourviere does not. There is little decoration, just splendid architectural form. It is what a Gothic building is meant to be: a worship space that lets in the light.

Manuel found a great French restaurant called L'Auberge Rabelais? It had red tablecloths on the tables which were very close together and one waiter. But the food was excellent. There was something of a rush towards the end of the meal because we wanted to see the 14th century clock at the Cathedral do its stuff. I say *at* the Cathedral. What it should have been was *IN* the Cathedral. Marilyn and I, who had both ordered desert stood outside the Cathedral looking up at the clock, wondering where the others were. The clock did nothing. We were shown the real thing a little later but by then the event was over. We had to move on to yet another church. This time it was St Mark's where St Peter Julian had a special grace of realization about his Eucharistic vocation. We walked there. Eymard did a lot of walking in Lyon! The walk was very interesting but not all that appealing to aging limbs. After the visit we decided to take public transport and that's how we lost Kennet as he is now known! The tram was fairly empty when we got on but when it stopped at a metro station a crowd of people got on. Then WE had to get off. We pushed through the crowd onto the foot path, but Kennet was not with us. I went along the outside of the carriage and there he was in peaceful reflection. I signalled that he was to get off and the tram lurched forward like a giant dragon eager to eat its prey. We sensed Kennet would get off at the next stop and return to us, but as chance would have it the next stop was up a hill and over the river. Manuel, fleet of foot, told us to stay where we were while he dashed off to rescue Kennet. Eventually we saw them both moving swiftly down the hill. All was well again. We stayed pretty much together after that which included a lot more walking to another church: St Anthony's which was the most ancient of all, being Romanesque. We then walked to a huge public square where Eymard had preached a series of Lenten sermons. What was needed then was a glass of beer! But could we find a bar? Not on your life. So we took the metro back to the funicular where we found a bar. Refreshed, we took the funicular up to Fourviere where our bus was parked. We got a bit lost trying to find Domaine Lyon Saint Joseph where we are staying in great comfort, but eventually we lifted ourselves out of the van, had a brief rest before dinner and went early to bed. Tomorrow we take the train to Paris!

23 October

We had mass in the chapel at Domaine Lyon Saint Joseph this morning. We asked Manuel to preside since this would be the last time we would be together at Mass. He graciously agreed, although it came as a bit of a shock for him. He mentioned in his homily that when Tony was Superior General he had said a good priest always started his day by reading the Mass texts of the day, so fortunately he had already read the texts and thus was able to make a connection between them and what we had been doing over the past week. Tony asked if anyone wished to thank Manuel. We all did, enthusiastically!

The final offering he had for us was a visit to a suburb in the city of Lyon which is regarded as a museum. It was an attempt to develop housing that allowed workers to live a more human life. The buildings were about four stories high and at the end of each building was huge mural. The murals were in great condition almost as if they were painted yesterday which they were not. We walked around the museum township taking photographs of the murals. No one living there stirred, for it was Sunday morning - time to sleep in.

Manuel then drove us to the station. It was time to say "Goodbye!" a sad moment. We had lunch outside the station after some hunting for a restaurant, then we boarded the train for a swift but extremely comfortable journey to Paris.

Paris! City of beauty and at 23 Avenue de Friedland some confusion. Tony had to press a number of buttons before we got any response. Fr Guitton emerged, all smiles, and in the unmanned office found the keys to our rooms. Once again we were in the environment of dark corridors, small lifts and bread and jam for breakfast. Marilyn, Jeff and I went out briefly to get a cup of coffee. Marilyn intends to meet Murray and Joy Stapleton tonight. I feel I have to remain with the group. We have to find a place for dinner and I, thanks to Manuel, not my credit card, have the necessary funds. I will see Murray and Joy on our free day, Tuesday.

24 October

At breakfast, Marilyn had a horror story to tell about her taxi ride last night. The driver didn't know where La Sainte Chapelle was, nor Notre Dame Cathedral. Murray and Joy eventually saw Marilyn in the back of the cab being driven hither and thither around the place they were to meet. They stopped the cab. Murray threatened to report the cab driver. Calmness was restored in time to enjoy the concert and the drive home was much less traumatic.

Andre Guitton agreed to accompany us on our Paris tour of the places connected to St Peter Julian. The eight-seated van arrived at 9.30 am and a young man, Emeric, introduced himself as our driver and guide for the day. There seem to be no rules for traffic in Paris, but Emeric managed to wend his way through the obstacles. Our first stop was at a convent, once the home of the writer Chateaubriand, where Eymard set up the first tiny chapel of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. The house is now inhabited by aging nuns who look after blind girls. Some parts of the original chapel are there and it was instructive to think Eymard began so simply. From there we went to Rue Saint Jacques which was the next site chosen by Eymard. There was nothing left. But we stood near a building site in a bitterly cold wind while Andre discussed the problems Eymard faced and how he went about working with the poor, unemployed youth, whom he prepared for first Holy Communion. It was to this street and a house next to the Fathers that Eymard called Marguerite Guillot to establish a similar work for girls. We have lost some of this original fervour over the years, I think. From there there we went to the Sisters of Reparation who now have a modern chapel with exposition. Eymard once went to stay at this convent but was turned away by the foundress, Mother Boucher. She told him the Marists have a place to stay in Paris. He should go there.

We had lunch in the Latin quarter at a restaurant called "Gaudeamus" which was very pleasant. We needed some fuel to strengthen us for another attack on a number of other churches in Paris in which Eymard preached or habitually visited: St Genevieve, San Sulpice, Our Lady of Victories. Then home and a rest before Mass in Eymard's chapel at which Tony presided and preached. We then went out for dinner - not as pleasant as lunch, but just as costly. Then a short walk home and gladly to bed!

25 October

The usual hard-crust bread and jam for breakfast, then we all went our separate ways. Today is a free day! At 9.30 am Marilyn and I took a cab to the hotel where Joy and Murray and Kate their daughter are staying, not far from Notre Dame Cathedral. We all went for coffee. Marilyn and I had a croissant, then we decided to walk to the Musee d'Orsay. It turned out to be a fairly long walk.

On the way Kate and I had an encounter with a gypsy who offered me a gold ring in return for enough money for a coca cola. I don't know if it's real gold but it has what looks like a gold mark on the inside. It fits my left little finger you'll be pleased know.

When we got to the museum we found it was shut due to a strike. We decided to walk to L'Orangerie. This, too, was shut! What to do? We decided to have lunch. This was had at a restaurant in full view of the Eiffel Tower. The food was excellent. Murray had convinced the driver of the British cab who had driven us to the restaurant to pick us up after lunch to take us to the Picasso Museum. He came back as promised and off we went to the Museum. Shut! Murray had another chat to the driver who then took us to Sacre Coeur in Montmartre. The tour around the artists' stalls was interesting. Most of the art is unexceptional, but you occasionally see a work that has merit. We sheltered in an art shop during a rain storm. The owner didn't seem to mind. Then we went inside the Basilica. What an extraordinary sight! The central part, delineated by the columns and roped off from the milling throng, was dedicated to people adoring the Blessed Sacrament in the large monstrance above the altar. Crowds of people moved around the perimeter passing by side chapels and lighting candles at the many candle stands. It is St Francis' writ large! Some people went to confession in full view, although you couldn't hear anything due to the sound of thousands of shuffling feet. After this there was only one thing to do: go home and have a rest.

At 6.20 pm Marilyn knocked on my door to tell me I needed a tie at the restaurant we were going to this evening. She had dashed out to the Champs Elysees to buy me one, correctly surmising that I didn't have one. Dressed in tie and a casual jacket of sorts, I met her downstairs and, having secured a taxi, set off for La Tour d'Argent. When we gave the address to the driver he expressed surprise. "Tour d'Argent," he said, "That is good! That is good, good!" Good, good, it certainly was. It was a dining experience never to be forgotten. At breakfast we excitedly attempted to tell our story, but the others had stories to tell as well, so we had to get in line.

After breakfast it was time to pack our bags and vacate our rooms. It was decided to go together to La Sainte Chapelle which most of us hadn't seen. Marilyn went to her hotel reservation but

would meet us at the chapel. Sue also went her own way but would meet us at the chapel as well. We men took the metro but got off a stop too far which meant we had to walk back. The security at the chapel is like getting into an airport. Crowds of people get there, but once you get into the chapel you realize all the effort has been worthwhile. Although the windows and the other ornaments are covered in dust, the extraordinary beauty of the windows takes your breath away in the morning sun. We spent a couple of hours there. After that experience we all felt a long leisurely lunch would fit the bill since we needed to fill in the day without too much rushing around. We found a pleasant restaurant not far from the chapel and a happy time was had by all. This, after all was our last meal together as a group. After lunch Sue went off to see Catherine Laboure's chapel. Tony decided to try the Musee d'Orsay. Marilyn, Jeff, Bernard and myself took a trip on the Seine. A great way to fill in time.

SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE OTHER PILGRIMAGE PARTICIPANTS



Jeff Connor - What a great time we all had!

The town of La Mure was at the heart of our pilgrimage. We received such a warm welcome from its' priests, Fr Manuel Barbiero SSS, Fr Jean-Claude, Fr Armand, Fr Dominic; from Laurance, our wonderful housekeeper; and many of the parishioners. We learnt of Fr Eymard's family and childhood. We experienced living in the house that he lived in; walking the streets he walked; celebrating the Eucharist in the church (now Eymard Chapel) in which he was baptized and worshipped; and seeing the beauty of God's creation all around this town just as he would have.

Each day we travelled to various places that were significant to his spiritual development at various stages of his life. Fr Manuel was our driver as well as being our expert on the life of Fr Eymard. We would read passages from his writings and reflect on them. My favourite of these places was St Romans. Although to all intents and purposes it is just a large rock with a chapel on it, it was here when he was assistant priest at Chatte, that he had a profound experience of God's love. This was to continue to influence his thinking for the rest of life.

Our days were well organized. We had a daily celebration of the Eucharist, either at the Eymard Chapel or at one of the Shrines of Our Lady, so loved by Peter Julian. There was also time for prayer as well as some free time to do as we pleased. Some of us walked, some of us shopped, some of us were content to have the odd Gin and tonic! Mealtimes were a joy. We sampled typical dishes from the various regions of France and there was good conversation and much laughter. I think my cholesterol tablets would have been working overtime!

After La Mure, it was on to Lyon and then back to Paris, where this great experience continued.

The purpose of the pilgrimage was to expand our knowledge of Peter Julian Eymard and deepen our understanding of his spirituality and to do so while having a jolly good time! I think all of us would agree that this was achieved and more. To me, the pilgrimage was an opportunity of a lifetime and I'm so grateful to have participated in it.



Ken Boland SSS - Pilgrimage....Why?

I believe I joined the Congregation because of an early fascination with Eucharist, a familiarity with 'Old St. Frannies', and because of an opportune personal invitation by Fr. Shale.

I did not join because of Fr. Eymard. At first I knew nothing of him, and early in Novitiate grew to dislike him, at least as portrayed. I stayed in spite of him.

Then things began to change, particularly as more accurate information came to replace earlier myths, with the work of Don Cave and others. After my time at Tantur Institute in Jerusalem I was able to join a very short run through some of the places in France with Don. Years passed, much had changed, and I was

given a second opportunity. So why go? The bottom line just has to be to do with "intimacy". I have lived in his home, entered his same doorway, walked down his street, descended into his underground earth-floor basement and walked the very short distance to his church. I know the views he saw, the short gentle rise to the town's 'Calvary', the colours of the bush in autumn, the same rich mix of local foods seemingly all set upon a generous cholesterol level, and the chilling wind off the alps so close at hand.

And like any family member, I sat in the brief sun at his grave, sadly robbed for some devotional cause, leaving his faithful and concerned sisters on their own, a sight I found disturbing. I also travelled the road north, rising to the place where the self proclaimed Emperor dared the military to stand in his way, a scene I suspect was dear to the young drummer. And later, returning from Grenoble, in a comfortable minibus, up the very long hill, I kept asking myself why, when he could no longer eat, and his speech had failed, apparently suffering a stroke, he was so determined to keep riding on the top of the coach to reach home, even though it was a six hour trip.

It is not any one moment, nor even the sum of many moments, so much as a time spent exposed to the simple elements of another's fragile life, and wondering at what has come from his life, and what has made him special. I think pilgrimage definitely needs time, not so much in days as in an opportunity to soak up whatever elements of the very human Saint Peter Julian can still be gleaned from his land. So, to some random bits and pieces as they come to me now:

The Church itself was a beaut surprise. When I saw it previously, it was a grim place indeed, cold, musty, damp stained walls, unused and unknown for what it was. And the parish Church was a large barely used monster with a pretty dead feel. Now the Church of Eymard has become the parish centre, beautifully yet simply restored, all the stains gone, pleasant lighting, new stained glass honouring Eymard, and most of all, a significant community celebrating every day, cantors leading with real beauty and everybody responding in song. And the other church? It's lost its Spire, so the sole spire is the one Eymard knew. Added to this is a lively local-and-beyond interest in the village saint.

As to the home of Eymard, the very steep stairs are gone, and all four floors, but not the basement, are pleasantly renovated...with heating, hot water and lighting.

The region is, on the whole, very beautiful. From my room, high in Eymard's home, I watched the setting sun over the distant mountains. I had asked years ago how it could be that our founder never noticed or gave thanks for the pleasure in the beauty around him. Now I find there are, in fact, rare references to this beauty. Perhaps that touches a key element in his nature: I see him as a 'driven man', one of passion and intensity constantly moving in some direction. He does seem to very occasionally spend time enjoying St. Bonnet. He does notice the wonder of a cloud layer hiding a valley, though he then gives it a twist about the limited view of the people below. But yes! he did notice. I'm happy with that tiny crack in the austere penitential armour.

Some moments come readily to mind: our visit to Eymard's first parish, Monteynard, and finding the old man sitting quietly amongst the graves adjoining the tiny church, with his story of his own family link to Eymard's generous ministrations so long ago. The call had come in the night of a wife dying in the village. In the cold wind and snow, the one kero lamp blew out. This is pre-electric time. Eymard made his way down a long steep slope, attended to the lady, then found his way back in total darkness.

And the story of the very young Peter Julian walking on his own all the way to Le Laus as a pilgrimage preparation for first communion; he had to find his own lodging, and food, apparently unassisted, and it is quite a long way. He had to be resourceful and confident surely. This was the lad who later becomes, as I see it, a driven man, a passionate man, so single-minded and strong willed. But also an impatient and urgent man who knows he just has to make things happen. And I do suspect a small tendency to exaggerate when someone else might well have said 'cool it'. Is the local 'Calvary' a little this way! And he does have a very fertile imagination never far from the surface.

I cannot end without a remark concerning Paris itself. We stayed briefly at our city shrine. We also attempted a community meal, but it was not to be. What I did find unpleasant is the huge focus on military successes, for example the Arc de Triumph, and the military Museum. I did want

to add one 'success' to the "Arc", just "Rainbow Warrior", but my companions were not happy about it, so I moved on to my second and solo pilgrimage.



Marilyn Jamieson - It was an unexpected privilege to be a member of the first Australian Pilgrimage to the Eymardian places in France and have the opportunity to understand the journey St. Peter Julian embarked upon as he moved towards the establishment of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation.

The group of seven Pilgrims shared some wonderful experiences. For me some of the highlights of our travels were staying at La Mure in the house where Peter Julian died; visiting several mountain towns where he lived and worked; celebrating Eucharist in small Shrines, villages, and the Chapel where he celebrated his last Eucharist; and of course Paris. It was rewarding being part of a group of people whose shared goal was to understand more about the life of Peter Julian. I now feel I know something about this extraordinary man. Before embarking on this trip I had a preconceived idea of this holy man as quite an austere character. In reality he was a very human person who agonised over making decisions, often changed his mind and doubted his ability to move forward. He emerged for me as a humanitarian, a gentle and kindly man, physically frail with a determination to do what God asked of him regardless of the personal cost. He chose to work with the poor children of Paris as well as to grapple with the hierarchy in the establishment of a new Religious Order whose central mission is devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

I loved being a part of this Pilgrimage, travelling through the mountain areas surrounding La Mure. In full Autumnal colour the mountains were just beginning to show signs of the coming winter with the fall of the first snow which gently capped the mountain tops. We were so well looked after by Father Manuel who seemed to be able to do absolutely everything with remarkable efficiency and speed. His commentary, his driving around the winding mountain roads, and his warm friendly personality set the tone for a remarkable experience. Many thanks to Father Tony McSweeney whose good humour and skill in translating kept us all informed.

Finally to the Blessed Sacrament Community thank you. I can't adequately express how I feel except to say that I regard this whole experience as the opportunity of a lifetime and one I will never forget.



**Sue McAlister -
Thursday 13 October**

We arrive at Eymard House early a.m. but can't get into our rooms until after 2 p.m. My solution would be to book the rooms from the day previous to arrival. This would add to the cost but possibly not as much as changing accommodation to somewhere else and the location of Eymard House is truly stunning. Lunch at a most enjoyable restaurant with highly entertaining staff. Afterwards strolling down the Champs Elysee can hardly believe I am here.

Friday 14 October

Travel by V.F.T. to Grenoble, met by Manuel and drive to La Mure. Go for a walk and discover a terrific shoe shop and ceramacist - both with lovely stuff. That night we join the locals at Eucharist in Eymard Chapel. Bit of an eye opener - the singing was beautiful led by the celebrant, African SSS Fr Amade. Acoustics in that little chapel are stunning.

Saturday 15 October.

Morning Eucharist. Visit Eymard exposition. What has stayed with me from that visit was the sight of his battered copy of St John's Gospel which he carried with him all the time. I didn't know of his great love for John's gospel. After reading a lot of his writings given to us in Manuel's booklets I've come to realize that Peter Julian was more of a mystic than I knew and this would tie in with his love of St John's gospel.

Sunday 16 October.

Notre Dame L'Osier. My overwhelming impression here, and lasting memory, was of the desolation of the place. I know it's important because his first Eucharist after ordination was

celebrated here. We had Mass in the hall because they thought the church too cold but I think it would be more meaningful to have it in the church and put up with the cold.

Chatte was little disappointing as we were unable to get into the church.

Saint Romans was very beautiful and I can imagine it being inspirational - especially as it would have been very remote then and the view nothing like as built up as it is today.

Monday 17 October.

Notre Dame de Laus. Mary appeared to a young woman called Benoite walking on the water of the lake. Benoite lived to old age working for the poor and disadvantaged. How amazing that Peter Julian, as a little boy, walked from La Mure to here because he loved it so much.

Tuesday 18 October.

La Salette. Could not warm to this place at all. The apparitions to the two children happened when P.J. was an adult and he actually met the boy involved and he believed them. Don't understand his love of La Salette. I was expecting it to have more meaning for me. Nice chapel though.

Later we visited Monteynard - his first parish. Visited the little church (lots of dead flies). We heard the story of P.J. being called out to a sick woman at night in extremely bad weather conditions - storm raging with strong winds and the lamp blew out. But he and his guide were led safely to the house quite a long distance away over rather treacherous terrain. This story was told to us by the husband of the woman whose family was involved and has been handed down through the generations.

He really loved his parishioners and they loved him but nevertheless, he left them to join the Marists. They must have been devastated but he was driven and I can quite understand him having to leave without saying a word to any of them, including his sisters, otherwise he may not have had the strength to go. I expect he thought their pleadings would weaken his resolve and he would stay and that would have been a disaster. What a dilemma.

Wednesday 19 October.

Grenoble. This day held a lot of meaning for me. We had a look in the building which was then the seminary - could only see the main corridor but could imagine him as a young man walking along it.

We celebrated Eucharist in the Adoration chapel where he celebrated his last Eucharist - so sick he could hardly stand up. The chapel is closed up and dusty now and is only used by various groups for prayer meetings.

We had coffee in the square where he would have arrived in the morning, already sick and on his way to La Mure for a holiday to restore his health; where he booked a lunch and arranged for his driver to join him but P.J. himself too sick to eat and where he would have joined his coach for the trip to La Mure - but too late to get a seat inside so, in the boiling heat and very sick, he sat up beside the driver. What a terrible sequence of events to contemplate. I found myself thinking about that square, that day (his time) and that square this day (our time). It's quite upsetting.

P.S. - memo to P.J. - I think Grenoble is a beautiful city.

In the afternoon we went up into the mountains to visit the museum of La Grande Chartreuse. Very wet and misty - beautiful and seemed very fitting. We also saw the fabulous paintings of Arcabas in the little church nearby.

Thursday 20 October.

A bit like a half day retreat. Mass and morning prayer at Eymard Chapel. The locals organised some special music for us - it was lovely. Then we had the morning to think about P.J. and his last day. The heat at the time, the crowds and general commotion, the unexpectedness of his death. Nobody thought he was that sick.

It hit home about him as a little boy walking that short walk down the street and around the corner to the chapel and how often he would have done it. We met at midday in the little chapel in the house which contained the bed in which P.J. died.

Friday 21 October.

La Mure to Ars and then Lyon. Beautiful countryside and Ars is a pretty village - it appears to snuggle onto the hill. Peter Julian knew the Cure of Ars and was very fond of him and had important contact with him over the years. These days Ars seems to exist because the Cure lived there. He sounds like he might have been a bit of a character and rather impetuous and loved to spend money on his beloved church - nothing was too good for it. The one story that sticks in my mind was that he bought statues of Michael, Raphael and Gabriel for a special "angel" chapel in the church. However when he got them home they were too tall so he just raised the roof of that part of the church - on the left of the front entrance - what a scream. When I heard that I had I had to rush back to take a picture because our 'tour' of the church consisted of being told about it while we were standing outside. By the time I had finished everyone was sitting up like 'jacky' in the bus waiting for me.

Arrive in Lyon late in the afternoon.

Saturday 22 October.

Lyon. Early in the morning we set out for the Cathedral at Fourviere - large and ornate. Peter Julian is depicted in the carving on the facade carrying the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance along with the Cure of Ars and others. The cathedral is no longer used for celebration of the Eucharist but a smaller chapel attached to it on the side. We went to Mass there. The cathedral is in a beautiful position - high on the hill side and overlooking Lyon - very foggy the day we were there.

After that we went down into the city and visited the smaller church of St Paul - a much simpler church - liked it because of that simplicity. It was from here that he led the procession on the feast of Corpus Christi carrying the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance for hours. It was around this time that the great love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament started to really take hold of him - growing to become an irresistible force. (A bit like when he had to leave Monteynard and would lead to another huge wrench for him when he had to leave the Marists.)

Very near Fourviere was where he went through the Marist Seminary and in Lyon he led a very active life meeting lots of impressive and important thinkers and religious people - amongst them Frederick Ozanam.

Sunday 23 October.

Early Mass in the chapel at Domaine Saint Joseph - just us with Manuel as celebrant so it meant a lot to us. We had become very fond of Manuel and were sorry he had to leave us and go back to La Mure. This was a lovely little chapel.

We filled in the morning going to look at the paintings on the sides of the apartment blocks in one of the suburbs. The area was an experiment in public housing in the '20s and '30s. It was extremely interesting. One of the paintings was a copy of a school photograph of young children - wonder what happened to them?

In the middle of the day Manuel dropped us off at the station. We had lunch there and then caught the Very Fast Train to Paris.

Monday 24 October.

Today we had a bus tour of Paris operated by an outside tour company and it was excellent. The driver and been given a months notice of this job, which was very different from his normal tours, and had read up on the important Eymardian places and his interest and knowledge was surprising given that he had never heard of Peter Julilan prior to this. We also had Andre SSS with us and he was very knowledgeable as well. We stood on the area where P.J. set up his first house. Today, of course, it is completely built up and extremely busy but back then it was a slum area on the outskirts of Paris.

After that we visited what is now a convent but then it was the house that P.J. rented and where he wrote the constitution of his new order. There has been some extension of the chapel and renovations but you could make out the basic room where he would have worked. Truly remarkable.

Tuesday 26 October.

Shopping time! Not that there hadn't been spots of that along the way - La Mure, Le Laus, La Salette, Ars, Fourviere. Les Magasins - what fun.

Wednesday 26 October.

We all went to La Sainte Chapelle, then lunch. After that the others went on a boat trip on the Seine and I went to Rue de Bac to visit Catherine Laboure's chapel. Very pretty.

I was very proud of myself mastering the Metro - all very well to travel London's Underground (everything in English) but I was a bit nervous of the Metro but managed it very well - didn't get lost once.

The pilgrimage was a most wonderful experience. I had no idea what to expect but it was truly illuminating and I feel I know Peter Julian so much better and not as a "Saint" but a very real and human being. I had known he was a workaholic but this trip has brought home to me some of the enormous anguish he went through. It was not just a holiday trip or even one of your ordinary pilgrimages. We immersed ourselves so much in the life of just one person that we could get to know him so well and we travelled with him from the time he was that little boy who went to sleep leaning against the Tabernacle to that terrible day in Grenoble when he was so very ill on his way back to La Mure.

The days that had the most impact on me, and to which my mind keeps going back, are the days in Paris and Grenoble - particularly Grenoble and all that happened to him there. It seems to be etched into my memory ... and we had that wonderful coffee stop - sitting on those cold seats which wouldn't warm up.



Eymardianplaces.com

If you have enjoyed the comments of the pilgrims in this special edition of *The Vineyard*, you are now able to have a virtual experience of the same places by logging onto eymardianplaces.com. Drawn up by our archivist, Damien Cash here in Melbourne, it is a huge and valuable resource for anyone wanting to discover as much as possible about the places where St Peter Julian lived and worked. We recommend it to you and hope you enjoy it.

Pat Negri, S.S.S.
Photographs by Jeff Connor