



Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

Adveniat Regnum Tuum Eucharisticum!

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In Father Eymard's footsteps at Lyons

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To appreciate better the human and spiritual journey of Father Eymard we undertook a pilgrimage from 5 to 7 May at Lyons, where he grew in a rich milieu of intellectual, mystical and cultural meetings. He discovered and also confronted here the misery of the working classes.

The historical context recalled by M-T Joubert was helpful. At Lyons the silk industry was in full swing. The male and female workers labored under living conditions, lodgings and precarious work that were inhuman: the days were stressful, very young children were put to work. This situation led to the uprisings of 1831 and 1834: "revolt of silk workers". In the wake of the 1789 revolution, the Church of France was weakened and a wave of anticlerical opposition spread through the country.

Lyons marked a decisive stage for Peter-Julian Eymard. He heard this call: "Come and follow me" (Mk 10:21). He left Monteynard stealthily and entered the Marists where he remained 17 years, seven of these spent at Lyons.

Meetings, places, felicitous circumstances, undoubtedly the Holy Spirit all shaped Peter-Julian's disposition, guiding him towards his strong commitment in loving worship of Jesus, Jesus-Eucharistic. "I needed Lyons to put me on the path of the Cenacle ..."



Meetings:

Marie-Eustelle Harpain (1814-1842)

Called the angel of the Eucharist, her mystical life, profoundly revealed an unconditional love for Jesus Eucharistic: "her love, her all, her only purpose of being". Father Eymard in reading the letters of M-E Harpain would note "the impressions that I'll retain of them became for me one of those memories of grace that are unforgettable. I can say that this was like the aurora of a remarkable favour. I was convinced that the virgin of St-Palais was the precursor of this triumph of the worship of the adorable Eucharist".

Pauline Jaricot (1799-1862)

Coming from a family of rich industrialists, she received from her childhood an authentic Christian education. On being healed of a grave illness she decided to serve God. She chose the poor workers' mode of life. She organized the work of the propagation of the faith in 1822 and also founded the living Rosary: each member had the duty of reciting a prayer daily and of making a weekly offering for the missions that are in a critical situation. We visited the house of Pauline Jaricot, where the Curé of Ars and Father Eymard used to go for prayer, contemplation and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Antoine Chevrier (1826-1879)

Sensitive to the misery around him, he received a grace of conversion while meditating on Christmas evening on the poverty of the manger. He transformed a dance hall, "the Prado," a place of perdition into a venue for teenagers wandering the streets. He instructed, catechized and prepared these youth for First Communion. Father Eymard would carry out similarly the same pastoral work in Paris and attempted to link up with Father Chevrier, but this came to nothing.

The mystical school of Lyons

It is the original power of Catholicism that draws together influential thinkers and artists. Father Eymard met here the philosopher Blanc de St Bonnet, who welcomed him to his manor at St Bonnet le Froid, where he was able to draft calmly the rules of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. Here he met also Camille Jordan, husband of Nathalie Jordan. Father Eymard would forge a friendship with the latter of great human and spiritual quality.

Finally, mention must be made of Marguerite Guillot, whose spiritual director Father Eymard would become from when he was in charge of the Third Order of Mary. She would become his associate in founding the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament.

Places:

Church of St Paul

On the Feast of Corpus Christi Father Eymard while carrying the Blessed Sacrament promised to bring the world to the knowledge and love of Our Lord, to preach only Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ Eucharistic.

Father Vergel celebrated Mass here; his homily was full of the Holy Spirit's rays of fire. He used the analogy of the fermentation and time required for beer to bring out the excellence of the nectar. At Lyons Father Eymard was on the path towards his objective. His moving text profoundly closed our celebration: "on 25 May, the feast of Corpus Christi, I had the remarkable honour of carrying the Blessed Sacrament at St Paul's and my soul truly found its centre here... I felt in me a great attraction towards Our Lord, never before have I known this so strongly".

The cathedral of St John

This place bears witness to the johannine spirituality of Father Eymard in the spiritual milieu of Lyons. A large Bible was there open before us at the page displaying Chapter Three of the Gospel of John: God coming among us for love (Jn 3:16).

Church of St Martin d'Ainay

Father Eymard used to meet his Lyonese friends when he celebrated

Mass here.

The church is situated near Castries Street where Mrs Jordan lived. We couldn't restrain our curiosity that led us to this address.

The basilica of Our Lady of Fourvière

In Father Eymard's day there was only a little chapel. The present basilica would be erected and consecrated in 1896. Its construction was the fruit of a prayer, a promise made by the Archbishop of Lyons if his city would be spared from way.

If the basilica overlooks Lyons and presents its mosaics, the stained glass and marble are unimaginably magnificent, it is in the little chapel where Father Eymard often stopped to pray to receive the "grace of vocation", a spiritual and singular grace: the Eucharist had not a body of male religious to honour it, to make it known. This was the origin of his Eucharistic vocation on 21 January 1851.

His vocation had still to be strengthened and the desire for his work had to reach the whole scope of its Eucharistic thought. He lived through a period of suffering. He had to leave the Society of Mary. He would discover the answer during a retreat of discernment. He left Lyons for Paris on 30 April 1856 to found the Society of the Blessed Sacrament.

For this pilgrimage we were welcomed at Colombier in a community of the Congregation and we wish to show them here our gratitude. We want certainly to thank Father Manuel for the mission that he is carrying out with dedication and for the detailed booklets that present chronologically the stages of our pilgrimage, essential pedagogical aids that accompany us beyond our stay in Lyons. Our pilgrimage, even if it was tiring, seemed to fill each one: "I want to learn more about Father Eymard, thank you for what you do"; "I am amazed by the modernity of this man who responded to the needs of his time in announcing the love of God in a special way in the gift of Christ in the Eucharist. Days like those of Lyons are a help to me"; "I experience in Lyons this time as a specially most valuable occasion to discover those places that were important for Father Eymard where they enabled us to share and experience friendship between us, bravo for logistics"; "A great gratitude for having had a wonderful day following Father Eymard's path, along which each stage of his life was traced, and which was woven by relationship with God and people. We ask him to renew us every day so that we may remain as children in the hands of the Lord, always looking to the future".

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Amplified General Council



With joy, I wish to inform you of our upcoming Amplified General Council (AGC) which will be held in Rome from the 13th till the 29th of April 2015.

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