

**Life and Letters**  
**of**  
**Saint Peter Julian Eymard**  
  
**Volume One**  
**1828 - 1852**

Founder

Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament  
Fathers and Brothers,  
Congregation of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament  
and a Eucharistic Association for the Laity

Translated and arranged chronologically by  
Sister Catherine Marie Caron SSS

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**-Fr. Edmond Tenailon**

## PREFACE

To translate the thoughts of a Saint is an awesome task. The risk of losing a profound intuition in the literal translation of words is ever-present. But the risk is worth the effort nonetheless in the hope that English readers will be able to benefit to a degree which would otherwise not be possible.

For the first time, the letters of St. Peter Julian Eymard are being presented in English, and for the first time in any language, they are being presented chronologically. The purpose is an attempt to reconstitute the life and letters of our Founder in as close a combination as possible. This will be as close to an autobiography as we can obtain posthumously. The originals show a remarkable flexibility of relationships. He adjusted to every person. His use of vocabulary, style and form vary sometimes very sharply from one person to the next. It is hoped that this characteristic has not been lost in the translation.

Here and there between the letters, biographical information is inserted to help place the letters in their context of life and events. Over two thousand one hundred letters have been taken from 5 published and 3 unpublished collections, reorganized chronologically, completed with footnotes and interspersed with a chronology of events and a list of topics taught in retreats and conferences.

To read St. Peter Julian's letters is to get to know him from within, and to find a friend and spiritual guide. The trivial details of daily life transport us to the life-style of the 1800's in a France beset by class struggle and revolution. We find a man who befriended every class of society. I pray that all readers will discover in Peter Julian Eymard the man, a friend and a saint with whom to study, learn, be guided, struggle and teach.

## Key

The technicalities of translations deserve some consideration and explanation. Our effort was to be more literal than literary, to stay as close to the original text as possible, while however striving for smooth and readable English.

The headings for the letters are followed with a code which will enable the researcher to locate the original French letter and know the number of letters addressed to this correspondent. For ex.:

Miss Marianne Eymard (III 1/145 VI 10) means that this is the first of 145 letters to Marianne Eymard in the French Vol. III and that there are also 10 letters to her in the French Vol. VI.

St. Peter Julian often used abbreviations to begin his letters and after his signature. The meaning of these will be given in a footnote the first time the abbreviation is used. Ex.: A.R.T.E. = May your Eucharistic Kingdom Come! Abbreviations used after the signature have usually been written out in full when they were simple enough. Ex.: Sup. = Superior. Others are left as abbreviated when they did not translate easily from one language to another.

The capitalization of words by the author has been respected and left as in the originals. Therefore, Heaven, Will, Providence are constantly capitalized, which reveals a certain sensitivity or importance given by St. Eymard to these spiritual realities. However, the letters from Vol. II (to Marguerite Guillot) do not follow his usual pattern of capitalization. These were probably not transcribed from the original manuscript to the French publication. Other words were capitalized in English though they were not so in French, because custom or meaning required it. Ex.: Mass, Society and Work, when the latter two words referred to the Religious Institute he founded or other works being undertaken in the Church of France at the time. The capitalization of the word cross and the words he, his and him, when referring to God, has been left as in the original.

Another pattern of his which has been respected is that of placing dashes when least expected, or an exclamation point in the middle of a sentence, or a colon to precede an explanation.

Although it was customary for diocesan priests to be called Mr. whenever the context is clear, these have been translated as Father, as is current in English use.

The list of topics taught at retreats and conferences is incomplete. But it is the one presently

available to the translator. Conferences given to the priests and brothers of the Blessed Sacrament are indicated by the abbreviation SSS, those given to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament by the abbreviation Conf. Serv.

Whenever a phrase is bracketed in English, it is because additional words were needed to complete the original French thought. Lines of dots in the text, especially letters to Marguerite Guillot, indicate that the text was made illegible by the recipient (crossed out).

The determining guide in placing the Letters was the chronological listing of Fr. Garreau, S.S.S. Therefore, some letters have been relocated because that critical reading indicated that some dates had been misread for the French publication. For instance, in St. Eymard's handwriting May and March were difficult to distinguish, as were January and June. Occasionally, St. Eymard himself wrote an incorrect date or year as can be deduced from the postmark or content. The critical judgment of Fathers Garreau and Troussier have been followed in this matter. Other letters were without indication of date or place. These have been placed according to St. Eymard's pattern of correspondence. Letters begun on one date and finished on another have been placed at the earlier date except when the context dictated otherwise.

The Letters are divided into six volumes as follows:

I 1828-1852; II 1853-1857; III 1858-1861; IV 1862-1864; V 1865-1866; VI 1867-1868.

A short biographical sketch about the recipients of the letters has been included in the back of each volume. The content of the Appendices has not been included in the topical index.

## Acknowledgements

Lastly, it is with a grateful heart that I wish to acknowledge the support and help of all those who contributed their efforts to this task: Sr. Janine Bourque SSS, who willingly researched information in the archives in Rome; Fr. Andre Guitton SSS, France, who supplied previously unpublished letters and responded to requests for clarification; Fr. Edward Stalmans SSS, Belgium, who supplied a travel journal; Fr. Gerard Busque who researched the archives of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers in Rome for the photographs; to those who assisted me in producing the maps: Mr. James Benefiel for his research and Mr. Joseph Montano for computer outlay; Mrs. Margaret Denat from Australia, who did the rough draft of translation from French Vol. VIII and part of Vol. VII; Mrs. Judith Abeyta who transcribed the initial translation from cassette to paper; Sr. Josephine Roney SSS and Sr. Kathryn Kelm SSS, who typed the first three volumes after the initial corrections; Fr. Normand Falardeau SSS, who verified the authenticity of all translations with the original French texts; Mrs. Virginia Reva, who reviewed the English idiom and grammar; Mrs. Julianne Hultzen and Mrs. Amy Miyaki, who put the text on computer; and those who helped with proofreading: Margaret Martinez, Mary Ann Halliday, Norah Ryan, Amy Miyaki, Joe and Kay Fischer, and Sr. Kathryn Kelm; to Mr. Georges Andreson of Guyner Printing Co. for his patience and professional suggestions.

In addition to these major contributions of time, work, support and love, I also wish to thank those who gave a lending hand and encouragement along the way: Sr. Marie Julien Fortin SSS, Sr. Rose Anna Ouellette SSS, Mrs. Nikki Ryan, Miss Sandra Roberts, Miss Linda Going, Fr. Joseph Roy SSS, Sr. Virginia Connors SSS, Sr. Simone Tardif SSS, Sr. Edna Mary Cardozo SSS. If anyone has been forgotten, please forgive me, and know that your reward will only be greater.

Chronological listings of events have been compiled from chronologies available from the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, various biographies, and drawn from the letters themselves.

In the Lord,  
Sr. Catherine Marie Caron SSS,  
translator

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO ST. PETER JULIAN EYMARD

### LIFE AND SPIRIT OF ST. PETER JULIAN

St. Peter Julian Eymard was born in the French Alps on Feb. 4, 1811. He lived very close to the church, and his mother would take him there every day for visits to the Blessed Sacrament.

Even at an early age, he was sensitive to spiritual things. However, it was to be a long, long journey before Peter Julian could finally realize his vocation to spread a love for the Holy Eucharist in the Church of France and found two religious congregations and an association for the laity.

Although he always wanted to become a priest, the way was not easy. His own father bitterly opposed his vocation and Peter Julian began studying Latin in secret. After the death of his father, he was free to follow his vocation. He entered the seminary for diocesan priests at Grenoble, and at the age of 24 he was ordained a priest on July 29, 1834.

He was sent to the town of Chatte as Assistant Priest and 3 years later became Pastor at Monteynard, where he was greatly loved by the people. After two years among them, every parishioner received Communion at Easter-time.

During the time he had been assistant at Chatte, an event had occurred which marked his spiritual life very profoundly. While he was spending an afternoon of prayer he was overwhelmed by a sense of the goodness of God. This experience marked his preaching and counseling from that day forward. He referred to this event until the end of his life. Meanwhile his desire for the religious life kept haunting him. He was attracted to the newly-founded Marist society and sought permission from his Bishop to join it.

He held many positions in the Marist Society. While he was serving as Provincial, he was asked to carry the Blessed Sacrament through the streets of the city of Lyons on the Feast of Corpus Christi. During this two-hour procession, he confided all the needs of the Church, of France and of the world to Christ the Lord. This was another important moment in his life. He wrote in his private notes: "Since the beginning of this month I feel a very strong attraction towards the Eucharist. It was never so strong before. This attraction impels me to bring everyone to love Our Lord, and to preach only Christ and Christ in the Eucharist."

One day, as Father Eymard was praying in the chapel at the shrine of Notre Dame de Fourviere, he was strongly moved by the spiritual needs of priests and religious. He was also struck by the fact that all the mysteries of Our Lord's life had religious orders to honor them. The Holy Eucharist alone, the greatest of mysteries, was without its own religious group to honor and glorify it. There should be one. From then on, he was haunted by the call to work for the Eucharist.

Little by little he came to consider the foundation of two congregations, one for men and the other for women - the Congregations of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers and Brothers, and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament - destined to make the Eucharist the center of their life and spirituality, to adore the Blessed Sacrament perpetually exposed and spread the fire of Eucharistic love to all. He wanted this grace to extend to the laity as well and inaugurated an Association for them.

Having consulted the Holy Father to know whether such a work would receive his blessing, he also consulted three Bishops in Paris to know whether the idea came from God. He received a favorable answer from both quarters and he left the Marists to begin this eucharistic work.

With only one companion, he began exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in Paris in 1856. Many of those who had promised to come did not do so. Two years later he invited Marguerite Guillot and a few other women to join them, to begin the women's branch. Marguerite Guillot, his principal collaborator, had been guided by him for many years in the Third Order of Mary, while he was with the Marists.

Father Eymard began his two Congregations in the midst of great difficulties of poverty, loss of credibility, rash judgments and misunderstandings. Nevertheless, when he died, the Blessed Sacrament Fathers were located in Paris, Angers, Marseilles and St. Maurice in France, and Brussels in Belgium. The sisters numbered 60 and were located only in Angers, after failing in their efforts to establish a new foundation, which had caused St. Eymard many heartaches.

Father Eymard was a friend of the poor and the lower classes of French society. During the French revolution, he visited the jails and the workers in their factories. They made it a point to protect him from danger, recognizing him as a friend. In Paris he began an apostolate among young uneducated workers, providing them with opportunities to learn catechism and make their first Communion.

He died August 1, 1868. On July 12, 1925 Peter Julian Eymard was beatified by Pope Pius XI, and on December 9, 1962, at the close of the first session of Vatican II, he was declared a saint by Pope John XXIII. The Pope spoke the following words on that occasion: "Follow his example, place at the center of your thoughts, your affections, your zeal, this incomparable source of all graces, - the Mystery of Faith, which hides under its veils the very author of graces, - Jesus the Incarnate Word."

## **SPIRIT**

The spirit that St. Peter Julian spread around him was a spirit of love - a great love for the Holy Eucharist, a love which is transforming and flowers into generous self-giving and service. His goal was to allow Christ to live in him and become the new self within... "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me."

He focused especially on the love in the Heart of Christ at the moment of the Institution of the Eucharist - a love that reaches down the centuries to each one of us. St. Eymard felt that the spiritual life is summarized in love which imitates Christ's self-giving.

For him, the eucharist was the "now" mystery of Jesus, the mystery that sums up all the others. New theology expresses that understanding in the words "covenant" and "memorial". "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." These words from the Gospel of John were a constant inspiration to St. Peter Julian. This love for the risen Christ giving Himself continually as food, as Body broken, as Blood poured out for the life of others, was the unending subject of his contemplation. He taught a method of prayer that flows from the Eucharist, that is: adoration, thanksgiving, reparation and petition. His prayer was an extension of the Mass. He was truly a man ahead of his time.

Emphasizing the loving goodness of God, he encouraged frequent Communion as remedy to our spiritual poverty. He prepared the way for the decree of St. Pius X allowing more frequent Communion. Placing the Eucharist at the center of the Christian life, he paved the way of a spiritual renewal centered on Eucharist which came to flower in Vatican II. Our understanding of the eucharistic presence of Christ is enriched with a deeper sense of community, as a sacrament of liberation from sin, as a call to personal transformation and communion among believers.

St. Eymard, the priest of the Eucharist, a man on fire with love for Our Lord, stands before us as a contemplative and an apostle of the Eucharist and opens our understanding to a warm, Christ-centered spirituality that is fed at the banquet of the Lord.

## THE HISTORICAL SCENE

The following is an excerpt from “*Vita Eucaristica e Vita Religiosa*” by Manuel Barbiero, Verona 1991, an excellent summary of the social and historical events of this period.

“During the lifetime of St. Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868) political, social, cultural and religious events in France intertwined themselves with a steady and pressing rhythm.

“The following events occurred on the political level: from the fall of the Napoleon Empire (1814) to the Borbonic Restoration with Louis XVIII and Charles X (1815-1830); from the revolution (1830) with the constitutional monarchy or bourgeoisie of Louis Philippe (1830-1848) to the Paris revolution (February 22 - 24, 1884); from the Second Republic (1848 - 1851) to the coup d’etat of Louis Bonaparte (December 2, 1851) with the birth of the Second Empire under the same Louis Bonaparte who became Napoleon II (1851- 1870).

“The transformation of France was also taking place on a social level, from a ‘rural country’ - the farmers represented about 90 percent of the population at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century - to a country which set out to fulfill, so to speak, the ‘industrial revolution’. Under the push of industrial growth a huge displacement of people took place from the interior of the land, from the countryside to the cities with the consequent birth of a new social reality: the working class, the proletariat, the suburb; the ‘social problem’ was born tied to the poor conditions of workers; including the sad situation of child labor.

“On the cultural level a struggle also rose up against illiteracy, creating clear divisions between those outside the cities and among the social classes. The State’s responsibility for schools and the various laws underline how slow progress was on this point. In addition to the difficulty in creating public institutions there was also that of printing and the progress of communications.

“On the religious level the situation was still more complex. After the unexpected disaster of the revolution, the Church made an effort to restructure and recuperate lost land, to reorganize dioceses, rebuild the clergy, strengthen itself in education and restore religion.

“The signs of the revolution remained, however. They accentuated a process of de-christianization that was already in course in numerous regions. It left the clergy divided, undermined the Gallican Church, and contributed to the new climate.

“These surprising events cost the religious institutes dearly: the religious life was destroyed by the revolution, because it was thought to be in contradiction with its own spirit. It was seen as opposed to Napoleon, who thought it useless; and yet, in an uncertainty due to a lack of legal security, the religious life developed and multiplied with the same spontaneity as in the 1200’s and 1500’s.

“During the 19<sup>th</sup> century France was a nation in which the Catholic religion was a religion of the State; it had become a nation in which the greater part of the French were Catholic. At the end of the century, it declared itself to be a nation of separation between Church and State.”

It is in this social and cultural upheaval that our saint found his way of spirituality. His own faith was unwavering and he became a firm anchor for many in a stormy sea.

## FRAGMENTS

The following undated fragments give us in capsule form a foretaste of the heartwarming spirituality which he was to share with countless correspondents over a period of approximately 30 years.

*FRAGMENTS (VI 1/3)<sup>1</sup>*

*CO 2065*

1<sup>st</sup> fragment:

Love is life, creates life. Love God like a fire which is always seeking fresh fare, like a child who finds life from its mother rather than [within] itself.

Love touches all the virtues and is bound to none of them, it touches all sacrifices and calls them love, like the sun it touches all created things while remaining pure and ever-fruitful in God alone.

These are my wishes for you and my final blessing.

Eymard

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2<sup>nd</sup> fragment:

May God keep these dispositions in you.

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3<sup>rd</sup> fragment:

Receive Communion like a child, sigh for Jesus like the hart in the desert.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Rev. Fr. Rene Robin, SSS, these lines appear to have been written on a letter addressed to Fr. Eymard and returned by him with the above marginal notes. The longer fragment must have been written in the blank space after the letter and the shorter fragments throughout the letter, between the lines; in fact one can see traces of a different handwriting surrounding the short fragments and preceding the long one. The original is in the Marseilles House. These manuscript notes were found in the House of Marseilles pasted inside the book by Rodriguez, Vol. II.