

Life and Letters
of
Saint Peter Julian Eymard
Volume Four
1862 - 1864

Founder

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

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INTRODUCTION

“All sacrifices put together are as nothing when we have our Lord on his throne: to see him, adore him, love him, serve him, isn’t that Paradise?” to Mme. Gourd, June 5, 1863.

The years 1862-1864 represent a particularly fruitful period in the life, teaching and apostolate of St. Peter Julian Eymard. His work as a Founder now entered a new phase: to perfect and solidify what was already underway, and so, much time was spent in making new foundations, in writing and revising rules for the men as well as for the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, preparing a Manual for Associates and rules for the Novitiate.

He was inspired by his vision of the Eucharist and tirelessly proclaimed its meaning. It is the Wedding Feast of the King to which rich and poor are invited and to which some are called to give their lives. Each foundation was seen as a new throne for the Lamb, a divine fireplace being set for all to see, a gathering in the Cenacle where all were called to prayer.

His roles as a Founder and spiritual director continued hand in hand. The conferences, parish missions and letters from this period reveal a man who was spiritually focused, single-hearted. Jesus is the true center of life, of the heart. The influence of the Gospel of John is evident time and time again.

Father Herve Thibault, SSS, aptly summarized this spiritual direction in his booklet, “Eymard, as Spiritual Counsellor” as follows:

“The main lines of his spiritual guidance as can be seen from his correspondence at the time, follow loosely the spirituality of the French Jesuits of the French School:

1. Be God-centered instead of self-concerned.
2. Strive for union with God above the service of others.
3. Frequent and daily Communion.
4. Pray with your heart more than with your mind.
5. May God suffice you; may God be your stay.

He was a spiritual director and not a psychotherapist. He did not help people to accept themselves on the human level, but to center their life in God.”

St. Peter Julian pursued his search for the Cenacle tirelessly: the Cenacle-community of men and women worshipping together in Paris, gave way to the Cenacles of new foundations. These became as if symbolically a pursuit for the Cenacle of Jerusalem itself, the place of the Institution of the Holy Eucharist. As we shall see later, this was also to give way to another, deeper, more interior Cenacle, to which he was being called...

PRAYER TO ST. PETER JULIAN EYMARD

“O Blessed Peter Julian, who received the outstanding privilege of knowing so perfectly the treasures of the most Holy Eucharist, to be on fire with it with seraphic love and to consecrate your tireless zeal to make it known and glorified perpetually by the whole world, obtain for us, we beg you, the spiritual and temporal graces which we need.

Obtain for us particularly to become, like you, faithful adorers in spirit and in truth of this Great Sacrament, and to work ever more to acquire the Christian virtues, especially a sincere humility, to be able to live a life of union with Jesus Christ which was the constant object of your zeal and which is the principal effect of Holy Communion in our souls.

Finally, obtain for us, O Blessed Peter Julian, your filial devotion to Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, in order that we may learn from this dear Mother to serve and adore on earth Jesus veiled in the Eucharist, to be able to adore and glorify him face to face in Heaven. Amen.”

- From the Directory of Prayers of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament.

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 as Conference Servants.

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 1845-1852; II 1853-1857; III 1858-1861; IV 1862-1864; V 1865-1866; VI 1867-1868.

Technical difficulties of translation are ever-present. His long rambling sentences, a string of phrases divided by semi-colons, exclamation points in mid-sentence are a challenge, or perhaps a temptation, to the translator. At first an attempt was made to rectify the grammar in the process of translation. It became evident that short sentences made his style abrupt, and interrupted the flow of thought from phrase to phrase which are characteristic of his style. Therefore, to safeguard the personality and feeling of the original writings, the sentences were left in their original form as much as possible... commas are often replaced by semi-colons.

Whatever conference or retreat titles which are available at the present time have been inserted at their proper place. This list is not complete or exhaustive. However, if there are gaps, it may spur on further research to complete this aspect of the Founder's life which is the framework and background which help to keep the letters in proper perspective.

A few letters in this Volume have never been published before and are published here for the first time. These are indicated by (U) after the name of the addressee.

Our Saint continued to perfect his Constitutions until his dying day. In the Appendix at the end of this Volume are outlines of the Constitutions produced during these years with a few key chapters translated in full. This also may spur on further research on the part of the interested reader.

Sr. Catherine Marie Caron, Translator