

Life and Letters
of
Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Volume Six
1867 - 1868

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
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*“We must bow our heads beneath the Cross and pray for those
who persecute and cause suffering.” (May 1, 1867)*

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout the first five volumes of the Life and Letters of St. Peter Julian Eymard we have followed the saint step by step through the major experiences and decisions of his life, described in his own words. We have benefited from the advice and direction given to countless contemporaries. We have discovered his humanness and his holiness and followed the development of his spirituality.

In this sixth and final Volume, we will learn even further how to face difficulties, accusations, challenges. St. Peter Julian teaches us by his life the meaning of personal transformation in Christ, of heroic hope in time of crisis and difficulties which were particularly acute in these last two years of his life. (1867-1868)

It is best described in his own words: “My soul is sad and crushed. Our Lord is leaving me in a vast desert. No doubt I deserve it.” (To Sr. Benoite, Feb. 22, 1868.)

Through it all he followed his own counsels to others: “If you don’t have any consolations, you have what is worth more, the strength and peace of trust in God. Hold onto these two possessions at any price, for they rise above the waves of the sea and the clouds of this life....

...Keep your heart uplifted and happy, keep a light spirit toward your troubles, but keep singing your love for both this and the eternal homeland.” (To Mme. Lepage, May 20, 1868.)

In this Volume, we also have access to a listing of conferences given to the Blessed Sacrament priests, brothers and novices, from the notes taken by the then brother, later Father Albert Tesniere SSS. The titles of these have been indicated here in their proper place. The frequency of the talks given here provide us an inkling of the frequency of his teachings to his community in the previous undocumented period.

In 1837, St. Peter Julian had written to his sister Marianne: “It is in the Lord that I come to speak with you in a spiritual way. Since our affection is rooted in God and for Heaven, it is only right that we assist one another on the long and difficult journey to eternity...”

Throughout these six volumes of Letters, we have been witnesses and beneficiaries of this desire of his, and we also have in some way been assisted on our own spiritual journey.

It is with a certain regret that we reach the closing final documents of his life... feeling the emotion of parting with a dear and beloved companion. Through his correspondence he has become also for us a caring friend, father and sure guide. May he continue through the Communion of Saints to be at our side and to guide us on the way.

Sr. Catherine Marie Caron SSS,
Translator

Commentary on the Collection of Letters

The collection of the correspondence of St. Peter Julian Eymard represents only a small part of the letters he wrote during his life. That is because he did not keep a copy of his letters, or only exceptionally so. Besides, we do not know of all his correspondents; he personally regularly destroyed the mail he received as a matter of discretion. He assured Mother Marguerite and other correspondents of it. Therefore, we only have the letters which his correspondents preserved, and even these collections are not complete. Certain letters were lost, even among those written to his sister Marianne. Other correspondents destroyed those letters which referred to personal issues, as Mme. d'Andigne declared in the investigative processes.

As for the specific question of July 19, 1968, we only have about three of the twenty or so letters which Father wrote.

As for the correspondence dictated to Fr. Tesniere at La Mure, there is no trace of it, nor hope of finding it.

Fr. Andre Guitton SSS
September 1, 1994

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