

CHAPTER IV

The Final Days July - August 1868

*“We die by degrees. We must resign ourselves to it.”
July 19, 1868*

Preacher and Superior

Plans for a Foundation in Lyons

Return to La Mure

Illness and Death

July 7 - Panegyric on St. Peter Fourrier at l'Abbaye-aux-bois: How to become a saint. Fr. Eymard was accompanied by Father Albert Tesniere, then Brother Albert, to whom he related many details about the foundation years.

2200

CO 2201

TO MISS THEODORINE THOMAS

(III 13/14)

*A.R.T.E.*¹

Paris, July 11, 1868

Dear daughter in our Lord,

Thank you for your little note. I was waiting to hear from you.

You must certainly expect some thorns, because at such a time self-interest often manifests itself full force. If you soften the thorns in the fire of charity, you might even burn them away.

You want real news about my health. I am suffering rheumatic pains caused by gout; sometimes more, sometimes less. The doctor said it would last a week. May God be praised! Will you be staying a long time? He wants me to go either to the country or to the springs at Neris, etc.

I received the 500 francs from M. Michel. I recommend myself to your prayers. We pray very poorly when we are ill.

All yours in our Lord,
Eymard

My sister is better, but she is still home-bound.

I may go to see her if I must go to the country. I haven't told them anything, for I'm not in any condition to travel right now.

2201

CO 2202

TO MME. MARECHAL, WIDOW (NEE DUFRESNE)

(VII 19/20)

Paris, July 12, 1868

...² So now you are a grandmother - that does indeed make me happy! God's gifts are good and when well-cultivated, are very good! - I am very ill with a rheumatic gout in my left hand. It is one of the small thorns of life.

¹ Adveniat Regnum Tuum Eucharisticum, Thy Eucharistic Kingdom Come.

² Excerpt from a letter.

2202

CO 2204

TO MISS JOSEPHINE GOURD (SR. JOSEPH DU SS)
(V 76/76)

Paris, July 13, 1868

Madame and dear daughter in Our Lord,

I have been suffering for a week from rheumatic gout in my arm, and that is what prevented me from answering you. I hope to come to see you Wednesday the 15th or the next day. The pain is less acute. But don't trouble yourself in any way, because I don't expect to stay with you very long since I want to go see my sister who is ill.

I will see you soon. I remain very united to you in our Lord.

Eymard

P.S. My best regards to Mother.³ I'm not writing to her, since I will see her and it's difficult for me to write.

2203

CO 2203

TO FR. HENRI BILLON SSS
(III 2/2)

Very dear Father,

Happy Feast of St. Henry!⁴ I thank you for your wishes for St. Peter's feast day! May God grant you every grace of holiness and joy in his holy service.

Until later, when I can write longer.

All yours in our Lord,
Eymard, S.⁵

2204

CO 2207

TO MLES. MARIANNE EYMARD AND NANETTE BERNARD
(III 145/145 VI 10)

I will be traveling to Lyons, dear sisters. I am planning to come to see you. It will be around the 25th of this month, but I will let you know the exact day.

I had some rheumatic pains, I am better.

I will be seeing you soon, dear sisters.

Eymard⁶

³ Mother Marguerite Guillot. They were together in Vichy.

⁴ July 13.

⁵ Abbreviation for Superior.

TO MISS MARGUERITE GUILLOT (MOTHER MARGUERITE DU SS)

(II 395/395 VI 2)

Paris, July 16, 1868

Dear daughter,

I couldn't leave today. I expect to leave tomorrow, Friday, and get to Vichy in the evening just as you did.

⁶ Written in pencil as a footnote to the following letter of Mme. Eulalie Tenaillon (A.T.) to Fr. Eymard's sister:

J.M.J. [Jesus, Mary, Joseph]

From my dear solitude

My poor dear and holy Sister,

I am writing you a few words to reassure you about our dear father. He is neither dead, nor sick, nor displeased with you. Since he knows that I give you news about him, he worries less. I realize that it is not the same thing for you. I would be the same. I understand perfectly how pleased you are to receive news from him. That is only natural and right.

How wicked and intelligent the devil is to put all those worries in your mind! Could you imagine that our dear father, who loves you so much, would allow anyone to say anything against you! If you had seen how sad and pained he was when he heard about your illness, you would have no such thoughts.

It is just the lack of time; he is always so busy! And then he was suffering badly, but he was not sick. He had rheumatic pains which wore him out, and I believe I can tell you without being indiscrete, that he is planning to go see you. I am sure that if he knew all the grief you are going through on his account, he would really be hurt by it.

I will leave space in my letter for him and I will not mail it until he writes a few lines on it.

I am pleased to learn that you are better. Renew your courage then and eat well so that he may find you strong when he comes.

However, don't expect him in the next few days, because he must go elsewhere before going there. He has not left Paris yet. He was due to leave today, but he was prevented from doing so. Have courage and trust, and do not doubt the affection of our dear and holy father any longer. That would hurt him too much.

I feel very badly about our dear Nanette's accident. Nevertheless let's hope that she is wrong in thinking that she will no longer be able to work. Please tell me precisely what happened to her. I assure you that I am praying very much to God for both of you, every day in the dear chapel of love of our dear Jesus. Please pray very much both of you, for my fourth son in order that he also may go to increase the ranks of the holy Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament. At this time he needs to have us pray for him in a very particular way. Poor little one! The devil is really doing all he can to prevent him from following the way of God's call. Do not miss praying for him every day and for my dear Zouave.

Do not forget me in your prayers either. I have greater need of them than you would think.

Miss Thomas is not in Paris right now. She left for a short time to be near her aunt who was very sick and died. She was 85 years old. At that age there was little hope for healing. She returned to Paris for a few days and left again for family affairs, so I cannot give her your errand.

Courage, farewell, my two dear holy souls. May our dear Jesus tell you all my love for you! If I could go to console you myself, you can be sure that it would soon be done. But God does not will it. He wants me here at his feet. Should I not consider myself very fortunate? Oh! Pray to him very much for me so that I may at least love this dear Jesus a little!

The one who loves you more than you can imagine and who embraces you both very tenderly. Could I do otherwise than love the sister of my dear Father, since I don't know how to do anything by halves!...

⁷ The original copy of this often quoted text cannot be located at this time. However, because of its beauty and frequent use, it is left here as a footnote:

"We have known the charity of God" (I Jn. 4:16). To believe in love is everything! It is not enough to believe in truth: one must believe in love. The love, that is, that our Lord Jesus Christ shows in the Blessed Sacrament. It is by living faith in the Eucharist that we make return for Christ's love for us. Pray for a simple and pure faith in the Eucharist. Men may teach you the subtleties of its dogma, but Jesus alone can give you belief in it. Come and receive not only its consolation, but be strengthened in faith. Yes, here is the Eucharist! What more do you want?

The Final Days

My pain is bearable, but makes it impossible for me to write.
My spiritual and fraternal regards to your very dear sisters in the Lord.

All yours,
Eymard

Madame Guillot
Barre House
rue de la Tour, Vichy (Allier)

2206

CO 2206

TO MISS THEODORINE THOMAS
(III 14/14)

Paris, July 16, 1868

Dear daughter in our Lord,

I am leaving tomorrow, at 9:00 a.m., for Vichy, where I will spend a few days and then I'll go immediately to La Mure. I will expect news from you there. I hate to leave without blessing you and getting you settled in your new apartment.

This morning, everything was moved to your place. Fr. Stafford and Brother John directed and supervised everything. Everything is done. Nothing was broken. It took an hour and a half to bring up your piano: it is fine.

My rheumatism is nothing during the day. It is more bothersome at night. Perhaps the trip will make it disappear? If La Mure were not so far, I would invite you to come to see my poor sister. Your prayers will accompany me.

I bless you, as we are united in our Lord.

Eymard

July 17 - Departure from Paris for Vichy, where Mother Marguerite, her sister Anne-Marie, Mme. Josephine Gourd and her daughter Stephanie were at the mineral springs for their health.

2207

CO 2208

TO MME. LEPAGE
(IV 26/26)

Paris, June 17, 1868

Very dear Madame in our Lord,

I am always late with you! It is because of a trip, and then of an acute rheumatism in my left arm. I have had it for the last 12 days.

2208

CO 2209

TO MILES. MARIANNE EYMARD AND NANETTE BERNARD
(III 144/145 VI 10)

Vichy, July 19, 1868

Very dear sisters,

I hope to reach you by the end of this week. I came here to see Mother Guillot and others I know. I will be going to Lyons and then to La Mure to thank God and Our Lady of La Salette for having healed you. Your illness had really worried me and I prayed God so much to heal you!

I am feeling better from the rheumatic pains which were not serious after all, since they were going from one limb to another. That is why the doctors sent me to get some fresh air and have a little vacation.

I am very happy to be able to come see you, dear sisters. I wasn't expecting this favor from the good Lord, because there are so many things which should keep me in Paris!

I will see you soon then! Don't come to meet me, and don't prepare anything in advance. When I get to Grenoble, I'll send you a dispatch immediately to inform you about my arrival at La Mure.

Your brother in our Lord,
Eymard

2209

CO 2210

TO FR. FREDERIC STAFFORD SSS
(III 11/11)

Vichy, July 19, 1868

Very dear Father,

I am here [at Vichy]. The doctor doesn't want me to follow a treatment for my rheumatic gout, but to go to the mountains.

Therefore I will leave here tomorrow or the next day (to La Mure d'Isere). I can see by several letters from Brother Aime, especially his last one on the 16th, that he is mentally ill. The best thing to do is to send him to us in Paris. - It would be unfortunate if he should go mad. The sternest letters do him no good. He might even be inclined to take very regrettable means to leave. So, send him immediately.

I gave orders to Fr. Crepon in Paris about it. This trial shows us that we must leave him in the lay state and in humility. - He was put forward too much at Saint-Maurice. Fr. Chanuet recognizes it. It is a good lesson for us.

Goodbye, dear Father. Pray for me. I'll try to go to make my retreat at my Pilgrimage place of graces, at Notre Dame du Laus, if the rheumatism leaves me a little peace.

All yours in our Lord,
Eymard, S.

P.S. Miss Guillot is here, quite ill. She must discontinue her treatments; she is very sick. The Gourd ladies are here also.

TO MME. ANTOINETTE DE GRANDVILLE
(IV 104/104)

A.R.T.

Vichy, July 19, 1868

Very dear Madame in our Lord,

Finally, I received news from you!

Thank you, because I expect it. We never forget our first acquaintances from the beginnings and you were in Paris when we began our Work.

I see that you are still complaining about your old faults; you must shake them when you can, because they are making the road to Heaven longer, more tedious, and fruitless for this life.

There are some virtues which blossom only with our last breath: such as mortification, gentleness, patience and self-denial. Therefore, we must water them every day: we must cultivate them anew. Here, faithfulness is the real virtue; to get up again is to heal.

Never become discouraged, that would be ingratitude or spiritual pride. Always walk in obedience and trust and you will reach the heavenly goal.

As the years increase, they weaken us physically. We die by degrees; we must resign ourselves to it! But fortunately the heart doesn't age. On the contrary, it becomes younger as it inherits what is lost by the other faculties.

Love our Lord very much. Yes, I will certainly pray for your devout and beloved sister, in order that Heaven might leave her with you awhile.

I came here to see some people who are ill. I have rheumatic gout which won me a few weeks of rest; from here I'll go to see my sick sister at La Mure d'Iserre and from there go to Notre Dame de la Salette where I will remember you.

I bless you with all my soul in our Lord.

Eymard, Superior

- July 20 Farewell to Mother Marguerite and Mme. Gourd. He set out for La Mure.*
July 21 Last Mass at the sanctuary of La Salette in Grenoble. That evening arrived at La Mure.
July 29 He rose out of bed for the last time.
July 30 Mass and Communion were held in his room by Fr. Chanuet, who was called from Paris.
Aug. 1 Communion given as viaticum. Holy death at 2:30 p.m.
Aug. 2 In the evening, funeral.
Aug. 3 Burial service.