

APPENDIX I

Excerpt From the Journal of Marguerite Guillot addressed to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament regarding her first meeting with Fr. Eymard.

“Toward the end of February 1845, the promise of our Lord came to pass.¹ Reverend Father Eymard, who was then Provincial of the Society of Mary, came to preach the Lenten [mission] at the Hospice of Charity, very near to where we lived. Since my elderly mother could not go as far as the parish church (St. Francis de Sales) she followed Father Eymard’s conferences. After eight days she said to me: ‘Daughter, I want you to come and hear my preacher; he is an apostle, a saint.’ I did believe my dear mother, but I really felt frustrated and I told her that I wanted to continue the Mission at the parish. My mother said: “Come, that would really please me and you will like it.” I made my mother’s will my own. It was a Tuesday, and Father Eymard was speaking about the spiritual trials of the soul, the means the soul should use to benefit from them and, finally, that trials are always a proof of the love of our Lord toward us. I thought, ‘How is it that this priest seems to be speaking only for me?’²

“A feeling of respect and veneration took hold of me merely at the sight of this Priest. I thanked our good Master for what I was hearing which was so suited to my needs. Obedience had obtained this grace for me. I was left with this powerful thought. What a man of God! It would be so good to open one’s heart to him! but I left it at that. I even regretted the thought as I believed he was only a visiting preacher, and I continued the Mission begun at the parish.

“Our good Master knew what he needed to do. The first day of the month of March, consecrated to St. Joseph, the true director of souls, Fr. Eymard announced that he would hear confessions. My dear mother was beside herself. She said: ‘My poor daughter, I am timid, I want to go to confession to Fr. Eymard. Bring me and you can go first.’ At that same time the confessor of the Institute fell seriously ill. I wanted to go to the Jesuit Fathers and it was difficult for me to give up my desire. However, I brought my mother and just as she wished, I went to confession first.

“Oh! How great you are, oh! Kindness of God! How admirable you are when you pursue a soul! Who knows what took place during this first hour of conversation? Ah! God knows and so do I. All I can say is that Father Eymard was for me what the sun is on a dark place at high noon. He told me about my life, my spiritual state of soul, my spiritual attraction, my form of prayer, my sorrows, the graces of God to me and I had not said anything yet. I had only said the *Confiteor*. Oh! happy moment! fortunate hour! My heart was flooded with joy and gratitude. During my thanksgiving, these sentiments were sighed forth between God and myself. I kept my secret and I resolved to benefit from this temporary direction during Lent, as I did not imagine that Fr. Eymard was residing in Lyons, as the Society of Mary was then unknown to me.

“I felt sorry to see Lent moving so quickly and I was storing away my spiritual provisions. On Holy Saturday, Father told me: ‘You are going to make a novena with me to seek God’s will for you; whether he wants me to continue directing you.’ - ‘How can that be Father,’ said I, ‘Aren’t you a visitor?’ - ‘No’ he answered, ‘I live in Lyons. - ‘Where Father?’ - ‘With the Marists.’ - ‘What is that?’ - Father told me kindly about the Society of Mary and I said: - ‘What is your work?’ - ‘Alas,’ he replied very humbly, ‘I am the Provincial. I so young, at thirty-three years of age and without experience, I am ashamed to say it. Pray for me so that I may fulfill this task since it has been given to me.’ - ‘I am afraid,’ I said to him. ‘I am afraid of God, that he may ask too much of me, and you also.’ Father smiled and said: ‘Well, we both want only the will of God. I am also afraid, you don’t want anything to do with me, nor I with you - Therefore, we will do only what God wills. We must reject our fear and disregard it.’

“We made our novena, with a *Veni Creator* and daily Communion.

¹ Interior words: “Be comforted. I will soon send you a more perfect path of obedience.”

² This last sentence was added in pencil, perhaps under Marguerite's dictation when the journal was reread to her at the end of her life.

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“The ninth day fell on Quasimodo Sunday.¹ I would find out the will of God for me. I entered the Church - Father was at the Elevation of the Mass. I begged our Lord by his precious Blood to give him light so that I might truly follow the will of God for that is all I wanted.

“After his thanksgiving Father came to the confessional and said: ‘My poor daughter, you caused me many distractions during Mass, especially at the Elevation, but what can we do - we must receive them when God sends them.’

“‘What distractions did you have about me Father and what does God want from me?’

“‘That I should continue with you, my poor daughter,’ said Father ‘and that I should care for your soul.’

“It was like Saul on the road to Damascus. Light had broken through. I understood the grace which the divine Master was giving me. From that time on, my soul was entrusted to him by God. The good Master gave me total trust to open my soul to him, absolute submission, respect and veneration for the smallest counsel. I became a daughter to him, giving thanks to our Lord, yes, his blessed daughter, submissive in every circumstance of my life, until the death of my blessed Father.

“If only I had in writing all the directions of this man of God. He considered only the well-being of the soul, he did not move ahead of grace but followed it. He communicated so much light, so many graces to the soul. He spoke little, but his words would touch, penetrate [the soul]. He was kind, gentle, and also strong and strict when it was a matter of correcting a fault. He never gave in when he asked for a sacrifice, seasoning it with a motive of love such as: ‘You would please our Lord - could you refuse Him?’ Once this love was understood, it was no longer possible to resist.

“He said: ‘If you only knew what a director must be like, concerned to pray day and night for the directee, and often prayer is not sufficient. We must join mortification and fasting with it. How I worry about you,’ he would often say. ‘My poor daughter, you alone make me work more than all the other souls which I direct put together.’ Oh, this is my embarrassment. I do believe it. My needs were as great as my faults.

“Father insisted that I give him an account of my soul in writing and that I should link my past direction to the present one. I would also write his counsels, the means to use for each [spiritual] state which the Good Lord led me through. It became easy. I did it for six years. I didn’t know that Father was keeping these notes. When he left Lyons he returned two large volumes to me and said: ‘I am going to give you a proof of my trust. These are your notes which I kept. Later they will help you. Keep them through obedience.’ I kept them secretly for several years and I must admit that I read them with spiritual benefit, but a serious illness led me to ask Father to burn them. He thought I was dying and he gave me permission.

“I often remembered his words: ‘They will help you later.’ It is true at this very moment when I am writing what I remember and then to direct my daughters, and finally to help them after my death.

“This digression is much too long. However, it will please you, my dear daughters. It will allow you to admire the ways of Providence which led my mother to bring her youngest daughter and more, who led her five daughters to be directed by this dear Father to fulfill God’s eventual plan. My mother was proud of it and our blessed Father would like to remind her, - ‘If I know your family, it is because you organized everything.’

¹ Sunday after Easter.

APPENDIX II

MEETING of the Third Order of Mary

December 2, 1849

(continued)

On Simplicity

Today, I am here to speak to you about interior simplicity, and its effects on the state of the soul - to mention two:

The first is to lead us to live in peace with ourselves,

The second is to make us forget ourselves.

To live in peace with ourselves is the condition of happiness on earth. Simplicity gives us this peace, even in the midst of our difficulties and imperfections. That is its secret: a secret known by very few devout people who are always agitated and troubled because the knowledge of their sins and imperfections cause them discouragement. At the sight of their ever growing imperfections they imagine that perfection is not for them. That is because they think it consists in impeccability and consequently in impossibility. Oh! my sisters, don't take this principle as your rule of life or as the condition for your peace of heart. On the contrary, take the principle of the *Imitation*. "All your peace in this wretched life," says the Author, "consists rather in humble patience." Well, these few words say everything. Patience supposes a struggle, a misfortune, a suffering which we could not avoid, but which is connected to our situation, our nature, and consequently, that it all comes to us from God.

You may say: But my faults, my imperfections, do not come from God! 'That's true, they come from our weaknesses, God does not want our faults, but once they have happened, he wants from us the humiliation of it; he wants its poverty; and when a poor sinner becomes more humble, more poor because of his faults, he only becomes more perfect [because of them]. Therefore, my sisters, perfection and progress in it can be found in humility which enables us to bear that state of humiliation, and what is more, to act and live in keeping with it. Here is an example to help you understand my thought. Look at a child. It is full of faults, it is ignorant, it does not have any skills, it ruins everything and falls at any moment into the same faults, and yet this child is candid. It lives in peace, it enjoys itself, it sleeps in peace. Do you know why? It has an interior simplicity and knows itself to be as he is and so he accepts peacefully the humiliation of his situation. He admits his ignorance, his inexperience, his faults. His response to every [accusation] is, that's true. And once he has made this admission, rather than blush, cry or pout over it, he goes to play. People discuss other things, as usual. That is the secret of interior peace: the simplicity of childhood.

Another example: Notice a truly poor person. To look at him is to pity him. We don't understand how he can still love life. He has only rags; he is covered with wounds and bruises. It is true that his condition is very repulsive. Well, however, this poor man sleeps peacefully. He is calm. He lives at peace with his rags and his infirmities. He is used to it. He considers the rejection and neglect of society as part of his poverty. He accepts everything and lives more peacefully than many others who are wealthier; that is because he has the simplicity of poverty.

Oh! my sisters! Believe me. Find your interior peace in simplicity -in simplicity like a poor man or a child, and it will be unalterable. If you place it in your correction, in your progress, in perfection, you will never have it. A profound reason for this is that the closer we come to God, the more we discover our weakness and our nothingness and that is why the holier a person is the more humble she is. Listen to the Blessed Virgin, recognizing that she had been raised to the divine dignity of Mother of God: "My soul," she said, "glorifies the Lord, for he has looked on the lowliness of his servant." That is perfect simplicity which praises God for everything that is due him, and keeps only "lowliness" for itself.

The second effect of simplicity is to make us forget ourselves. What destroys simplicity in us is the life of self-pride - because by it we refer everything to ourselves. We make ourselves the

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rule and the center and when something frustrates us or contradicts our desires, then there is an interior sorrow, then hard feelings, finally, struggle and fighting. A soul that is not interiorly simple is almost always in this state.

But simplicity, on the contrary, pacifies a person, makes her even-tempered, and why? Because it makes us do things through love for the person who commands. So then, each thing is seen only in the pleasure it gives to the beloved person, and in the positive aspect of the thing which is suggested.

Therefore, a soul which is simple in the Christian sense, forgets itself; it does not begin by consulting its own feelings and preferences, but the will and good pleasure of God. There is nothing else for her, nothing that bestows any value on things.

It is the precious effect of Christian simplicity to bring us directly to God without passing through our self-pride. So then, temptation has no opportunity to ruin our works at their source. It was forestalled by our [aiming] immediately for God and his holy will. Then we will love everything equally because what gives each thing its value is not its intrinsic worth, nor its suitability to our personal wishes, or our personal tastes, but only our love for the will of God who wants or desires it.

Such is the life of the simple child. Things are nothing for him, nor does he worry about them! nor does he have any repugnance. That is why he is prompt in his obedience to his mother! It is because he is simple and acts without any return of self-pride.

So, my Sisters, become simple like children, like the Blessed Virgin. Simplicity is as great as love. Let us grow in Christian simplicity through divine love. Let us truly make God our center [of life]. Let us lose ourselves in his love in order to live by his Divine life.

Amen.

APPENDIX III

Preface by Fr. Edmond Tenaillon SSS,¹ to Volume IV of the French Letters

Letter of Spiritual Direction to Lay Persons
by St. Peter Julian Eymard, published in Paris in 1901.

FORWARD

When St. Peter Julian recommended in a letter:

“Keep in mind the three necessary qualities of a spiritual director,” he was unwittingly describing himself:

- “empathetic because of grace and because of the trust he inspires;
- strong inner life; (otherwise they are like train conductors)
- experienced; prudence requires it.”²

The three hundred and forty four letters of spiritual direction included in the fourth volume (French letters) of our Founder’s correspondence strongly demonstrate this self-description, and complete our picture of the Servant of God. They increase our admiration for his strong and tender piety, his noble view of life joined to an exceptionally practical mind, mature prudence, and genuine sensitivity which flow from a generous, thoughtful and faithful heart.

Like all the saints, Fr. Eymard had marvelous ability to attract others. Everything about him communicated the spirit of Jesus Christ. People flocked to him to experience a touch of heaven.

Few confessors in our century - other than the venerable Cure d’Ars - heard as many confessions, directed and comforted as many people as he.

He himself admitted with charming candor that he no longer knew how to ward off the flood of visitors and penitents who besieged him in the parlor and confessional. “As time goes on people in Paris absorb more and more of my time and steal it all... I am always in the pulpit or in the confessional... I am sought after on every side and hardly have a moment to recollect myself... in Angers, they laid hold of me and ate me alive... that seems to be my lot. I am everyone’s poor messenger. How fortunate I would be if at least I were God’s ambassador...”³

His charity for souls was boundless. As numerous and difficult as his responsibilities were as founder of two religious families, he never lost sight of those who entrusted themselves to his direction. He listened to them not only in the confessional where he strengthened and directed them, but he also worked to further their progress and perfection through correspondence. He responded to their fears and difficulties, clarified and supported past directions, and spread the fire of zeal and the ardor of charity far and wide. He didn’t rest until the person was totally given to the service of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

As extensive as this collection of letters may be, we know it is only a small part of his voluminous correspondence. So many treasures were lost, or bore fruit only in the private lives of individuals. Nonetheless, the collection is very rich and reveals Fr. Eymard as a director who was as sure as he was enlightened, as prudent as he was devout, as tender as he was strong.

It becomes evident that his heart was at the service of souls, his humanity at the service of his priesthood. Strength was born in kindness. He used to advantage the trust and affection given him to speak honestly.

Fr. Eymard’s direction had a single purpose: to lead people to unity of life, thoughts, feelings and discernment with Jesus Eucharistic. Diverse ways and means were needed to reach this goal according to the temperament, circumstances, situations and special graces of each penitent.

¹ Postulator of the Cause of Beatification.

² Letter 6 to Madame Jordan, December 3, 1864.

³ This thought is repeated often in his letters, especially toward the end of his life.

This was the principal quality of this prudent director. He was attentive to the grace of each one, their personal attraction, the special action of the Holy Spirit who breathes where He wills, and then respecting fully the freedom of souls and God's grace in them, he directed them strongly and gently toward the most Blessed Sacrament, which he justly called: "The center of everything."

When he was dealing with a generous person, he would ask and obtain a great deal. It was easier to deal with one who was just beginning and still knew very little about the spiritual life. What great prudence, sensitivity and perseverance he used when dealing with the conversion of a sinner!

For now, we will limit ourselves to mentioning the key points without multiplying details. But we repeat that a particular quality of his direction was its simplicity, whereby he opened his own heart to those who awakened his trust. He would admit both his imperfections and his spiritual joys to them with the simplicity of a child, asking for the help of their prayers. He wrote to one of his directees: "Everyday I find a nest-full of faults in myself, weaknesses which were well hidden, and I discover that when I thought I was adequate, I was only poor, weak and blind."

His letters are natural and without artificiality. He wrote without rereading his letters, often forgetting the punctuation. He often wrote his letters on the train while travelling. It's very likely that his many occupations and deep humility left him with little time and inclination to work on his style or to fill in the periods. Nevertheless, we find such a variety of noble and often sublime reflections about events and persons! Such a breath of eloquence and poetry flow through these letters! Like St. Francis of Assisi, he loved nature, birds, flowers, rivers and mountains. He easily became enthusiastic over the works of the Lord. All contemplatives have loved this way of speaking. Their purity of mind draws them to nature's beautiful scenes. I see Fr. Eymard as a poet, unknown to himself, a poet in the highest and most sincere meaning of the word. That is, he was gifted with deep feeling. He let his heart open up to express precise ideas, clear nuances of feeling, a song from his soul.

But first and above all, Father was a charmer of souls. If he sought them with such ardent, sensitive and persevering zeal, it was because he dreamed of "bringing about the beautiful kingdom of Jesus Christ on earth."

So, he was deeply venerated by those who had the good fortune of being formed in his school. They considered it an honor that he was the one who had won them over fully to the Eucharist; that they had committed themselves seriously to the royal service under the influence of its apostle's ardent words of love.

Those who outlived their holy director were unanimous in proclaiming his helpful and decisive influence in handing their lives over to God. That is Father Eymard's highest glory. We believe that readers will discover this for themselves in these letters.