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La Mure: "Toward discovering a man and a saint" - Pilgrimage in the eymardian places



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As the solemnity of St Peter-Julian Eymard, Founder of our Congregation and that of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament is approaching, on 2 August, we wish to share what we experienced in the places where he lived and carried out his mission. This witnesses to how our Saint's life and mission are always vibrant and present.

To really know someone, you have to take a few steps with them. Between **20 and 26 June 2021** six pilgrims, Sara, Rossella, Marco, Francesco, Gianfranco and Fr Manuel (leader of the group) set off, visiting some places that shaped the life and where Saint Peter-Julian Eymard made his important decisions. Here we discover a man and a saint who, unlike what is presented to us in the photos of the time, serious and self-confident, was on a continuous journey, who was farsighted and even when he thought saw ahead, looked even further.

Our pilgrimage was not a simple visit to places, but also a search for a key to reading the meaning they had in the life of Saint Peter-Julian Eymard, and to draw from it a starting point to reflect about ourselves and on our path.

La Mure the base camp of our pilgrimage was where we were welcomed both by the volunteers of the "Maison Eymard" (members of the association "Les amis du père Eymard en Matheysine"), who took care of us, even delighting us with meals prepared by them, and also by the local community of the Blessed

Sacrament religious. Each of our days, in the room where Father Eymard died, now used as a chapel, began and ended with Lauds and Vespers.

La Mure, the place of Saint Peter-Julian's birth on earth and to heaven, presented us an opportunity to reflect about how the place where we were born has affected our Christian formation and education.

We visited the Marian sanctuaries of Laus, Osier and La Salette: the first two stages of our pilgrim journey, linked to St Peter-Julian's First Communion and his first Mass, were occasions to meditate on the presence of Our Lady in our life and about the significance of Mary's apparitions throughout history.

But the most impressive place of all the stages of our journey was the Rock of Saint Romans, where Saint Peter-Julian, while beholding the beauty of creation, experienced the love of God. It is only by visiting this Rock that you can truly appreciate the experience lived by Father Eymard.

Other stops were Chatte, the place where he had his first appointment as curate, and Monteynard, where he had his second post as parish priest.

Each stage of our pilgrimage guided by Fr Manuel Barbiero, a knowledgeable expert of the eymardian places, was divided into a time of visit and that of prayer and practical reflection, first personal and then shared by all.

This experience was for me, and I think for all, a time of authentically getting to know Saint Peter-Julian Eymard in a way that was beyond a mere historical narration of episodes of his life. It provided an understanding that did not neglect the human, personal and spiritual relationships of Father Eymard.

This was a journey through various places where he humanly experienced doubts, relationships, questions, and a continuous search for answers, but thanks to the action of the Spirit, the seed of grace and holiness grew.

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