

# *To Preach Nothing but Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ Eucharistic*

A Pastoral Letter from the Most Reverend John O. Barres  
to the People of God of the Diocese of Rockville Centre  
on the Life and Eucharistic Mission of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

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My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Every period of Catholic evangelization and mission flows from a rediscovery of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, in the Holy Eucharist.<sup>1</sup> Pope Benedict XVI emphasized this point in his Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis*, and near that document's end, reminded us why this is so: "We cannot keep to ourselves the love we celebrate in the Sacrament [of the Eucharist]. By its very nature, it asks to be communicated to everyone."<sup>2</sup>

Today, the Church in the United States is immersed in a period of Eucharistic Revival. This time of grace invites us to deepen our love for the Lord in the Eucharist and proclaim his Real Presence among us.

Loving Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and sharing that love on mission: This is the rhythm of the Eucharistic Revival. It is a familiar rhythm and one woven into the story of every saint. Indeed, holy men and women, whatever their ecclesial mission and in whatever age they lived, consumed the Body and Blood of the Lord, knew his Presence in their lives, and were set on fire as disciples.

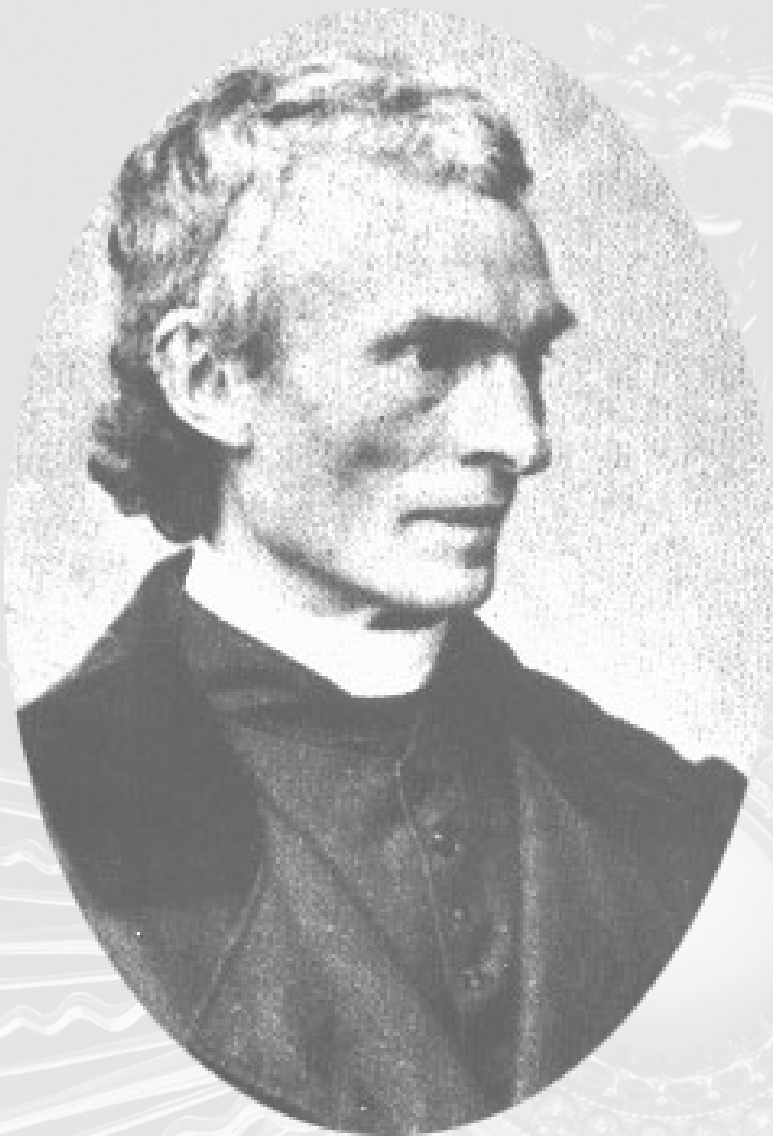
The rhythm is common to every saint, and during this Eucharistic Revival, I would like to share with you the story of one in particular, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, who can be a model and intercessor in this time of turning to the Eucharistic Lord.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard was born on February 4, 1811, in the French Alps. He spent his entire life in France and died on August 1, 1868. However, in those fifty-seven years, and with the help of God, he accomplished much and became a Eucharistic evangelizer and revivalist par excellence.

1. Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 6.

2. Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 84.





Eymard lived in the wake of the French Revolution, which greatly persecuted the Church, and so the Church he knew was in a period of rebuilding, both physically and spiritually. His discovery of his vocation - *to preach nothing but Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ Eucharistic* - was not immediate but was a journey guided by the Holy Spirit.

On the day of his First Holy Communion, Peter Julian Eymard knew that it was his calling to be a priest. At the age of 23, having overcome the loss of his mother, vocational opposition from his father, and a serious illness, he was ordained to the priesthood in the Diocese of Grenoble.

While serving as a diocesan priest, he received another vocational call: the call to religious life. Before his bishop would release him to enter the novitiate, however, he was told to have all his parishioners make their “Easter Duty”, that is to say, to make a sacramental confession and to receive Holy Communion on Easter<sup>3</sup> (in this time, frequent communion was uncommon). A seemingly monumental task, he applied himself to this work. Two years later he happily reported to the bishop that he had successfully prepared his parishioners, and all had made their Easter Duty. The bishop was not only surprised but urged Father Eymard to remain a priest in the

diocese, recognizing the asset he would be in evangelization, catechesis and as a pastor of souls. Father Eymard renewed his request to the bishop, who wisely sent him off with his blessing.<sup>4</sup> While departing his parish, his sister and other parishioners urged him to stay, however, he replied, “God calls me today. Tomorrow will be too late.”<sup>5</sup> The wise bishop sent Father Eymard off with his blessing.

Father Eymard joined the Society of Mary (the Marists), a newly founded religious congregation. He promoted devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and was very involved in a lay offshoot of the Marists known as the Third Order of Mary. While in Paris, Father Eymard encountered the practice of Eucharistic Adoration. Remaining devoted to the Blessed Mother as he was from a young age, he also saw a vocation to promote devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He saw the need in his time to make reparation for sacrileges and to make people aware of the abiding love of Jesus for humanity in the Sacrament of God’s Love.

3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2042.

4. Rev. Albert Tesniere, S.S.S., *Blessed Peter Julian Eymard: The Priest of the Eucharist* (New York: Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament, 1936), 32-35, 37-38.

5. Rev. Norman Pelletier, S.S.S., *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late: A Life of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Apostle of the Eucharist* (New York: Alba House, 2002), 28-33.

During a Eucharistic procession, he was filled with a desire to “preach nothing but Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ Eucharistic.”<sup>6</sup> Father Eymard, thinking he could do this within the Marist charism approached his superiors about establishing a society for the Blessed Sacrament within the Marists, but his proposal was rejected. He then resolved to leave the Marists to form a society of priests that would engage in the Eucharistic apostolate. This endeavor was approved by the Archbishop of Paris and by Pope Pius IX, who both saw the need for this apostolate.

The time in which Saint Peter Julian Eymard lived was a time of rebuilding in the Church. He and his fellow Blessed Sacrament Fathers dedicated themselves to catechizing adults and adolescents who had never made their First Holy Communion; to helping couples marry in the Church; and to promoting adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. They also promoted frequent and worthy reception of Holy Communion.

At the end of his life, Father Peter Julian Eymard suffered from illness and died in 1868. Throughout his life and through various trials and sufferings, he always put his trust in Jesus Christ and found comfort in the Lord’s love poured out and made known to us in the Holy Eucharist. As a priest offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he learned to conform his life to the mystery of the Lord’s Cross.<sup>7</sup>



In our own day, there are many lessons to take away from the life of this great saint:

**1. Saint Peter Julian Eymard shows us how to be open to promptings of the Holy Spirit.**

His vocational path was not clear-cut. He faced obstacles, and throughout his life he saw his vocation unfold. His heart was open to be led by the Holy Spirit. He always sought to follow God’s will while remaining obedient to his superiors. This brought him freedom, peace, and allowed his endeavors to bear fruit. As a priest, he came to see the need for greater availability of spiritual direction for both priests and laity alike. In his endeavor to be led by the Holy Spirit to carry out God’s will, he formed an apostolic friendship with the great Saint Jean-Marie Vianney. At that time, Father Vianney was the pastor of the small, rural parish of Ars, and today is the patron saint of all parish priests. Saint John Vianney became a member of the Third Order of Mary and encouraged Saint Peter Julian

Eymard in establishing his congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. In encouraging the faithful to listen to Father Eymard, Father Vianney would say: “He is a great saint.”<sup>8</sup> Father Eymard would say of the Curé of Ars: “Do you know that there is a great person in France in our days? A poor country parish priest who works

6. Tesniere, 46.

7. *Ordination of Priests*, 135.

8. André Guitton, *Peter Julian Eymard : Apostle of the Eucharist* (Davao City, Philippines: Blessed Sacrament Fathers, 1994), 140.





miracles, the parish priest of Ars. I dare not say that he is my friend, he is too holy for that!”<sup>9</sup> These two saint-friends supported each other as they sought to follow God’s will for their lives and to lead souls to Christ.

## **2. Saint Peter Julian Eymard teaches us about the centrality of the Eucharist in the Christian life.**

His firm conviction that the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ enabled him to properly order the spiritual life. Eucharistic worship is divine worship. Having a deeper awareness of the Real Presence

of Christ in the Eucharist means that we will be led to adore him in the Blessed Sacrament, and adoring the Blessed Sacrament leads us to the worship of God in offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Mass is the source and summit of our Christian life and faith. In searching for the lost sheep and bringing them back into the fold, he led them to a deep appreciation of, and radical fidelity to, the Sunday Mass.

## **3. Saint Peter Julian Eymard teaches us courageous apostolic zeal that doesn’t fear to do what others might call impossible or undesirable.**

He was not deterred from his goal of entering religious life when his bishop told him to have his whole parish make their Easter Duty. He believed it was possible. He believed in what he was doing and applied himself diligently to the task at hand for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. As a priest in Paris, he set out to catechize the people who had not been taught the truths of the Catholic faith in order to lead them to the sacraments. Many of them were uneducated, and it certainly was a difficult task, but he applied himself and went out in search of the lost sheep.

## **4. Saint Peter Julian Eymard teaches us about the merciful love of Jesus.**

In his time, the Church in France suffered from the tendencies of Jansenism, a heretical understanding of human sinfulness, which made it difficult for people to see God’s mercy and infinite love. Having worked through his own struggle in striving for perfection, he was a compassionate confessor. In his promotion of Eucharistic adoration, he directed people to focus their attention on Jesus’ love for humanity through his abiding presence in the Eucharist. He also wanted people to understand the Mass as the unbloody representation of Jesus’ saving sacrifice on the cross in his great act of mercy for sinners. Through his own experience of human woundedness on account of sin, he was able to lead people from fear to a faith that finds God’s mercy in the confessional, and his healing grace in the worthy reception of Holy Communion.



<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ssscongregatio.org/en/about-us/the-founder/eymardian-places.html>



**5. Saint Peter Julian Eymard demonstrates the fruitfulness of faithful adherence to the liturgy's norms and principles.<sup>10</sup>**

He sought to harmonize devotion with liturgical life.<sup>11</sup> In his preaching of the Forty Hours Devotion, he would focus on the liturgical time and feasts. When it came to celebration of the Mass and sacraments, he was faithful to the Church's prescriptions. As a pastor, he sought to restore splendor to divine worship.<sup>12</sup> In his writings, he notes: "With a jealous attention, the Church has regulated worship of the Eucharist, up to the slightest details. She does not shift onto anyone else the care for honoring her Divine Spouse—it's because everything is of great importance, everything is divine when it concerns Jesus Christ present."<sup>13</sup>

**6. Saint Peter Julian Eymard teaches us that Marian devotion is Eucharistic and Eucharistic devotion is Marian.**

From his youngest years, he was devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary

and viewed her as his mother. Mary always directs us to her Son, Jesus. He learned from his mother when visiting a church always to pray before the Blessed Sacrament and to pray to Mary. In his time as a Marist Father, he sought to imitate Mary's fidelity to Gospel living in a way "unknown and partially hidden in this world." Modeled after Mary, he sought to give of himself completely to God. In the Eucharist, the memorial of Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection, we see how he gave of himself completely. He taught that in receiving Holy Communion we are enabled to give the gift of self to God patterned on the life of our Blessed Mother Mary. Saint Peter Julian Eymard said: "Devotion to Mary follows on the love of Jesus, her divine

Son. How, in fact, can we adore Jesus Christ without honoring the one who gave him to us? How can we love Jesus without loving Mary?"<sup>14</sup> Envisioning Mary as the living Tabernacle of the Presence of the Lord, he taught about the intrinsic unity of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus and the Heart of Mary: "All in Mary turned toward the Blessed Sacrament as toward its center and end. A current of grace and love was established between the adorable Heart of Jesus Hostia and the adorable Heart of Mary; they were two flames that burned as one."<sup>15</sup>



10. Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, 38.

11. *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, 79.

12. Tesniere, 33.

13. Peter Julian Eymard, *The Real Presence*, 8, II.

14. Peter Julian Eymard, *Eucharistic Handbook*, (Cleveland, Ohio: Eymard League, 1948), 115.

15. Peter Julian Eymard, *Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament* (Cleveland, Ohio: Eymard League, 1930), 114.



In this time of Eucharistic Revival, may Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament and her faithful son Saint Peter Julian Eymard, intercede for us, that there may be an increase in understanding of and reverence for the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and a renewed devotion and fervor for the Sunday Mass in our Diocese of Rockville Centre and throughout the United States of America.



*Saint Peter Julian Eymard, pray for us: "That the Eucharistic Kingdom of Jesus Christ may come among us!"<sup>16</sup>*

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*+ John O. Barres*

Most Reverend John O. Barres  
Bishop of Rockville Centre

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Page 5 (lower right): Bronze sculpture of Saint Peter Julian Eymard (1863) by French sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Page 6: Bishop Barres kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament in the Monstrance during Eucharistic Adoration at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception, Huntington, NY. Source: DRVC Office of Communications.

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Page 7 (lower image): Monstrance is elevated during Eucharistic Adoration. Source: DRVC Office of Communications.

