

***“Eucharistic vocations always have the marks of the Passion on them, since the divine Eucharist is an admirable and perpetual continuation of the Passion.”***

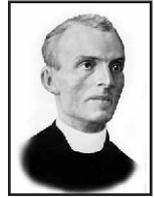
[To a Foundress of a Congregation of Adorers, October 1865]

Fr. Eymard would here be referring to the characteristics that would be sought in a vocation of a potential Adorer. If the Eucharist itself is the fruit of the self-giving of Jesus even unto death, death on a cross, spending quality time praying before the Sacrament exposed would necessarily have to deepen this quality of self-giving in the Adorer. However, in Fr. Eymard’s time, those making Prayer before the Sacrament would not have had the advantage that we have today.

For one thing, the symbol through which Jesus gave himself totally to us is taken much more seriously in our day. It is seen not merely as a simple sign or gesture, but as really embodying what it signifies. And so the first thing we do when coming into the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed is to ‘read the sign’ which in the Eucharist is not just bread, but bread that was broken and given to be eaten. Evidently this awareness takes us back to the Cenacle where Jesus, on the night before he died, took the bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples reminding them that this was truly a symbol, embodying himself, now broken and given *for* them. Prayer made before the Sacrament then should make us ask ourselves, “If Jesus broke himself out of love for me, what could he be asking me to break in my life out of love

for him?”

The answer to this question will evidently lead us to our own passion experienced throughout the day, as we sincerely yet



joyously say on each occasion, ‘Father, not my will but yours be done in my life!’ If we can also live it faithfully as Jesus did, until he had shed the very last drop of his blood, then we would qualify as true Adorers. For Jesus wants Adorers not just in order to offer him some consolation in words, but rather that his work of redemption may continue and reach all mankind. ‘I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, one shepherd’ (Jn 10:16).

Now Jesus came to take away the sin of the world. In the Bible sin is depicted as ‘disobedience’ (Gen. 3:1-12). So, if sin is disobedience, then the only way that Jesus could truly take away the sin of the world is through obedience. And if we continue his work of redemption, then it can only be done by uniting our sincere obedience to his and presenting it to the Father. This is all that Jesus asks of us when he says, ‘Do this as a memorial of Me!’ Our Eucharist, our prayer before the Sacrament and our actual life situation do precisely this. Although not expressed in these terms, this is surely what Fr. Eymard would have conveyed in his own language, suited to the times in which he lived.

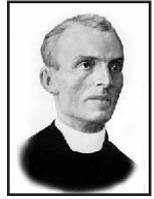
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***“In a word root your life in the positive (consideration) of truth, grace and divine goodness, and finally in the love which gives and receives lovingly.”*** [To Countess D’Andigne, January 1866]

background of Jansenism which was prevalent in his day, Fr. Eymard’s emphasis on the positive, on love as the central feature of our relationship with God, stands out as his unique contribution to the Church of his times.



When we glance over the life and mission of Fr. Eymard, we notice that by a special grace given him, he emphasized the positive side of our response to God’s call to us to be his children. In all his writings and teachings, he came back again and again to the aspect of love rather than penance, self-mortification, a pessimistic focusing on sin and its negative fall-out. He always encouraged his directees to focus on the positive, in fact, he insisted that they be rooted in the positive aspect of the Truth of God’s goodness, love and mercy, rather than on negative aspects like his justice and punishment.

However, his was no soft, sugary approach either. He repeatedly lived what he proclaimed so often, ‘In the Eucharist God gives himself (and not just a mere thing) to me totally and so, through the Eucharist, I too wish to give myself (and again, not just some earthly thing) totally to him. This is what he stressed when advising his directees too, that when they respond to God’s love with a similar love they would find themselves giving of their very lives a lot more joyously and generously. For love not only gives, but gives all without counting the cost.

Even though most others would not have picked this up from the Gospels, yet having committed himself to read two chapters of the Scriptures every day which he did all through his priestly life, he could not have missed this unique revelation of Jesus. Even the most familiar parable of the Prodigal Son is introduced by Luke in ch. 15 thus, ‘Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he told them this parable...’ (15:1-2). The way Jesus handled the problem of the woman caught in adultery is another instance in which we see very clearly what his preference was (Jn 8:1-11). Against the

The Gospel story of the woman (Mk. 14:3-9) who came in while Jesus was at table in the house of Simon the Leper is inspiring indeed! When she broke the neck of the jar and poured the ointment on his head she offered Jesus not only the costly ointment of pure nard but the expensive alabaster jar as well. It is thus that Fr. Eymard would encourage us, even today, to give in return for all the love that the Father has lavished on us in calling us to be his beloved children. Love, when genuine and wholehearted, never says ‘enough’ but gives till the very end, and what is more, rejoices in the giving, seeing it as a privilege to be chosen to give to that extent.

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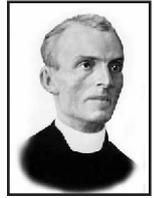
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***“Because to love God is everything, to be loved by him is the supreme happiness, to serve him through virtue and obedience is sovereign perfection.”*** [To Countess D’Andigne, September 1865]

Short as it is, this quotation of Fr. Eymard is rich in meaning. He possibly had explained earlier in this message to his directee that whatever else s/he might want to give to the Lord, nothing would be good enough if it did not come out of love. We could sum up his message in the words of St. Paul, ‘If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing! If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing’ (1 Cor 13:1-7).

Such a lavish return of love is not possible unless first we ourselves experience the boundless love of the Father. This realization no doubt will be ours only when we consistently keep our gaze on the marvelous ways in which God loves us every moment of the day. When we read the Scriptures or better hear it read for us, particularly during the Liturgy of the Word, at the end of all the readings we need to pause in silence and hear God asking us: ‘Have you seen how much I love you?’ This is the question Yahweh asked the Israelites through Moses as they stood ready to make Covenant with him at the foot of Mt. Sinai: “You have seen what I did to the

Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself...’ (Ex. 19:3-5).



Unfortunately most Christians do not pause after the readings to relish this tremendous love of the Father and hence their response to his love inevitably ends up as a resolution which comes more from the head than from the heart! But if we did find our happiness, even on the physical level of feeling, in God’s love for us expressed in a thousand different ways, then our goal would be to serve him through virtue and obedience, as Fr. Eymard suggests.

The virtue he speaks of would not appear in our lives because we have cultivated it assiduously by dint of frequent repetition and vigilant examination of conscience – that would be too much of a self-directed effort and would end up being very sterile and artificial. Rather, it would blossom in our lives because we leave ourselves open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit who is more keen on transforming us into Christ than we could ever be by ourselves. As long as we do not interfere in his work in our lives through our self-centredness, he will surely fashion and mould us into Christ very effectively.

Lastly, the one quality that God asks of us is our loving obedience, our readiness to say Yes to him no matter what his demand of us is. That is the one quality that stood out in the life of Jesus as expressed in Phil. 2:5-11 – ‘he was obedient unto death, death on a cross...!’

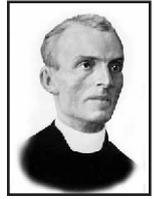
***“Experience is the great science of life.”*** [To Ms Marie Gaudion, May 1865]

It is really amazing how deeply Fr. Eymard was accustomed to the practice of self-awareness. While this capacity to be self-aware is one on the most distinctively human endowments with which God has blessed us, unfortunately most people do not pay too much attention to what goes on inside of their minds and hearts all through the day. When we pay careful attention to this inner ‘movie’ or tape-recorder that constantly operates within our minds we develop the capacity of learning from experience, which Fr. Eymard here calls ‘the great science of life.’

The simplest way to benefit from all the experiences that form part of the warp and woof of our daily lives is to practice the art of converting all our ‘raw experiences’ into ‘lived experiences.’ All that we go through, good and bad, during our waking moments could be called the ‘raw’ experiences of life, the raw material, as it were, that God uses to convey his love to us. However, if we remain only with this raw material, we get nothing very valuable out of it. It is, for example, when the raw cotton is worked upon, and spun into cloth that we possess something valuable. Similarly, we need to reflect on the events of the day, to discern what the Lord has been saying to us through these events for them to be profitable and instructive.

We are all aware that God speaks to us through words, but equally through actions as well. And that is why the word ‘dabar’ in Hebrew is used to refer to both, God’s words and actions also. Thus, the

fact that I missed the bus which I was keen on taking in order to reach on time and fulfill my purpose of going into town – could have been God telling me that he has another, his own, better plan for me. By missing that bus and waiting (if I lovingly accept that unpleasant experience which threw all my plans out of gear!) it could have happened that I met a friend to whom I offered a listening ear and helped ease some of his problems and pain. My missing the intended bus enabled me to be a ‘good samaritan’ to my needy neighbour and offer him God’s blessing.



However, it is when I sit back and reflect that had I caught the bus according to my plan, I would not have had the opportunity to experience the joy of serving my neighbour, that is when I see a meaningful reason for my missing that conveyance. Now I would possibly thank the Lord for making me miss that bus. The ‘raw’ experience (mere fact) of that inconvenience has now become a meaningful and purposeful ‘lived’ experience.

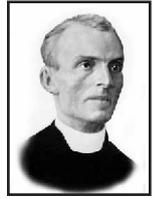
It is only when we train ourselves to do this kind of reflection regularly that we begin to learn positively from all our life experiences. Paul’s challenging insight: ‘We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose’ (Rom. 8:28), invites us to transform most of the raw experiences of each day into a meaningful message from the Lord and respond to him with love and gratitude.

***“Abide in the house of God, divine fatherly goodness, like a child who knows nothing, does nothing, damages everything, but dwells in this gentle kindness.”*** [To Countess D’Andigne, March 1865]

Fr. Eymard begins this piece of advice repeating what Jesus himself had said in the context of the Last Supper. “I am the true vine and you are the branches ... abide in my love... unless you abide in me and I abide in you, you will not be able to produce any fruit” (Jn 15:5-9). We recall that to abide speaks of something more permanent than merely paying an occasional visit to the house. It implies that we make ourselves at home in God’s presence and are not embarrassed or bashful in his sight. That can only come about when we accept wholeheartedly our status of children of God, gifted freely with his divine life in Covenant.

Once we are convinced not only on the intellectual level but primarily on the emotional level that our weaknesses and failings do not diminish God’s love for us; rather our very weakness draws him close to us, as he realizes full well that we cannot help ourselves by our own resources, then we have nothing to fear. God is not surprised or embarrassed by our failings, but each limitation of ours draws us closer to him. As he promised in Isaiah 40: ‘He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep’ (40:11). His gentleness and mercy are such that ‘a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench’ (Is 42:3). In actual practice, it is we who

are most self-conscious about our weakness because we imagine that our failings make us less acceptable to others and even to God himself!

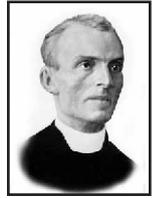


Here again we see the insidious influence of the Self. We project within ourselves the belief that we must be absolutely perfect before we can be acceptable to others and then imagine that God our Father is also the same. And even though he reminds us innumerable times and in marvelous ways that we are loved by him *as we are*, we somehow refuse to believe, thus making our own lives miserable and a constant preoccupation to be perfect! The ideal of a peaceful abiding in God’s home is portrayed for us in Ps. 131: ‘O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.’ (v. 1-2).

What a relief to have this kind of faith in our Father’s love for us. St. Therese of the Child Jesus shows us through her own life the blessedness of this approach. While this realization is a gift it also needs assiduous cultivation on our part. And the best part of the story is that the Lord in his goodness provides us with ample opportunities for us to develop the art of blessing and thanking God for everything that happens to us because we see it as a blessing even when it appears as something negative and painful. Further, the more we bless God in every circumstance, the more ready and eager we find ourselves to surrender into his loving hands.

***“Our Lord loves children – now children soon forget past troubles and always live in the present. That is what gives them this simplicity and their peace.”*** [To Mme Benoit Richard, March 1865]

Jesus, ‘he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”’



Children can be characterized by several qualities, but the key ones pointed out in the Scriptures are their littleness and inability to help themselves in all situations. When Jesus took a little toddler and placed him before the apostles who had just recently been squabbling over who among them was the greatest, he instructed them, ‘Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it’ (Mk 10:15).

There is perhaps no other quality the Lord loves as much as that of our being like little children in his presence. As a matter of fact, in spite of all our intellectual and scientific advancement, when we look at the total picture of the universe stretching before us, we realize pretty soon how tiny and insignificant we are before the rest of God’s creation. Yet, we seem to want to direct our lives to ultimate success on our own steam! ‘And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit’ (Mt 15:14).

How do we train ourselves to develop this loveable quality of being like little children especially in our dealings with God? Here too the process has to begin with our focusing our eyes on the Lord. We need to observe carefully how Jesus deals with children. When the apostles drove away the parents who brought little children to be blessed by

(Mk 10:14). He was very gentle and accepting of them, not demanding anything of them in the way we usually do or imagine he would have done. What perhaps drew children most to Jesus was their directness, innocence and simplicity – they take everything seriously especially when told by a loving parent and besides, they are content with so little. This is true, of course, only until they grow up and are indoctrinated by elders to give way to their growing egos.

Needing so little they are easily satisfied and hence content with what they have. Even a worthless trinket is enough to keep them occupied for hours on end. And yet when dealing with our Father, he gives us the very best – how much more should we not be totally satisfied in his presence, especially when we have learnt to dwell in his house and abide in his love? Just being in his presence would keep us content, without having to think of the past or the future! These will be taken care of by our loving Father without our having to do anything about them. Truly, with this kind of an approach we could be perfectly at peace all through our lives, even in the midst of the greatest storms or adversities. Nothing would disturb us, “for you are there with your crook and your staff and with these you give me comfort!... Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life; in the Lord’s own house shall I dwell, for ever and ever” (Ps. 23).

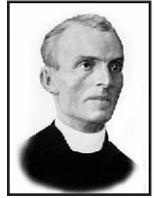
***“The Holy Eucharist has won. I am its happy servant and some day I hope to be its zealous and devoted apostle.”*** [To Mme Sauvestre de Bouraliere, May 1856]

When Fr. Eymard states that the Holy Eucharist has won, he could not be referring only to the ceremony or the ritual that constitutes the Eucharist. Rather he would have in mind what the Eucharist stands for, particularly the total self-giving of Jesus. Having understood this as the central point of the Eucharist Fr. Eymard sought to live it for himself and inculcated this approach in all his followers.

Concretely what he rejoices over in this statement is that his struggle to found a society of religious dedicated to the Eucharist has ended in the clear expression of God’s will through the acceptance of his plan by the Archbishop of Paris. So, now all that remained for him to do was to painstakingly build up this group, step by step until it could be a light unto the nations, spreading Eucharistic fire to the four corners of France. Having formed his followers into a group of zealous disciples he would then move out to wherever the Lord wanted him to share his insights with all who would welcome them.

But even in those early days, Fr Eymard was very clear in his mind that it is ultimately the living of the Eucharist that is more important than merely knowing about it or even teaching it to others. As the very first rule of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation today expresses it: ‘We are called to *live* as

brothers in the Church... to *live* the mystery of the Eucharist fully and to make known its meaning so that Christ’s reign may come and the glory of God be



revealed to the world (RoL– 1).

The danger today, of course, is that we emphasize more the doing over the all-important aspect of being. What we are speaks louder than what we say, and hence we need to attend to this aspect of living as a constant challenge in every generation. Jesus gave us the BE-attitudes, which can be seen not only as principles to be implemented and introduced into our lives, but also as an expression of a quality of being, flowing from the central truth of our status as children of God. Thus, if we take only the first beatitude, most would interpret it as meaning that we strive to make ourselves poor in spirit and then the kingdom of God will be ours.

But the statement is much more powerful when we recall that God has already gifted us with the kingdom ‘Do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom’ (Lk. 12:32). Once we wholeheartedly receive his kingdom and live as kingdom people, we notice that the desire to hoard material possessions or secure our lives financially or otherwise just vanishes. When we see this happening, we can be sure that the Eucharist has finally triumphed over our self-centredness and we too could rejoice with Fr. Eymard!

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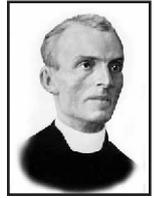
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***“To love one’s present state and to sanctify its pains and sacrifices, that is what Jesus loves above all. And so, be happy with the will of Jesus.”*** [To Ms Julie Antoinette Bost, 1853]

Sometimes it is suggested that as Christians we ought to live as if our homeland is in heaven. We then project everything into the future and strive to render ourselves worthy of being admitted into God’s eternal presence. ‘Lord who shall be admitted to your tent (Ps 14/15:1-5) – this becomes our guideline as we live here on earth. But Jesus came to show us that our heaven is here already. God has gifted us the kingdom (Lk. 12:32) which is not a place, nor a situation of having plenty of material benefits. Rather, it is primarily a relationship of love and mutual indwelling with the Blessed Trinity which can be enjoyed independently of any place or condition. It is a quality of being, more than a result of doing something extraordinary. Hence, while we do not need to be immersed in the ‘world’ in its negative aspects, we certainly need to take everything around us seriously, for this is the ‘raw material’ which provides us with opportunities to enter into this love relationship with the Father.

While God continues to shower his love on us through every creature around us, he also invites us to be instruments to share his love with those whom he sends into our lives. Every interaction we engage in is an invitation from the Lord to ‘expand our capacity to love.’ The more we exercise our love in every possible situation, the more we develop our

capacity to experience God and that is the measure we take with us when we leave this world.



Jesus explained this approach in the parable of the talents. Each is given a certain amount (never equally for all) and is asked to trade with what he has received. The amount he has when he finally appears before the Master will be his reward for all eternity – rather, he may be given more, but never less. Hence, all we need to do is to focus on each event, seeing it as the concrete expression of God’s will. We then seek to make the best use of it, not for ourselves alone but for others also. Every little incident is a challenge for us to grow, to increase the ‘talent’ given to us. The transaction will be most fruitful when self-giving love is the central element, not self-gain. Love is the oil that the bridesmaids were supposed to carry with them as they awaited the arrival of the bridegroom. Whether one has the oil of love or not in oneself becomes the decisive factor when we approach the throne of God. Love is also the ‘one thing necessary’ that Mary had as she sat at the feet of Jesus listening to him, the one thing that would never be taken away from her.

When we remain close to Jesus doing whatever he tells us, as Our Lady recommended to the servants at Cana, then we need have no fear of living life to the full! In fact, we begin this full expression of our union with God and other people and the rest of Nature already now. Our heaven will only be the complete manifestation of what we have allowed God to make of us while here on earth!

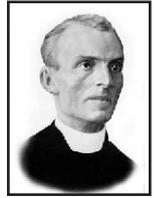
December 9, 2011 (Canonization by John XXIII 1962; placed on Lit. Calendar, John Paul II 1995)

***“The good Lord loves you very much, I assure you and you also love him, you desire only him - that is sure.”*** [To Mme Lepage, October 1867]

This sentence of Fr. Eymard could be said of any human being, because Jesus died for every single person. When God loves he loves all his creatures equally even though he does not distribute his good gifts equally. Even in the parable of the Talents we notice that the Master gives five to one servant, two to another and to the last only one. Feeling that he had been discriminated against, this last servant did nothing with the talent he had received except bury it in the ground and return it as it was to the Master on his returned. He failed to realize that he was given the one not because the Master cared for him less, but because that was the measure of his capacity to produce. Had he seen the love of the Master in that one talent, he would perhaps have traded with it with equal enthusiasm and hence would have received a reward from the Master.

We can never afford to forget that we should not measure the amount of love God has for us in terms of the amount of gifts or material possessions we have. That was the way Israel regarded their standing before God. They believed that the more material possessions they had, the more favoured they were in God's eyes. And the same for the number of

children they were blessed with; thus for a woman to be barren was the same as being cursed or rejected by God. The same principle applied to a person with



physical defects like being born blind – they attributed such deficiencies as a punishment for sin, either the sin of the person himself or that of his parents. It would take them a long time to realize that God loves every person equally even when he does not favour everyone with the same number or kind of gifts.

However, the key point to be kept in mind when making a return to God is that the measure of our generosity should not be what others have received, but rather the love and generosity of God in blessing us with all that we do have. When we realize that even the little we have is totally undeserved, we appreciate all that the Lord does for us and seek to make a return with equal generosity. And ultimately, that is what matters before God and so Fr. Eymard could assure his directee that all was well as long as she kept responding to God with utmost generosity. Often we ourselves are not able to gauge the measure of our response to God and hence need the support and reassurance of another person who looks at us objectively.

Our natural tendency is to focus on our sinfulness and hence we imagine that we are unacceptable to the Father, that we count less in his eyes and that is the reason why we have received fewer gifts and talents. This leads to a lot of restlessness and worse still, comparison with others and the resulting dissatisfaction and numerous other complications.

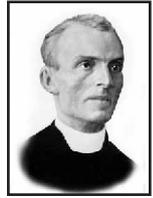
***“Work to become a saint, so that heaven may celebrate your feast! To be a saint, love our Lord dearly, sacrifice your personality to him and joyfully consecrate your whole life to him.”*** [To Ms. Marguerite Guillot, November 1866]

At first sight this suggestion of Fr. Eymard could be taken to mean a kind of focusing on oneself and working to earn a reward in heaven. However, we could also see the statement in another light if we pictured ourselves to be like the prodigal who has recently returned home. The celebration for his return would have begun from the moment he stepped into his father’s home, but he would have known deep within himself that there was a lot more to come, and so he would have needed to consciously appreciate and move towards that greater celebration.

When we attend to the means Fr. Eymard suggests we see that he doesn’t adopt the approach of a labourer or servant. Love is what characterizes those of the family, while a servant may have respect and admiration for his master, but hardly ever would he have love in the truest sense of the word. Further, the total gift of Self is what could be expected from someone closely linked with another out of love. Generally, the hired person is not expected to be deeply committed to the welfare of his master; his it is merely to do what has been contracted for, with as much fidelity as possible. Anything more than that, would flow from a deeper level of relationship. Now that becomes possible when the Master chooses to relate to the

servant no longer as a slave but as a friend or blood relative.

We have a striking example of this in the Centurion of the Gospel



who was so concerned about his servant that he sent emissaries to Jesus to request a healing (Lk. 7:2-9). If he went to that extent it is evident that the Centurion loved and appreciated this servant more as a son than as a slave. That, of course, is his free choice and he could do that for anyone he chose. Yet, it would not be true the other way round: no slave could demand that s/he be treated as a family member when the relationship is simply that of a slave. And that even if he did a hundred times more than what is expected of him. As Jesus suggests, ‘So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, “We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!”’ (Lk 17:10).

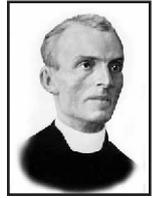
Realizing that Jesus has accepted us as friends, no longer as servants as is seen in the context of the Last Supper, we put our heart and soul into every action we do, making it truly an act of selfless love for whoever the Lord sends into our lives. Love ought to be the guiding principle of our lives so that it is love and love alone that stands out in our lives! Evidently this is not possible as long as we tend to be self-centred and do nothing about ridding ourselves of the Self in us. Love always focuses on the other and not on oneself. And so we are led to consecrate our entire lives to the service of Jesus ‘who loved me and gave himself up for me!’ (Gal. 2:20).

***“When we have to deal with worldly people, we must use the prudence of the serpent and the virtue of justice.”*** [To Mme Lepage, October 1866]

In our dealings with others it is helpful for us to remember that not everyone operates according to the principle of the love of God as the central issue in life. The Lord offers us the invitation to live as his children, but we know even from the Gospels that each person is left free to respond the way he chooses. Thus, the rich young man freely and consciously chose not to sell all his belongings, nor to give the money to the poor and take up the following of Jesus even though he expressed a keen desire to have eternal life and had been keeping all the commandments from his very youth.

Human transactions are most effective when they operate on an equal footing. And so when dealing with ‘worldly people’ one would evidently need to first get on to their level, not with the idea of deceiving them or getting the better of them, but simply that the transaction may be fair to both parties. Hence the great need of caution and prudence which enable us to choose the right alternatives. However, experience shows that priests and religious are perhaps easily taken for a ride in such matters precisely because they fail to exercise sufficient prudence. They tend to trust anyone and everyone and learn from bitter experience that not everyone works for the glory of God. Self is in many cases a conscious choice that some people make, even though they know that it will not bring them happiness in the long run. It is interesting to note that we

are told in the gospel that the rich young man on making the decision to quit ‘went away sad’!



However, on our part it is important to make sure that justice prevails, not just for our benefit, but for the other as well. Today, most knowledgeable people would tell us that the best approach in our interactions with others is the Win-win approach, in which we seek the good of the other as much as we seek our own benefit. No one loses in such an effort, though it is not easy to work out genuine win-win solutions, precisely because this presumes that one selflessly seeks what is good for the other, not just as we perceive it, but also as the other sees the situation. One powerful example of such a win-win is the way Jesus handled the situation of the woman caught in adultery. His prudence led him to uphold the law (‘Stone her, but let the one who is without sin cast the first stone!’) and also the infinite mercy of God (‘Woman, has no one condemned you? Neither do I; go and sin no more!’ Jn. 8:3-11).

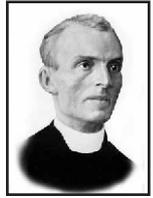
It is evident that this kind of justice and mercy can meet only in God and in one who is very close to God, one who has put on the mind of Christ. This kind of an attitude is the fruit of a truly Eucharistic life, in which one seeks to live genuine Eucharistic values throughout the day. Initially we might make mistakes, but gradually through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and our persevering efforts, we learn the art of balancing justice and mercy and dispense it with prudence.

***“Speak to God like a six year old speaks to his dear mother. Think in him. Act in his presence. Remind him of everything you have seen, heard and done.”*** [To Ms. Stephanie Gourd, November 1859]

Fr. Eymard here applies the principle that Jesus gave us, ‘Unless you become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Mk. 10:16). Jesus recommends that we adopt childlike attitudes in our dealings with God and others, even though we are adults and need to live as adults. The quality of simplicity and innocence are perhaps the most needed childlike attitudes that we could cultivate, especially in our dealings with God. We stress repeatedly that our Christian life consists precisely in accepting our littleness, brokenness, sinfulness and so on, without hiding or rationalizing it in any way. Next, we place our nothingness in the powerful hands of God with childlike confidence, offering total loving trustful obedience to whatever he may wish to do with us. Our deep trust is what enables us to allow God full freedom with our lives. And then great things happen in and through us – such that everyone immediately acknowledges that it is God who acts through us, and so the glory is given to him!

We see this attitude so powerfully in Our Lady whose nothingness is expressed in terms of her ‘virginity.’ When invited by God to the greatest honour of being the Mother of the Redeemer, she first reminds him of her virginity, her unsuitability for this great

task; yet when reassured by God that the Holy Spirit would take care of all the difficulties connected with that, she placed herself totally and irrevocably into



God’s hands saying, ‘Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word!’ (Lk. 1:26-38). Now Mary not only said these words, but she lived them all through her life. Never once do we find her questioning God’s wisdom in his dealings with her. Totally at his service, she works marvels in the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth, at the Wedding feast of Cana and at the foot of the Cross.

That is the kind of attitude Fr. Eymard recommends to his directees if they wish to find personal fulfillment and also to do great things for God. With this attitude, prayer becomes fairly simple – more of God’s activity in our lives than actually what we ourselves accomplish. Living in community with people of all kinds of attitudes and approaches also becomes easy as we learn to respect each person and relate to God’s presence in that person. In our relationships with others, we see ourselves more as ‘servants’ before them, servants of God sent to bring out the best in them if they wish to collaborate with God. In no way do we impose ourselves on others, yet we are fully committed to our task of extending God’s kingdom.

While making ourselves like little children can be difficult at times because of our innate tendency to emphasize the Self with its pompous ways, yet with a little bit of care and attention, we could allow God to transform us into his beloved children.

***“Poor human nature had its fears; they desire a life which is too missionary.”*** [To Ms. Marguerite Guillot, November 1859]

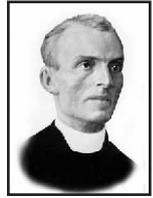
In this simple observation, Fr. Eymard reminds us of a very important principle in the spiritual life. When God invites us into Covenant with him, his idea is that we act as partners with him. He raises us to his own level and treats us as equals. In the Bible we are shown God as consulting Noah, dialoging and bargaining with Abraham, reasoning with some of the prophets and so on, exactly as he would do with the other Persons of the Trinity.

Now while this is a great privilege for us creatures to be raised to such heights, we do notice a strange tendency in ourselves to want to do more – to ‘run ahead of the Spirit’ as it is termed. In other words, we set out to do more, little realizing that God has his own time for each step of the process. Scripture calls this ‘the favourable time’, the ‘hour’ (*kairos*) which indicates that the entire situation is ripe and ready for this step which God has planned. If we seek to act outside of this plan, all we succeed in doing is to ruin God’s plan and force him to approach the matter in another way.

One good example of this approach is seen in the life of Jesus when some people came and told him to flee because Herod sought to take his life. The way Jesus responded is truly instructive. “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way,

because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem” (Lk 13:32-33). In other words, Jesus indicates that he wishes to stay within God’s plan for him – there is a time for action and a time for suffering the consequences of that action, or as Koheleth puts it, ‘For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away; a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace’ (Eccl 3:1-8).

Having observed this tendency in human beings, Fr. Eymard remarks rightly that it stems from fear. But when we act out of love, no such impetuosity would appear in our dealings with the Father. We find ourselves being content with whatever the Father ordains for us and we are happy to work things out one at a time – and that too in God’s own time! Patience becomes almost second nature to us, and delays and disappointments do not cause us any anxiety. How peaceful our life can be when we work according to God’s plan for us in all things! When God is around, everything is under control, especially if it is his control that truly operates in our lives.



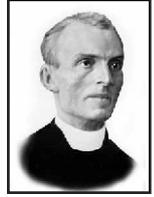
***“In communion we incarnate Jesus in us. Communion is the goal of the Incarnation.”*** [Long Retreat at Rome, March 1867]

Fr. Eymard would not have had the terminology that we use today after Vatican II. The term ‘Covenant’ is commonplace today and it signifies the intimate union which God desires for all human beings from the very inception of the world. He, however, started it as a pilot project inviting just one nation, the Israelites, into this kind of a communion with him, after liberating them from the slavery of Egypt. “I shall be your God and you shall be my people,” (Ex. 19:3-5; 24:3-8) was the way God expressed this intimacy. The only one condition for such a great gift was obedience, their readiness to follow God’s directives so that he could lead them into the Promised Land, a symbol of their free choice to live as God’s children.

Later when God sent his only Son Jesus born as an ordinary human being, among the first things Jesus did as he began his public ministry was to gather a group of men around him. The purpose he had in mind was, ‘they were to be with him... and I will also send you out to preach and to heal...’ (Mk. 3:13-17). He kept these chosen ones close to himself and they formed the inner circle of his close friends; they heard all ‘the secrets of the kingdom of God’ (Mk. 4:10-11) and witnessed all the very special signs or miracles he worked! Thus, Jesus brought the pristine concept of Covenant with the Father up-to-date, as it were.

Then, just before he left this world, he gave his disciples the Eucharist in

which he once again offered himself to all who were prepared to accept his love, in the form of bread that is broken and a cup that is shared. Thus, first



through the Word and later through the Bread and the Cup, Jesus once again established the Covenant, but this time it is the new and everlasting Covenant, sealed in his own blood, the ultimate sign of total loving obedience. So, each time we celebrate Eucharist, we are invited by the Father to enter into Covenant once again – not just as a ritual, but as a way of life. Hence, we can say truly with St. Paul, “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20).

What is important to note is that the very purpose of Jesus becoming a man was to enter into this kind of deep, personal communion with all human beings. All he asks of us is a genuine openness, a deep trust in him knowing that he will always give us more than we give in return and that whatever God ordains for us is always for our good. As long as we keep close to him, especially at the feeling level, his project of the Incarnation can become very successful. However, knowing that we progress only bit by bit, he invites us daily to make the effort to enter into communion with him, first during the Eucharist in a symbolic way and then throughout the day as we live out our commitment to belong to him and not to ourselves. Failings should not deter us from making progress, because he is present precisely to help us along.

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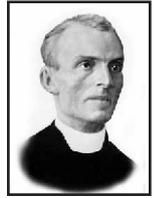
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***“Like the first disciples in the Cenacle, our religious ought to be of one heart and one soul in the service of Jesus.”*** [T. Herve, sss *“Studies on The Spiritual Journey of St. P. J. Eymard,”* Vol 3, p. 83]

Possibly what Fr. Eymard had in mind was not just the first disciples in the Cenacle, but rather the early Christians as they sought to live out the demands of their Christian commitment. The Acts of the Apostles tell us, ‘Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need’ (Acts 4:32-35). This is the ideal that Fr. Eymard had for his own religious.

When we look at the disciples gathered in the Cenacle, Luke reminds us that even at that solemn and sacred moment, they disputed among themselves about who was to be considered the greatest among them. “‘For, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!’ Then they began to ask one another, which one of them it could be who would do this. A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest” (Lk 22:22-24). Luke repeats this episode

from 9:46-48 because this kind of behaviour still remained as a glaring part of the lives of his community members. And we know from experience



that it is also part of our community lives even today.

The remedy for this kind of power struggles is first of all a deep personal experience of the love of Jesus for each one of us. Once we are convinced that we are somebody in his sight, most likely we would not depend on the appreciation of other human beings. Next, we would also need a personal conviction that each of us has a very special mission with regard to the kingdom. And since God does distribute his gifts unequally among people, no two persons would probably possess an identical set of gifts.

Again, each will be judged and evaluated according to his/her own set of gifts and the kind of response each makes. So, in practice, there is no point in comparing oneself with others. In fact, most spiritual authors would recommend that we compare ourselves not with others, but with ourselves alone... what we are at present as a result of our cooperation with the Lord with what we could have been, had we responded with maximum generosity to all the blessings the Lord did actually shower on us. That kind of a comparison would certainly keep us on our toes wanting always to better our response from day to day. Like the rich young man, our query should always be, ‘Lord, what more must I do to gain eternal life?’ (Lk. 10:17-22).

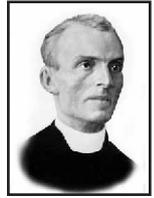
***“The Good Lord is blessing us with crosses.”*** [To Bro. Jean, December 1862]

Generally, when we think of God blessing us, we think in terms of us receiving pleasant favours, things we like and which will possibly make life more pleasant for us. Hardly would we think in terms of receiving crosses and difficulties as a blessing from the Lord. And that is because our way of thinking is so different from that of the Lord. When the Lord sends us crosses, he does so, first of all, in order to get us out of our comfort zone. Once we are settled in that comfort zone, then almost everything we do will be done out of routine. We hardly ever put our heart and soul totally into anything we do. But when we have to struggle with a new and difficult situation, we become fully alert and our engines begin firing on all cylinders; we invest the maximum energy into what we do and usually end up doing the job at hand extremely well.

The second fallout of the Lord’s approach is that with each extra effort we make, our capacity increases and so in the long run we become capable of giving a lot more. We keep growing and what is more, enjoy the growth and extra zip we experience, all of which is to our advantage. Another benefit of receiving crosses is that we soon realize that we are inadequate to tackle them all by ourselves and so need to remain close to the Lord. God will not rush in to help us when we do not want his help or even appreciate it. But the moment we open ourselves to his grace and sincerely seek his help, he simply floods us with the maximum he has in store for us.

Thus, through the cross we are made to carry, we are the first to benefit. And

above all, when we have had to struggle with our own crosses and eventually emerge victorious, we learn what compassion is, even if



others do not come to our aid in such circumstances. As Paul put it, perhaps based on his own personal experience, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For, just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering’ (2 Cor 1:3-6).

Very few would understand and appreciate how painful mental suffering can be until they themselves have gone through it. Having experienced it personally our sympathy and compassion take on a very real quality and when we do reach out to others, our gift of love and solidarity will mean a lot more to the receiver, because it comes from the heart. And so, it is a good practice to bless God for all the crosses we receive. In fact, as we bless God for crosses, we could also anticipate all the good results that will surely accrue to us and through us to so many others as well.

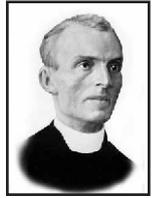
***“We must desire heaven because it is the possession of God, it is the perfect glorification of God. Then there will be no more sins, no more temptation, no more obstacles to his love and ours.”***

[To Countess D’Andigne, November 1865]

In this piece of advice to his directee, once again we admire the ability Fr. Eymard had to go to the heart of the matter. When most of us think of attaining heaven, we would see it more in terms of ourselves receiving a reward commensurate to our spiritual striving. However, wouldn’t that still be self-centredness, on our part? Fr. Eymard turns it around and suggests that we desire and strive for heaven not so much for our own benefit but because it would provide us with the opportunity to give greater glory to God, our Father. While it is true that we would appropriate God’s love in the fullest measure in heaven (fullest according to the capacity we have prepared for ourselves while on earth), yet that itself is what gives God glory, that in spite of our innate self-centredness, he was able to transform us to the measure that we have attained. Our stature in heaven is the measure of God’s success in rescuing us from ourselves and from the snares of the Evil one.

Throughout the Scriptures, the one consistent picture of God is that of Saviour who saves us in spite of ourselves and our obsession with Self. His redemptive work is mainly to snatch us out of the claws of the Evil One through the power of his love. Further, because we will see God face to face, we will have absolutely no doubts about his love for us

and no more Self to block our hearts from being totally open to all that he wants to give us. Possibly the only sad feature here would be that we did not



develop our capacity to enjoy God more through a greater generosity while on earth. We will realize our short-sightedness and regret our miserly response to the Father. Nevertheless, we will still be happy with what we have.

On the other hand our response to this deeper realization of God’s love too will be wholehearted and generous. There will be no more Self to obstruct our generosity and so our giving glory to God will be constant and uninterrupted, generous and fulsome! However, here too the measure of our giving praise and glory to God will be proportionate to our capacity developed while on earth. Nevertheless, it will be genuine and that is what will touch the loving fatherly heart of God!

Further, all our loving and being loved by the Father will be unending with no fear of us wavering and changing our decision or stance towards him and others. With that fear out of the way, we would enjoy what we have, little though it be, without comparing ourselves with others and envying them for their blessedness. On the contrary, we would be able to rejoice genuinely and selflessly for what they have been able to achieve and that too would give glory to God that at last we are able to be selfless and rejoice in the good fortune of others.

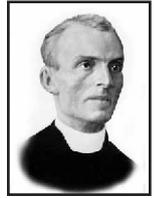
***“Always remain simple in your grace, pious at heart and joyful in your way of life.”*** [To Mme Mathilde Giraud-Jordan, January 1866]

We have here another very practical and down-to-earth recommendation from Fr. Eymard. It is said that simplicity is the key-note of great people, because those who genuinely know that they have been gifted do not have to flaunt their talents in order to get the attention of others who will then proclaim how great they are. True greatness is what we possess in the eyes of God. Jesus warned us not to seek the approval of people around us as the Pharisees used to do, because that approach would mean that they will have received their reward already (Jn. 5:41-47). The directee in question seemed to possess this quality of simplicity, but Fr. Eymard encourages her to continue to remain simple always.

There is the further danger that after having begun well, a person may get carried away and end up losing everything. Such people would be like Peter whose faith was strong enough to make him ask Jesus to let him walk on the turbulent waves of the stormy sea. At Christ's command he stepped out with great faith and courage, but then seeing the huge waves all round him, he lost heart and began to sink (Jn. 14:27-33). We too could end up that way even though the beginning was good and encouraging.

In its ancient meaning the word *pious* denotes a filial attitude, the attitude of children towards their loving parents and that is what will stand the Christian in good stead in all circumstances. Even

though we pray the Lord's prayer so often, it is rare that we realize that the moment we say the word 'Father' meaningfully we have to admit in the same



breath that we are his children! Else, we have no right to call him Father except when we use the term as a title. So, we all need to strengthen our awareness of our status as children of God, making every effort to live up to it as often as possible.

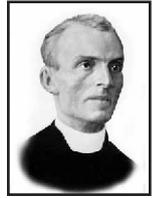
Once we have internalized this fundamental attitude of being a child of God, we will notice that we automatically remain joyful at heart. Paul's advice to the Philippians remains eternally valid even for us today, 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus' (Phil 4:4-7). Peace and joy are the special Easter gifts of the Risen Lord and they characterize the Christian wherever s/he is. A sad and mournful Christian is a sorry sight indeed, for 'If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?... Who will separate us from the love of Christ?... For I am convinced, that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers... nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:31-39).

***“A religious of the Blessed Sacrament belongs to the great King and follows him everywhere.”*** [To Bro. Marie Ratons, April 1864]

What Fr. Eymard says here is true enough that where the Master is there his servant will be also. However, in his great love for us, Jesus has made the opposite also true, viz. that wherever we are, the Lord is also present, not just apart from us, but always as a part of ourselves. This is the astounding truth that Fr. Eymard himself discovered during his Great Retreat in Rome, as he awaited the momentous decision of whether or not the Blessed Sacrament Fathers would be given possession of the Cenacle. Though it was his great dream that the Blessed Sacrament Fathers would one day possess the very spot where Jesus gave us the Eucharist, he gradually realized that Jesus had outstripped our wildest expectations by granting each person a very personal Cenacle within his very being – there he dwells in the closest intimacy, as long as the person is interested in that depth of relationship.

Jesus encourages us saying, ‘Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne’ (Rev 3:20-21). This approach is typical of Jesus who never forces himself onto anyone; he respects our freedom, inviting us to respond to his love with great generosity, not so much because he benefits from it, but rather because we are the ones who receive the

most. Unfortunately, so many Christians are busy the whole day and week, without a moment to spare for their divine Guest and yet he waits patiently and



lovingly for the slightest attention they offer him.

As he appreciates our presence, so must the Blessed Sacrament religious treasure Christ present within him/her. We need to train ourselves to be consciously aware of his presence and relate to his plan and will, everything that forms part of our lives. When such a living dialogue continues all through the day, one can well imagine the blessings we would receive. For one thing we would never feel lonely, for Jesus himself promised us, ‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father and you in me, and I in you. Those who know my commandments and keep them are the ones who love me, and those who love me will be loved by my Father and I will love them and reveal myself to them!’ (Jn 14:18-21).

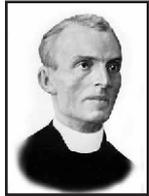
However, our remaining close to Jesus must not stem from selfish interest alone, but rather it should be the expression of our desire to lovingly be at his service as much as we can. That should be our greatest joy and fulfillment, and even though we might fail from time to time, we return to the source and origin of our happiness with renewed vigour.

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***“Let the Holy Eucharist be the centre of your devotion and love.”*** [To Ms Mariette Guillot, September 1858]



donning of the new white baptismal robe and the following of Christ shown through the final part of the ceremony at the main altar in the sanctuary.

That Fr. Eymard was convinced of the centrality of the Eucharist in a Christian’s life is beyond the shadow of a doubt. We see him here recommending precisely that to one of his directees. In our day especially after Vatican II, the Eucharist has certainly attained a lot of the centrality it deserves; several celebrations are held each day in almost every parish Church at least in our big cities. Even for other devotions like novenas and so on, not one is conducted without the Eucharist celebrated in conjunction at least, if not as part of the devotion. Thus, whether it be a novena to Our Lady or to a popular Saint, like St. Anthony, Christians are today accustomed to having the Eucharist as part of it.

For as Paul reminded the Romans, ‘Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his! We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.’ (Rom 6:3-8).

However, can we truly say that the Eucharist is the centre of our Christian lives today? As a devotion it certainly is. Yet, how many would truly understand the purpose and dynamics of the Eucharist? Or for that matter, its role in the Christian journey to God? For one thing, not many would see it as a reaffirming, at deeper and deeper levels, of the basic renunciation of Self and Satan that was professed at one’s Baptism! As a symbol of renunciation of Self and a readiness to die to the Self in us, the candidate seeking baptism first threw away all his/her old clothes which stood for the old, sinful self. Next, together with Christ, the candidate accepted death as s/he entered the pool of water and remained immersed in it. Then came the rising to a new life expressed through the

Now the same baptismal dynamic of dying to Self is expressed in the Eucharist when the community through its minister ‘breaks the bread and shares the Cup’ which Jesus said, ‘is my self – my body/blood.’ But this is hardly ever meant by most participants. They mostly celebrate Eucharist more to get grace, peace and so on from God rather than to give of themselves, broken and shared! If this one dynamic could be done meaningfully and consciously, it would not take long for the Eucharist to really be the centre of our Christian life!

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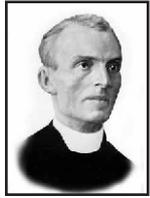


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***“Love our good master who dwells in your home only for you.”*** [To Ms Stephanie Gourd, November 1859]



will lose control over them and not be able to do as we please! In actual practice, it is the other way round, when Jesus is in charge, there is more likelihood that we will enjoy the fullness of life in him.

In different ways and with the help of different comparisons and similes Fr. Eymard emphasized the central truth that God dwells within us, out of love for us. This, he had said earlier in one of our reflections, is the very purpose of the Incarnation, the reason why the Son of God became human, so that he could share our lives, no matter how simple and humdrum they be. However, a life cannot be shared unless both sides are totally transparent to each other. On his part, God has shared his all with us, for as Paul says to the Romans in his letter, ‘He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else?’ (Rom 8:31-32). “All that I have is yours”, “I shall be your God” – with expressions such as these God seeks to convince us that he has bestowed on us ‘every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus’ (Eph. 1:3-4). Truly, there is nothing that God can give us today which he has not given us already in Christ Jesus.

So, in practice, the ball is in our court for Jesus says, ‘Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne’ (Rev 3:20-21). Jesus offers to dine with us, which perhaps is even more than dwelling with us or perhaps the best part of dwelling with us. Could the problem be that we do not open the door of our lives to him as freely and generously as he expects? Of course, one of the reasons why we keep Jesus at bay is that we still want to be masters of our own destiny. And Jesus is very clear about the fact that, ‘No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.’ The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they ridiculed him. So he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of others; but God knows your hearts; for what is prized by human beings is an abomination in the sight of God” (Lk 16:13-15).

The question that remains then is, how much do we give of ourselves in return to God? God is at home with us, but are we at home with him? Do we take the time and trouble to share our every thought and desire with him, as a little child would share with its loving parents? Does God enter to that extent into the very fabric of our lives? In most cases this does not happen, and perhaps the reason is that deep down we are afraid that if Jesus is given a chance to take over our lives, we

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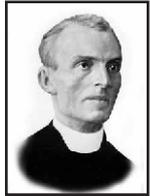
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***“Humility and mortification are the fruit of the cross.”*** [To Marguerite Guillot, March 1853]



For Christians the Cross is a symbol of eternal life – it is the way chosen by God and accepted lovingly by Jesus so that anyone who welcomes the Cross in his life is sure to possess eternal life. Basically, the cross symbolizes death to Self and to all that is evil or against God’s will in our lives, and so it stands to reason that when our lives are freed from selfishness and sin, we will inevitably possess its opposite, which is God’s life within us. But, self-centredness is a rare kind of disease, such that unless we constantly work to eliminate it in our lives, it will keep returning to plague us. Or better, it is what Jesus himself warned us about saying, ‘When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none. Then it says, “I will return to my house from which I came.” When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation’ (Mt 12:43-45).

So, the Cross offers us the antidote; it also invites us to keep our selfishness under control through vigilance and mortification. In fact, once we get a taste of the eternal life that Jesus offers us, we would be eager to obtain this treasure at any price, even a total death to self. “The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. ‘Again,

the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it” (Mt 13:44-46). Once we have truly met Christ, we are ready to sell all that we have in order to possess him!

Besides, once a person has shared the sufferings and humiliations of Jesus lovingly and willingly, s/he is not afraid of anything anymore, for whatever else the world will mete out to him/her because s/he is a follower of Jesus it will never be as painful as what Jesus himself went through. Here again we have the words of Jesus, ‘You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another. “If the world hates you, be aware that it hated me before it hated you. If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world— therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘Servants are not greater than their master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me”’ (Jn 15:16-21). So, humility is truly the fruit of the Cross shared with Jesus.

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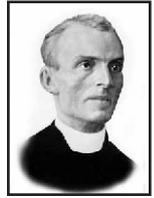
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***“Live wholly from Jesus and for Jesus not like a daily mercenary who is looking for his reward after every day of work.”*** [Quoted in *‘The Eucharist and the Christian Perfection foreseen in the Religious Life’, 1927*]

Several times already we have heard from Fr. Eymard that Jesus must be the centre of our Christian lives. One practical application of this principle would be that we live wholly from Jesus: he becomes the source and the origin of everything in our lives. Like Paul we turn to him at almost every turn, ‘What would you have me do, Lord?’ (Acts 22:10). Once we have placed ourselves wholly at the disposal of the Lord we need to look at the second question, which is: for what reason do we offer our services to the Lord? If there is present even the slightest desire of obtaining a reward, then we will turn out to be mercenaries, looking for self-gain.

‘Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But to one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness. So also David speaks of the blessedness of those to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the one against whom the Lord will not reckon sin”’ (Rom 4:4-8). We know that what the Lord gives us out of his generosity and love is far more than what we could ever earn as wages. Besides, our work is full of defects from start to finish, shot through as it is with self-centredness, and

so after we have done all that we should have done, we say we are no more than unprofitable servants (Lk. 17:10).



And so, it is far better to place ourselves in the loving hands of our Saviour and accept from him all that he gives us, grateful that we are treated not as servants but as his friends (Jn. 15:15). Besides, he himself tells us that he chose ‘those whom he wanted. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons’ (Mk 3:14-15). So, even when choosing us, (and he does that even before we were conceived in our mother’s womb), Jesus intended us to be his friends, relating to him out of love rather than out of a sense of duty.

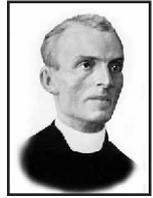
However, the sad part of our lives is that even though we live in the house, ostensibly like sons, yet so many of us have the inner attitude of slaves, as happened in the case of the elder brother in the story of the Prodigal Son. When he came in from the fields... he “answered his father, (saying) ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’” (Lk 15:29-30). What a tragedy: to be in reality a son, and yet live like a servant, an outsider – in fear and abject submission! And if this is really our habitual attitude, what difference has the coming of Jesus made, as far as we are concerned?

***“To love one’s present state and to sanctify its pains and sacrifices, that is what Jesus loves above all and so be happy with the will of Jesus.”*** [Mlle J. A. Bost, May 1853]

Writing to the Philippians, Paul reminds them that ‘our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself’ (Phil 3:20 - 4:1). While this is true, we can never afford to forget that our heaven begins here on earth and will be conditioned by the way we live here. Hence, our preoccupation should be to make the most of each opportunity offered us, be it painful or pleasant. Especially we need to learn how to transform or sanctify our pains and sufferings, as these often tend to take us away from our greatest good. Unless enlightened by faith, we tend to look on suffering only as a punishment for wrong-doing. We fail to see God’s love in suffering and yet time and again, the Scriptures show us how God reserves perhaps the biggest crosses for his closest friends. ‘Therefore, let those who are suffering in accordance with God’s will, entrust themselves to a faithful Creator, while continuing to do good’ (1 Pet 4:19 - 5:1).

The real meaning of suffering is seen most clearly in the life of Jesus. Innocent though he was of all that his adversaries accused him, he accepted immense suffering out of love for his Father and it was his humble obedience that enabled

him to transform all that suffering into eternal glory. ‘For David says concerning him (Jesus), ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right



hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence’ (Acts 2:25-28). ‘...He has also said in another psalm, ‘You will not let your Holy One experience corruption’ (Acts 13:35).

Experience shows us unmistakably the truth of Paul’s insight, ‘No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it’ (1 Cor 10:13). Of course, given our tendency to enthrone the Self, we need to cultivate this approach towards suffering. It would help if we recalled further, as Fr. Eymard tells us, that this is what Jesus loves to see in us... more as a reflection of our love for him. When we accept all the sufferings that Jesus lovingly yet carefully chooses for us, we express our deep trust in him and so we need to make it a habit to always do his will, and that too lovingly. For he himself reminds us, ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ (Jn 14:15).

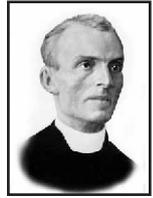
***“God shows us in this way that we cannot rest on our good works, nor on our virtues, but on his grace.”*** [To Mme Lepage, April 1867]

The spiritual life has been often described as a journey, recalling the historic journey that the people of Israel made from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. Now, if this comparison is to be meaningful, it must include a constant moving forward rather than a resting in one place. This was further brought out by the fact that all through this journey Israel lived in tents which could be pitched easily at night and dismantled in the morning when the journey would be resumed. In the spiritual journey too one must constantly keep inching forward, as there is no resting place as long as we live.

The reason for this is that the good Lord wishes to grant us a maximum share in his life and love but for this, one would need to be emptied totally of the Self. Each day, therefore, brings its own share of crosses and hurdles and the effort a person makes to handle these in a Christ-like manner is what ensures the growth. As in other journeys, one needs to regularly check whether first of all one is on the move, and secondly whether the movement is in the right direction. In the spiritual journey, the movement is always regarding growth in love, since love is the essence of God’s own life which he shares with us. So, any increase in the various facets of love (kindness, patience, thoughtfulness and the like as shown in 1 Cor. 13) would indicate real spiritual growth. As regards the direction too, it has to be always in the line of a greater,

more spontaneous and generous dying to Self and sharing with others.

Thus, while at the beginning of our spiritual lives, we might have found



it difficult to put aside our own plans in favour of reaching out to a needy neighbour, having grown in Christ-likeness, we would now find it happening almost unconsciously and regularly. We acquire the skill of breaking of ourselves for others without making too much of a show, so that ‘the left hand does not know what the right is doing!’ (Mt. 6:3). This is the ideal towards which we move as is indicated in the Last Judgment scene. Thus, when the just are told by the Judge that ‘when I was hungry you gave me to eat’, they will ask in surprise, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you to eat?’ This shows that they weren’t even aware that they were doing something extraordinary, but took it in their stride!

And so, there is no resting on our laurels while we make this spiritual journey. What we focus on is only one thing: God’s tremendous love which keeps beckoning us forward constantly till we reach the full maturity of Christ, ‘the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ’ (Eph 4:11-13).

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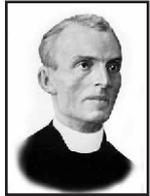


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***“We need to live in thanksgiving which supposes a soul experiencing the joy of the Lord’s gifts and blessings.”*** [To Mme Lepage, March 1867]



incomprehensible joy in the midst of sorrow, and we can find a measure of happiness and well-being regardless of the circumstances that

surround us.” (Ps. 32 – *Psalms Now*, Leslie Brandt)

Growth in the spiritual life can also be gauged by the spontaneity and ease with which a person picks up the signals and inspirations of the Holy Spirit inviting us to a deeper insertion into Christ. Initially when the spiritual journey has just begun, one needs to be constantly led and encouraged by another for as Mark says quoting Isaiah, ‘To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; in order that “they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven”’ (Mk 4:11-12). But as our vision clears up under the powerful and loving hand of God, we begin to see the marvelous ways in which he blesses us every moment of the day.

In fact, once this begins to happen, the beloved sees God in everything and everyone, so that there is hardly a moment when s/he is not in touch with God. And further, with each succeeding ‘discovery’ of his love, the thrill and joy of the find keeps increasing, so much so that life then becomes like a treasure hunt. Jesus’ words now begin to make perfect sense, ‘Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth’ (Mt 6:19-24).

That is when we begin to live in constant thanksgiving fulfilling what is indicated during the Preface at each Eucharist, ‘Father in heaven, it is right that we should give you thanks and praise always and everywhere.’ By this time of the journey, one begins to see the loving hand of God, not only in what are obviously his blessings, but also in other events that might seem like abandonment, punishment or whatever to others. “The faithful and the faithless both suffer the uncertainties and insecurities of this life, but the child of God can depend always on the love of his Father. It is for this reason that there is light even in the midst of darkness,

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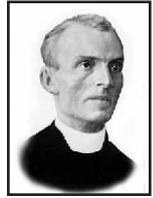
***“Oh, is there any greater happiness than to be with the Most Blessed Sacrament! To live only for him?!”*** [To Mlles Marianne Eymard and Nanette Bernard, January 1867]

The first thing that strikes us in this little quotation from Fr. Eymard’s communication with his own beloved sisters is that for him the Eucharist is not so much a ‘thing’ no matter how sacred or precious, but rather a Person, the Person of Jesus himself. Even in our own day, how few Christians realize this deep truth that our communion is primarily with a Person, living and present to us in several ways. The happiness we experience comes not so much from the fact that we are present to him, but that he chooses to dwell within us as long as we care to have him.

In practice though, this presence becomes meaningful the moment we advert to it and so in the matter of experiencing happiness because of his presence, the ball is in our court. He is the divine Guest whom we have given shelter in the best ‘room’ in our home; but if we leave him alone while we tend to our own agendas the rest of the day, how would we really benefit from his coming to us? Wouldn’t we then be like Martha who is the one who welcomed Jesus into her home but then promptly set about preparing a sumptuous meal for him, leaving him all to himself. Mary is the one who chose the better part, realizing that Jesus delights not so much in what we give him, no matter how costly or precious, but rather in ourselves: ‘My child, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways’ (Prov. 23:26).

Our remaining with Jesus, or

‘abiding in his love’, however, must lead to a total ‘living for him.’ As St. Paul puts it, ‘For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them’ (2 Cor 5:14-15). If Christ died *for* (read, ‘in place of’, ‘in the name of’) us, then it follows that today we live in place of him. Or again in Paul’s words, ‘For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me’ (Gal 2:19-20). Further, ‘For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you’ (Phil 1:21-24).



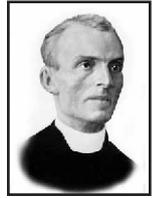
How would one know whether or not one lives for Christ alone? Jesus reminds us, ‘Every one therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven... Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me... Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me’ (Mt 10:32-40).

***“Stay very close to our Lord and see his holy will in everything that happens.”*** [To Mme Benoitte Richard, May 1867]

In this little piece of advice Fr. Eymard once again goes to the heart of the matter viz. that in our relationship with Jesus, he has already done all that he could – nothing remains for him to do. Having accomplished his assigned task, he returned to the Father! The ball is now in our court and it is our turn to respond to the best of our ability. St. Paul’s hymn in Ephesians sums this up powerfully when it says, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved...

‘In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you had

heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s own people, to the praise of his glory’ (Eph 1:3-14).



The more we live up to our commitment to die to self and allow Jesus free rein in our lives, the more we experience his closeness and love. The most important fallout of our being close to him is that we take delight in doing his will, first by carefully understanding what he asks of us, and if possible also by seeing the reason he would have in mind when asking this of us, and then a perfect execution of his demands. Sometimes, this will obviously be difficult and will go against the grain, but that is when our love and fidelity will be tested. We might fail from time to time, but that is, in a sense, inevitable as we go through the process of learning how to submit ourselves to him.

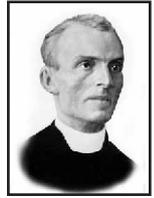
What is important is not how many times we fail, but how eagerly we rise and return to him. Our failures too are part of the learning process and do not in any way diminish his love for us. It is said that if we imagine our relationship with Jesus in terms of us tied to him by a string, then each time we break that string through sin, he ties a knot to reunite us. While this brings us once again in touch with him, it also brings us closer as the string gets shorter because of the knot. Thus, our failings can serve, in a sense, to bring us into deeper union with the Lord! O happy fault!

***“Live deeply within your own soul in our Lord, because that is your real home and your real life.”*** [To Ms. Virginie Danion, February 1867]

This quote from Fr. Eymard reminds us of Jesus’ words, “Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles.”... Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile’ (Mt 15:10-20). Jesus repeatedly instructed his disciples that when dealing with God, it is not the external alone that matters, but the heart. However, the natural human tendency is to judge things by their appearances and to be satisfied with the externals only.

Fr. Eymard makes a particular and practical application of this principle when he counsels his directee that focusing on the Lord’s presence within oneself is far more important and perhaps more difficult and demanding than merely attending to the externals. In order to do this fruitfully, it would help if we worked at developing the art or skill of self-awareness. This means that even while occupied with various kinds of transactions on the external level, we are also simultaneously keenly aware of our inner reactions – the fear, hidden agendas, double motives and so on that are ever present. Generally these go unnoticed and so we live practically only on the

outer level and evaluate our actions purely from that point of view. But when we are able to be in touch with what goes on inside, we could be pleasantly surprised at the wealth of knowledge we gain about ourselves, both good and not so good!



With the Lord dwelling in the inmost cave of our hearts, it is there that he interacts with us, with the real business that goes on in our lives. So, if we wish to deepen our relationship with him, that is where we would need to concentrate our attention and work out whatever improvements he suggests. That level is our real home and our real life and while other human beings might be content with dealing with us at the external level, the Lord reads our hearts and relates to us at that inner, most real level. When we approach this work of living at the deepest level of our being, we experience a deep joy and thrill at catching ourselves out. We then have the choice of working on our shortcomings at least by removing the obstacles and manifestations of the Self so that the Lord can have a greater say in our lives, or of continuing with the self-deception.

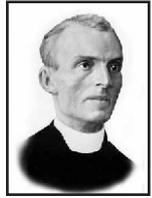
Could this be the ‘one thing necessary’ that Jesus spoke of with regard to Mary’s choice? (Lk. 10:38-42). And he added, ‘it will not be taken away from her.’ We would do well then to work at this level, at that which will not be taken away from us too, neither here nor hereafter! What joy would be ours then!?!

***“That’s the reason for which I was unwilling to go merely with reparation... and a life exclusively contemplative. For us, we not only want to adore, serve and love Jesus in the Eucharist, but especially to make it known, adored, served and loved by every heart.”*** (Fr. Eymard, 1867)

Having made it clear that his desire was to focus on the total Eucharistic mystery because that is what expresses the height and depth, length and breadth of the love of Jesus for us, Fr. Eymard specifies why he sidelined the burning question of the day – reparation through a withdrawn contemplative way of life. That approach would possibly suit one dimension of gratitude to Jesus for this great gift, but it would do almost nothing to honour and achieve the second greater desire of his, to have every single human being appreciate this gift and benefit from it. This was the fire that burnt in the heart of Fr. Eymard who expressly avowed that he eagerly sought to cast this Eucharistic fire over the four corners of Paris first and then over the whole of France.

Down the years, SSS have honoured this second aspect through publishing monthly magazines dedicated mainly to Eucharistic topics, teaching in Seminaries and other houses of formation, preaching retreats primarily on the Eucharist, encouraging and promoting prayer before the Sacrament, not merely as an exercise, but as a matter of growth and progress in the spiritual life, spiritual direction of priests, religious and dedicated lay faithful. They engaged in ecumenical work, scholarly research into Scripture, Patristics

(writings of the Fathers of the Church), work with and for diocesan priests, writing books and articles specifically on the Eucharist, preparing



booklets that would enable people to pray before the Sacrament in an enlightened way and so on.

Today, especially in Third World countries but also elsewhere, social uplift work is done enthusiastically by SSS, including prison ministry, assisting migrant workers in their difficulties, empowerment of women through self-help groups, encouraging drop-outs from schools and colleges to seek and find meaningful employment, medical help for the poor and needy, particularly HIV positive patients and their families. Counselling for youth, broken families and others, shelters for mentally deranged persons picked up off the streets – in fact any work of mercy that the compassionate heart of Christ would recommend.

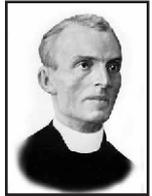
The important point is that this ministry is seen and exercised as directly linked with the Eucharistic celebration. Considering the centrality of the Eucharist, there are still several avenues that need to be explored; what holds us back is the shortage of personnel, and so another important branch of SSS ministry focuses on vocations to both SSS and other dedicated Church bodies. It is worth repeating though, that ministry is not only something that SSS religious do; what they strive to make of themselves, special friends of Jesus in his sacrament of love – that itself if their greatest apostolate for it makes the presence of the Risen Lord more effective and transforming wherever they are!

***“Be the apostle of the divine Eucharist, like a flame which enlightens and warms, like the Angel of his heart who will go to proclaim him to those who don’t know him and will encourage those who love him and are suffering.”*** (To Mme Antoinette de Grandville, July, 1859)

In this short sentence, Fr. Eymard sums up the vocation of a true Adorer. Having learnt from the Divine Master himself, the adorer becomes an ardent apostle of his love to everyone to whom he is sent. To those still unaware of the infinite love of the Father, the apostle makes this love visible and tangible through the kind of selfless life he leads. Once he is able to put people in touch with Jesus, he knows his basic work has been done. Jesus will take over and complete the rest. It is amazing how even in our own day, after so much of Scripture being made available to Christians through the Eucharist and through personal and other studies of the Bible, the picture that most people have of God is still that of a punishing judge. They may not articulate it this way, but in practice this is how they relate to God. And so, the vocation of an adorer is even more important today.

One group of persons who would find it rather difficult to see God’s love would be those caught up in suffering. Pain, difficulties, rejection and the like tend to narrow a person’s vision and so make it difficult to think in terms of love. There is further, the habitual Jewish way of thinking that any and every suffering is a punishment for sin and so the work of the Adorer is even more important and difficult too!

Besides spreading knowledge of God as loving father, the adorer also works to elicit a fitting response to God’s love – which is certainly not fear,



or acting out of a sense of duty, nor working for reward, but a selfless return of love, shown primarily through obedience and selfless service of neighbour. Once people are convinced that God’s freely given love is always present and effective, they would easily understand that the best and most fitting response to love is love itself. And love is shown primarily through obedience, as Jesus taught, ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ (Jn 14:15). It is easy to love God on special occasions or when the going is smooth; but to love in all situations is possible only with the help of the Spirit. Yet, Jesus himself has assured us of the Spirit he would send upon his followers so that they would have nothing to worry about. He would do all that is needed, if only they collaborate with him. “This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. ‘I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you’” (Jn 14:17-18).

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