

MEMORIAL OF SAINT PETER JULIAN EYMARD, PRIEST  
MARIAN CATECHIST CONSECRATION WEEKEND  
SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE, LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN  
AUGUST 2, 2014

Acts 4, 32-35

Ps 34, 2-3. 4-5. 6-7. 8-9. 10-11

Jn 15, 1-8

**HOMILY**

*Praised be Jesus Christ, now and for ever. Amen.*

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles reminds us of the good order which prevailed in the early Christian community because those who owned “property or houses”<sup>1</sup> understood that they were only stewards of God’s good gifts entrusted into their hands for the benefit of “each according to need.”<sup>2</sup> The faithful understood that they were alive in Christ, that they were living branches inserted into the Vine Who is Christ, and that Christ alone could prune them spiritually, so that they might bear “much fruit.” In the Parable of the Vine and the Branches, Christ declared: “Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.”<sup>3</sup> The faithful understood that the life of Christ flowing into their hearts from His glorious pierced Heart was life lived totally for others, especially those in most need.

The temptation is always to view ourselves and our good gifts apart from their origin in God and their destiny in the service of His Kingdom. Succumbing to the temptation, we become forgetful of God and rebellious before the order which He has placed in our hearts and in our world. Even the good order in the early Christian community suffered from the sin of those who succumbed to the temptation. We think, for instance, of the account which immediately follows today’s account from the Acts of the Apostles. It is the account of the first process in the Church to deal with the disorder introduced into the community by the crime of deceit perpetrated by Ananias and his wife Sapphira.

In the first days of the Church, Ananias and Sapphira sold some property, and, when it came time to turn over to the Apostles the proceeds from the sale, they lied about the amount which they had received for it, keeping some of the proceeds for themselves. The process in dealing with the public sin was brief. Saint Peter first interrogated Ananias. Concluding his

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 4, 34.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 4, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Jn 15, 4.

interrogation, he declared to Ananias: “You have not lied to men but to God,”<sup>4</sup> at which point God Himself intervened to give the judgment. The account tells us: “When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died.”<sup>5</sup> After a similar interrogation of Sapphira, the same judgment befell Sapphira. When Saint Peter asked her: “How is it that you have agreed together [with your husband] to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?”<sup>6</sup>, the account tells us: “Immediately she fell down at his feet and died.”<sup>7</sup>

We see in the account of the good order of the early Christian community and in the account of the crime and punishment of Ananias and Sapphira the importance of canonical discipline and of the canonical process to restore good order when it has been violated. Unless there is a process which is followed with the highest degree of justice possible for us, in imitation of divine justice, the good order of the Christian life is soon eroded and destroyed through the confusion and deception which Satan tirelessly attempts to sow in Christian hearts and in Christian communities. Drawing our life from the Vine Who is Christ, we, the branches, recognize temptation and sin for what they are, we receive the forgiveness of our sins, and we receive the grace to live a just and holy life.

Reflecting upon the splendor of the grace of Holy Matrimony during these days, we are reminded today that marriage is the gift of God to a man and a woman by which He confers upon them a particular share in the faithful, enduring and life-giving love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Most Holy Trinity. It is the Divine Love with which God the Son Incarnate, the Bridegroom, espoused the Church, espoused us, His Bride.<sup>8</sup> Yes, it is the man and woman who consent to marriage, but it is God, according to His plan “from the beginning,”<sup>9</sup> who makes the two of them “one.”<sup>10</sup> The man and woman do not give to each other the grace of Holy Matrimony which comes from God alone. They are ministers of the grace by their act of consent. The Church’s canonical discipline regarding Holy Matrimony safeguards and fosters the great gift which comes to the married from the Heart of Jesus through the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. If it does not serve the truth of Holy Matrimony, as it has been established by God “from the beginning,” it betrays its own nature and must be immediately reformed.

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 5, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 5, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 5, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 5, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Eph 5, 31-32.

<sup>9</sup> Mt 19, 4. 8.

<sup>10</sup> Mt 19, 5-6.

Today, we celebrate the memory of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Priests of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Pondering the life of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, we understand that it is through the Eucharistic Sacrifice that we are most fully alive in Christ, most perfectly inserted as living branches into the Vine Who is Christ. We also understand that it is from the fruit of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, Holy Communion, that we receive the sustenance for our daily living in Christ along the way of our earthly pilgrimage. Throughout Saint Peter Julian Eymard's some 57 years of priestly ministry, the Holy Eucharist was the center of his priestly life. He declared that "without [the Holy Eucharist] I should have been lost."<sup>11</sup>

In a profound mystical experience during the procession for Corpus Christi, he understood that in the Holy Eucharist is found the pattern for our daily living and the way to attain the common good and thus peace for the world. He described the experience with these words:

My soul was flooded with faith and love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Those two hours seemed but a moment. I laid at the feet of our Lord the Church in France and throughout the world, everybody, myself. My eyes were filled with tears: it was as though my heart were under the wine-press. I longed at that moment for all hearts to have been within my own and to have been fired with the zeal of St. Paul.<sup>12</sup>

Saint Peter Julian Eymard went on to found a religious institute devoted completely to fostering devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament.

He not only founded an institute of priest-adorers of the Most Blessed Sacrament and an institute of religious sisters devoted to continuous adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, but he also organized the Archconfraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament in order to foster an ever greater knowledge and more ardent love of Our Eucharistic Lord in all the faithful. In fact, at one time, canonical discipline required that the Archconfraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament be established in every parish. The saintly Curé of Ars who knew personally Saint Peter Julian Eymard and his Eucharistic apostolate commended him highly, declaring: "Tell the good Father Eymard that I will pray for the work every day."<sup>13</sup>

Imploring today the intercession of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, let us ask for the grace to view our service of the Church in the context of our participation in the Eucharistic

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<sup>11</sup> Herbert Thurston, S.J., and Donald Attwater, eds., *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Complete Edition, New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1956, Vol. III, p. 256.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.

Sacrifice. Let us ask for the grace to place ourselves and all whom we serve into the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, asking that our apostolate of catechesis may redound to the healing of sin and the growth in divine grace in ourselves and in those whom we catechize. Saint Peter Julian Eymard, viewing his own sinfulness and all of the tragic situations in his homeland of France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the entire world, was inspired to place all of his concerns into the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus, ever open to receive us and to impart to us without measure healing and strength. He desired to gather all hearts into his own and to offer them to Our Lord in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and in prayer before His Real Presence in the Sacred Host, whether reposed in the tabernacle or exposed in the monstrance for adoration. As we strive daily to speak the truth with love, to serve the discipline of the Christian life which finds its pattern in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, let us give our hearts and the hearts of all whom we serve to Christ Who alone is our salvation.

In a particular way, as we view the profound confusion and error about the most fundamental truths, which afflict our society, in general, and which would beguile even the members of the Church, let us, with Saint Peter Julian Eymard, daily “lay at the feet of our [Eucharistic] Lord the Church in the United States and throughout the world.”<sup>14</sup> In a particular way, at this time, let us “lay at the feet of our [Eucharistic] Lord” all of the most grave confusion and error regarding Holy Matrimony and the family. Understandably, before the situation of our culture and even the situation of the Church, we are tempted to profound discouragement. But we must never give way to the temptation, for Our Lord is with us, above all in the Sacred Host which truly is His Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity. In all our efforts to witness to the truth with love, to teach the truth with love, let us begin in the presence of Our Eucharistic Lord, drawing from His Eucharistic Heart the truth and love which we are called to proclaim and to live.

May our days with Our Lady of Guadalupe at her shrine lead us to implore her intercession daily that we, in all things, may be, with her, one in heart with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. May Our Lady of Guadalupe draw us daily to the Real Presence of Our Lord and Savior in the Most Blessed Sacrament. In His presence, may we hear and heed her maternal counsel: “Do whatever He tells you.”<sup>15</sup>

Let us now lift up our hearts, one with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, to the glorious pierced Heart of Jesus opened for us in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Let us lift up to the Heart of Jesus our apostolate of catechesis. Let us lift up to the Heart of Jesus all of the souls whom

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. footnote 9.

<sup>15</sup> Jn 2, 5.

we catechize, or who are, in some way, affected by our apostolate. In the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, as Saint Peter Julian Eymard so wonderfully teaches us, our hearts will be healed of any disorder which tempts or afflicts us. Our hearts will be inflamed with the Divine Love flowing from the Vine Who is Christ, from His Most Sacred Heart, so that we may be true and faithful members of the Marian Catechist Apostolate. May we never forget the words of Christ in the Gospel, and may we never fail to trust in them:

If you remain in me and my words remain in you,

Ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.

By this is my Father glorified.

That you bear much fruit and become my disciples.<sup>16</sup>

*Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received, have mercy on us!*

*Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America and Star of the New Evangelization, pray for us!*

*Saint Peter Julian Eymard, pray for us!*

*Saint Juan Diego, pray for us!*

Raymond Leo Cardinal BURKE

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<sup>16</sup> Jn 15, 7-8.