

**TWO PRIESTS**  
**(J.F.M.H. -2.8.2018)**

The Curé of Ars had some useful advice on prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. It is taken from his Catechetical instruction to children, but applies to us all *'As for ourselves, how often do we come to church without thinking what we are going to do or for what we are going to ask. And yet, when we go to call upon someone, we have no difficulty in remembering why it was we came. Some appear as if they were about to say to God: 'I am just going to say a couple of words, so I can get away quickly.' I often think that when we come to adore Our Lord we should get all we ask if we asked for it with the lively faith of a pure Heart.'* (Divine Office P. 150\*.)

St. Peter Julian Eymard was born at La Mure d'Isère in France on 4th February 1811. There is a story about his childhood that illustrates the lifelong love and reverence he had for the Eucharist. One day at the age of five he left home unnoticed. After searching for a long time, his sister found him in the church behind the main altar. He was kneeling on a small stepladder with his head resting against the tabernacle. She asked him what he was doing. "Saying my prayers" he replied, and when she asked "But why up a ladder?" told her that he could listen to Our Lord better from there. Listening to God seems to have been something he did all his life, and it is a practice we should imitate.

In 1829 Peter Eymard entered the novitiate of the Oblates of Mary, but illness caused him to return home. Two years later at the age of 20 he entered the grand seminary of Grenoble and was ordained Priest on the 20th July 1834. He returned to the Marist novitiate in 1839. Six years later he became the Provincial of the Oblates of Mary. In January 1851 he made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Fourvières, where he promised the Mother of God to devote his life to founding a congregation of priests whose principle duty should be to honour the Blessed Sacrament. Having obtained ecclesiastical permission, he bought a house in Paris and in June 1856 moved in with one companion. The Congregation of Priests of the Blessed Sacrament had started to adore their Lord exposed in the Eucharist.

At the beginning of May in 1859 Fr. Eymard who was having difficulty in finding recruits for his infant foundation, happened to be in the village of Ars, and went to see his friend the Curé, Jean-Baptiste Vianney, he said: *"I fear that we have made a mistake in founding this work, and that God is bringing it home to us by not sending recruits to enable it to grow. You urged me on to this undertaking which seemed so sacred; therefore ask Our Lord to provide for Himself good and numerous adorers of His Divine Sacrament. "To which the Curé replied: "My good friend, you want me to pray to the good Master for you, but you have Him always before you."* Three months later on August 4th 1859 the holy Curé of Ars died and took with him to the throne of the Master he had served so well, the petitions of his friend. God's answer was not long in coming, for within a few weeks of the Curé's death, new recruits came spontaneously to offer themselves for the service of the Eucharist.

Fr. Eymard had a great devotion to Our Lady, and made a study of the relationship between her and the Eucharist. In 1854 Pope Pius IX had defined the Immaculate Conception, Two years later Fr. Eymard wrote *"Behold how the worship of the Eucharist is spreading, never was it greater or more universal than in our day. That is the grace which the Immaculate Conception is bringing to the world. Devotion to Mary runs parallel to devotion to Jesus and follows its phases and its growth. Well devotion to Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament will grow with the worship of the Eucharist."* On the 1st May 1868, he opened the May devotions with a sermon, saying: *"We shall honour Mary under the title of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament. Yes let us say lovingly: Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Mother and Model of adorers, pray for us who have recourse to thee."* In 1955 the feast of Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament was inaugurated. (The Feast Day is on May 13.)

There was an incident that happened in the last few months of Fr. Eymard's life which is most revealing. A priest came to see him while he was ill in bed. The priest had in his possession a Host that a Freemason, now converted to the Faith, had stolen from a tabernacle in Paris, and had kept in his house for 12 years. Finally overcome by grace and remorse, he had brought the Host to the priest, who now sought the advice of Fr. Eymard. The Paris community of the Blessed Sacrament spent three nights in atoning adoration before the profaned Host and, in spite of his illness, Fr. Peter Eymard took his share in the hours of adoration.

He died in La Mure d'Isère on 1st August 1868, aged 57. On 9 December 1962 at the close of the first session of the Second Vatican Council, before a large gathering of the Council Fathers, Pope John XXIII canonized St. Peter Julian Eymard. The Pope described him as "the perfect adorer of the Blessed Sacrament". A phrase, which Fr. Eymard had used to describe Our Lady and which also, reflected the life of this Saint himself. It may explain why he is called "the Saint of the Eucharist". It is the reason why we chose him to be one of our three patrons of this Tabernacle of St. Francis. Since 1997 his Feast has been included in the Universal Calendar of the Church.

St. Jean-Baptiste Mary Vianney, the Curé of Ars, was canonized in 1925 by Pope Pius XI and is the Patron Saint of all parochial clergy.