



VI

Evangelizing and Mission

We welcome Christ's command to the apostles
and like them we proclaim the Gospel
and give witness to it with our lives.

We invite all people to that communion with God
which we celebrate in the Eucharist.

We collaborate with men and women of good will
towards the building of a world of justice and
solidarity.

Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA), 12a

**Associates of the
Blessed Sacrament
Initial Formation Program**

Evangelizing and Mission

1. Opening Prayer

Take time before saying the prayer to read it over in silence. Take a few minutes to sit with your thoughts and touch your experience. Think of people who are examples of faith. Think also of people who are away from the faith. Ask the Lord to help you grow in living your faith for others. Have one person from the group read the prayer slowly with pauses as others follow along.

Shaper of the Universe, all that you have created belongs to you,
and yet the world does not know your loving presence is among us.

Our lives are diminished by a culture of death that breeds hostilities.
Those denied the necessities of life suffer injustice and oppression.

In Jesus, your Son, you make known your love for the world.
Called to follow in his footsteps, we witness to his presence among us.

At every celebration of the Eucharist, his word takes root in our lives.
Touched by the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection,
we become a community of believers in this sacrifice of praise.

In the breaking of the bread, our hearts encounter the fire of your love.
We receive the healing power of the Holy Spirit in the communion we
share.

As your disciples you send us to “go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”
We humbly pray you remove all that might hinder us from loving others.

Your servant Peter Julian led people to the Eucharist to satisfy their
hungers at the banquet of love where all are welcomed.

Be with all who feel separated from you or are indifferent to your love,
most especially those we now hold in the quiet of this prayer.

Close with the “*Apostles of the Eucharist Prayer.*”

2. Introduction to the Theme

Great emphasis is being placed on what is called the “new evangelization” taking place within the church. Traditionally, the work of evangelizing was entrusted to missionaries who were sent to distant lands to preach the Gospel and establish the church. Peter Julian Eymard was born with a missionary spirit and desired to spread the gospel message to the ends of the earth. God did not give him the physical strength required for such a task.

God did plant within his heart, though, the seed that is now coming to full fruition in the efforts underway to bring about a “new evangelization” within the church. As we read earlier, Saint John Paul II gave the title “Apostle of the Eucharist” to Saint Peter Julian Eymard. Peter Julian was concerned with the great number of people who were no longer attending Mass or experiencing the vibrancy of the faith in their daily lives.

The Rule of Life of the congregation says of the founder in number 2, *“Challenged by the religious ignorance and indifference of his time, Saint Peter Julian Eymard searched for the answer to its needs. He found it in the love of God manifested in a special way in the gift of Christ in his Eucharist. Captivated by this love, he made it known to his contemporaries.”* You don’t have to go very far to find people who may be Catholic in name alone and have little or no relationship to Christ or the church. For too long, the church has been closed in on itself and has become burdened with requirements and regulations that became obstacles to the experience of the love of God made available in the Eucharist.

The evangelizing efforts of the church flow from the Eucharist. The faithful come together to worship. They acknowledge their sins and listen to the word of God in order to bring the message of the Gospel to the world. United with Christ in the sacrifice of praise to the Father, they are nourished with the Lamb of God and sent to be a healing presence of God’s love in an often broken world.

During the festivities of World Youth Day (Brazil, July 2013), Pope Francis set this challenge before them, “We have to become courageous Christians and seek out those who are the flesh of Christ.” Inasmuch as the flesh of Christ includes every human being on the planet, this will require the resources of the Holy Spirit. He goes on to raise the question, “But what if

we make mistakes, falling flat on our newly apostolic faces? Well, what of it? Get on with it: if you make a mistake, you get up and go forward: that is the way. Those who do not walk in order not to err, make the more serious mistake.”

3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words*

“May I seek you with a pure intention, and with a pure zeal may I proclaim with your Gospel; may I work for your glory alone, that you may be known in the Blessed Sacrament, that your life may be manifested in my life . . .”

On retreat with diocesan clergy in Grenoble
September 8, 1837

“Now please pray so that I may respond to such a beautiful vocation; that, like the bread of the sacrifice, I may lose my life, my substance, my personality, to be changed into the spirit and life of Jesus, retraining only a human appearance, humiliation, and poverty, so that the virtue of Jesus may dwell in the midst of my infirmities.”

To Mme. Clotilde Tholin-Bost
May 18, 1856

4. Bible Text

“As you sent me into the world, so I sent them into the world. And I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in truth. I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.”

John 17:18-23 NAB

6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

Eucharistic Evangelizing: Spread The Eucharistic Fire Everywhere! by William Fickel, SSS

Former director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing, Father Fickel has participated in the formation and ministry of laity who become teams of eucharistic evangelizers. They visit parishes to present the *Life in the Eucharist* programs based on scriptural or sacramental themes. The goal of the ministry within parishes is to assist them in forming lay teams of evangelizers who learn to give witness and offer teachings centered on the eucharistic themes of the LITE program. In this article, Father Fickel presents the vision of Saint Peter Julian Eymard to transform society by making known the love of God present in the Eucharist. Popes, cardinals, bishops, and clergy all call forth the laity to live the grace of baptism and confirmation by joining in the new evangelization taking place within the Catholic Church fulfilling the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

Evangelizing and Mission – Key Points

- Mission is what defines the church. The church does not exist for itself; it exists to bring God's grace and salvation to the entire world. That is the task of all the baptized, and the Eucharist nourishes us as members of Christ's body to be a living sign of God's presence serving the needs of the human family and inviting them to share in the work of salvation.
- As the disciples were sent out to proclaim God's word, so, too, are we sent forth in our contemporary world. We are the 72 disciples (*Luke 10:1-17*) of the twenty-first century who have been commissioned to do our best to proclaim Jesus' message and to create faith communities centered in the Eucharist and serving the needs of the human family.
- The Eucharist when it is well celebrated with full active participation shapes the daily life of people in the light of the Gospel. The charity, compassion, and service rendered to others become outward signs of our faith in the mission of Jesus living in the church.
- Saint Peter Julian Eymard was convinced that a life cannot be fully eucharistic unless it is consecrated to both God and our fellow human beings. He wanted his followers to become disciples and apostles of the Eucharist.

Reading

Eucharistic Evangelizing: Spread the Eucharistic Fire Everywhere!

by William Fickel, SSS

“In response to our baptismal vocation we seek to witness to Christ’s presence at the crossroads of society and, starting from the Eucharist, we strive to influence our world in the light of this mystery, source and summit of all evangelizing.” Rule of Life for Associates, 2b.

The spirit and vision of Saint Peter Julian is taking hold throughout the congregation and among the associates of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. Celebrations were held during 2013 (the “Year of Faith”) to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his canonization by Saint John XXIII and the opening of the Second Vatican Council. Called the “Apostle of the Eucharist” (by Saint John Paul II), the Holy Father said of Saint Peter Julian Eymard: *“Yes, honor and celebrate him who was so perfect an adorer of the Blessed Sacrament; after his example, always place at the center of your thoughts, of your affections, the undertakings of your zeal this incomparable source of all grace: the mystery of faith, which hides under the veils the author himself of grace, Jesus the incarnate Word.”*

The world and church have changed in many ways over these fifty years from the time of the council and the canonization of the priest whose heart was enflamed to make known the love of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament throughout the world. Our founder had a vision that when the Eucharist was experienced as the living presence of God’s love entrusted to us, hearts would be changed and people’s lives would be transformed. A good example is a group of young people from Saint Stephen’s Parish in Winter Springs, Florida, who demonstrate the full measure of this spiritual force working in and through their lives. Though they are typical teens, they live with great eucharistic zeal as a result of going through a Life in the Eucharist program for teens.

In the pastoral letter *Disciples of the Lord / Sharing the Vision* (2010), Cardinal Donald Wuerl challenged people to embrace the new evangelization taking place within the church. The letter states that everything the church is, she has received from Christ. The first and most precious of his gifts is the grace bestowed through the Eucharist, the paschal mystery: Christ’s

passion, death, and glorious resurrection. As the people Jesus has freed from the power of sin and saved from death, we are to give witness to the life of Christ that has been entrusted to us. The fruit of our Eucharist, when celebrated with full participation of all the people, is to transmit faithfully the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world. The message of this pastoral letter is this: “The church’s primary mission is evangelization.”

The word “evangelization” comes from the Greek word for “Gospel,” *εὐαγγέλιον* or *evangelium*. The Gospel announces the “Good News” that Jesus is God’s Son and our Savior. Jesus sent his disciples on mission to preach and to heal as the sign of God’s presence (kingdom) in the world, (Luke 9:1-7). The disciples went out in pairs to preach repentance and drive out demons and cure the sick (Mark 6:12). This “partnership” of being “sent out” to evangelize reflects the communal aspect of the church. Catholics do not evangelize the way other Christians do, that is, with an altar call that invites an individual to come forward and make a public demonstration of faith accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. It is from the celebration of the Eucharist that we are sent out to share the life of Christ received in Holy Communion in living the Gospel message. We seek to bring others into a communion of friendship by inviting them to belong to the body of Christ and take their place at the table of the Lord.

For many Catholics, the idea of evangelizing remains a foreign concept. We tend to be private about our religion. It has taken us years to build up the communal spirit of our worship, and some still desire the more impersonal, private, quiet, or Latin Mass. Saint John Paul II emphasized that Catholic evangelization necessitated catechetical instruction, proclamation of the Gospel, the social teaching of the church, and participation in sacramental worship.

“A total evangelization will penetrate deeply into the social and cultural reality, including the economic and political order....Such a total evangelization will naturally have its highest point in an intense liturgical life that will make parishes living ecclesial communities” – L’Osservatore Romano, December 5, 1988.

Among the dramatic developments in modern Catholicism, says Avery Dulles, SJ, is the evangelical shift in Catholic teaching and practice under the pontificates of Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. The church

needs to find a model and inspiration to overcome the misunderstanding and resistance among some Catholics to this “new” evangelization. Just as the complaint was made with the changes in the liturgy that we were becoming more Protestant in our worship, so also many Catholics think of the evangelical Protestant churches when Catholics are challenged to become evangelizers.

We think of someone like Tim Tebow (former college and NFL football star) who the *New York Times* called “a preacher in a football body.” There is no mistaking that his entire life including his time on the field gives witness to his faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. He is a man who listens to God speak to him and does what the Lord tells him to do including putting Bible references on black patches under his eyes during a game. He has stirred a lot of controversy among those who want to keep religion out of the public forum. However, a vibrant relationship with Christ breaks out beyond the confines of the churches because we are people who have been sent out to give witness to the love God has for every person regardless of creed or politic.

Archbishop José Gomez of San Antonio said in his pastoral letter *You Will Be My Witnesses* (2010) that for the new evangelization to become a reality, laypeople have to step up. “The proclamation of Christ is the duty of every believer,” the archbishop wrote. He asserted evangelization begins “in the heart that has been evangelized, the heart that has heard the Good News and been converted.”

“We cannot be silent about what we have seen and heard and felt,” the archbishop declared. “We cannot help but proclaim and testify to the great difference that Jesus Christ has made in our lives.” Evangelization is a duty of every Catholic, but it is a “duty of delight, a duty we carry out with joy and thanksgiving.” “We want the world, beginning with those nearest to us, to share in what we have been given — the free gift of God’s grace and the joy that comes with knowing the truth that sets us free,” he said.

The duty to proclaim Christ falls upon every member of the church. His pastoral letter is addressed particularly to the laity. “I want to speak especially to you who live out your faith in the midst of the world and all its secular affairs,” he wrote. “As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, lay people are given the ‘duty ... to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth.

This duty is all the more pressing when it is only through them that people can hear the Gospel and know Christ.”

Archbishop Gomez noted how laypeople have been fundamental for the process of evangelization since the very beginning of the church. “The primary apostolate of lay people, since the early church, has always been to spread and defend the faith among their families and neighbors and to bring the teachings of Christ to bear on the issues facing their communities,” he said. “Your first duty remains to heed the commission every one of us receives at the end of every Mass — to go out into the world to love and serve our Lord.”

“Nourished by the gift of his body and blood, you are called to bear witness to this gift by making your lives a form of worship to God. Your evangelization must always be profoundly ecclesial and intensely eucharistic. You are calling people to Christ and to his church — and to the heart of the church, which is the Eucharist.” Archbishop Gomez urged the faithful to have a renewed awareness of their priestly souls and to “seek to serve God and your brothers and sisters every day, through all that you do and say, through the way that you live your life.”

“People respond more to example than to ‘teaching,’” he acknowledged. “Testify to your faith through your daily habits and actions. You will find that your witness to the Christian life will be attractive to others and will afford you regular chances to talk about the ‘source’ of your happiness in Jesus Christ and your Catholic faith.”

The Archbishop said, “To my mind, the deepest problem we face is the tendency under secularism to reduce religious identity to a kind of ‘cultural Catholicism.’” For those who have left the Catholic Church, Archbishop Gomez recommended an active approach. “Let us talk to our brothers and sisters about what is keeping them from the church,” he said. “Let us talk to them of Christ’s living presence in his church and in his sacraments. The happiness we all seek is found only in communion with Christ in his church. Let us then issue a compassionate call for our lapsed Catholic members to return to the sacrament of reconciliation and welcome them back to the eucharistic table.”

Saint Peter Julian Eymard was troubled by the religious indifference

and ignorance that challenged the church in his time. People separated themselves from the regular practice of their faith and lost the sense of God's love for them in the face of the hardships and struggles of daily life. For Peter Julian, the solution to these social problems was to be found in the Blessed Sacrament. He wanted to establish the reign of Christ in the hearts of the people. He was passionate in his conviction that Christ would draw all things to himself and bring about a revitalization of faith within the church.

“I want to speak with you about the Most Blessed Sacrament because I would like to see this fire break out from under the ashes and become a blazing fire. I know very well that we must wait for God's time; but who is telling you that it hasn't come? As for me, I believe it has and I tell you: Have courage! Get to work! People must be forced to open the tabernacle door. Our Lord must not remain hidden to this indifferent or unbelieving generation. The Sun of the Eucharist must rise to scatter all the shadows of the night, melt frozen souls, and frighten away its enemies, if they aren't touched by his love.”

– *The Life and Letters of Saint Peter Julian Eymard*, Volume 5, document 1766, page 226.

“People must be forced to open the tabernacle door!” In the mind and heart of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, this is eucharistic evangelizing! It is a call to prayer and a deeper relationship with the presence of God in our lives. We cannot lock God up in a tabernacle. Saint Peter Julian is also saying that we cannot hide our love of God within our hearts. It has to be made known. It has to be shared with others. Faith is not a private matter that can be kept secret. It is public by its very nature of gathering people together in worship. Our reception of Communion is a pledge of our willingness to be in communion with others. We come together and acknowledge that our lives are broken, in needing the healing love and mercy of Jesus so that we can reach out in service to others.

Our secular culture is losing the sense of what it means to belong to a faith community. People like their privacy and personal independence and a certain freedom from obligations. In many places, parishes are experiencing an influx of new immigrants from Asia and Latin America with different cultures and experiences of being church. Some of these people have a

different piety and find it difficult to adapt to the local established parish community. At times, there may seem to be two separate Catholic communities using one church building and having nothing to do with each other. The Eucharist calls us to be the one body of Christ with all having a place at the one table of the Lord.

To be captivated by the love of God, was for Saint Peter Julian the distinctive mark of eucharistic evangelizing. Open the doors of your homes and churches and welcome others to table friendship. Warm, loving hospitality is the best way we can give witness of the Christ who taught us to share our food with the hungry and thirsty in our midst. Catholics evangelize in the setting of being a faith community. Whenever we talk to another, whatever we share with another, we are ultimately inviting them to join us around the table of the Lord to eat and drink the Lord with us. This is why Catholic evangelization must revolve around the parish, the local community where the Eucharist is celebrated. We are representatives of that community, calling people to experience God's presence with us in that community.

We are all evangelizers; it is the primary mission of the church. Evangelization has to do with us, our children, our relatives, our neighbors and friends as communities of believers caring for the human family. We can all think of relatives and friends who are alienated from their faith. We also know people who have no church but express curiosity or have questions about life's meaning. Like it or not, we are always evangelizing. People know we are Catholic. They see us going to church. We have no choice but to evangelize. Our only choice is to evangelize well or to do it poorly.

Christian families are called to welcome, demonstrate, and spread the love and presence of Christ in the world. Pope Benedict XVI said to members of the Pontifical Council for the Family: "The new evangelization is inseparable from the Christian family." The family does so by being a community of lifelong, self-giving love. It is open to welcoming new life, it educates its members in the faith and in charity, and its civic involvement and charitable activity are motivated by faith.

When a Christian family "is able to live love as communion and service, as a mutual gift and openness toward all, it reflects the splendor of Christ and the beauty of the Trinity in the world," the pope said. Pope Benedict said the church needs strong couples involved in its pastoral work, too,

especially in educating children, teaching young people about the Christian vision of sexuality, preparing engaged couples for marriage and helping married couples strengthen their relationships.

Pope Benedict invited the young couples “to discover the beauty of existing for and being precious to someone, being able to say to each other, ‘You are important to me.’” He told couples that the journey of getting to know each other was a gradual process that should be lived with intensity and truth. “Love requires a process of maturation starting from initial attraction and feeling good with the other to learning to give of oneself, sacrifice for, and respect the other.”

As Catholics, we have the greatest gift to share: the faith and grace to assemble around the Lord’s table, to hear God’s word proclaimed, and to share in the sacred meal. The table is not set for us to keep to ourselves. It is a table meant to be shared, even as it has been shared with us. Indeed, how can it be the Lord’s meal unless it is shared? Let us make room around the table, and invite people to our parishes. Let us make our parishes places we’re proud to have people visit. And let us love others by offering them the one unbreakable sign of love we have received: the grace of our faith.

I would like to close with the words of Saint Peter Julian Eymard who wrote: “*Continue to work for the glory of God; be like a hearth which spreads the eucharistic fire everywhere. Believe in your grace and mission; it is faith which brings about the works of God.*” – *The Life and Letters of Saint Peter Julian Eymard*, Volume 6, document 2035, page 125.

7. Closing Prayer

Prayer of Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance
everywhere we go.
Flood our souls with your spirit and life.

Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly
that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.

Shine through us and be so in us
that every soul we come in contact with
may feel your presence in our soul.

Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.
Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine,
so to shine as to be light to others.

The light, O Jesus, will be all from you.
None of it will be ours.
It will be you shining on others through us.

Let us thus praise you in the way you love best
by shining on those around us.

Let us preach you without preaching,
not by words, but by our example;
by the catching force –
the sympathetic influence of what we do,
the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you.

Amen

8. Additional Reading Material

- Dodge, Don Scott. “Liturgy and Mission.” *Emmanuel*, March/April 2008.
- Gribble, Richard. “Our Vocation to Proclaim the Gospel.” *Emmanuel*, March/April 2008.
- Gomez, Archbishop Jose. *You Will Be My Witnesses: A Pastoral Letter to the People of God of San Antonio on the Christian Mission to Evangelize and Proclaim Jesus Christ*. February 15, 2010. Online: www.archsa.org/documents/anv_en.pdf.
- LaVerdiere, Eugene, SSS. “Proclaiming the Death of the Lord.” *Emmanuel*, September/October 2006
- Morneau, Bishop Robert. “Effective Evangelization.” *Emmanuel*, January/February 2008.
- Ramsey, Boniface, OP. “The Eucharist and Mission. *Emmanuel*, September/October 2007.
- Wuerl, Cardinal Donald. *Disciples of the Lord: Sharing the Vision. A Pastoral Letter on the New Evangelization to the Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Archdiocese of Washington*. August 23, 2010. Online: www.adw.org/pastoral/eletterlink.asp.
- Homily of his Holiness Pope Francis, *Called to Promote the Culture of Encounter*. July 28, 2013. Online: www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa.

Prayer in Honor of Saint Peter
Julian Eymard

Gracious God of our ancestors, you led Peter Julian Eymard, like Jacob in times past, on a journey of faith. Under the guidance of your gentle Spirit, Peter Julian discovered the gift of love in the Eucharist which your son Jesus offered for the hungers of humanity. Grant that we may celebrate this mystery worthily, adore it profoundly, and proclaim it prophetically for your greater glory. Amen.

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Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament

