

Theme 3

The History of the Emmanuel Community¹⁷

In France about 120-130 new communities were created after the Council, between the years 1970-1975 and the 1990s. Among them the Emmanuel Community has the most members. All over the world many communities came into being through the Charismatic Renewal too, and of these the Emmanuel Community is currently one of the most important.

We are going to run through the history of the Emmanuel Community briefly in three sections: (1) our founder, Pierre Goursat; (2) the foundation of the Emmanuel Community as such; and (3) the development of the community.

(1) Pierre Goursat

The Emmanuel Community was established in 1976 from a prayer group of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal founded in 1972 by Pierre Goursat and Martine Laffitte-Catta.¹⁸

Pierre Goursat was born on the 15 August 1914 in Paris. Pierre was very Parisian in spirit, but his family originated in the provinces, especially in the Southwest and South-East of France. His parents had two children, Pierre and

¹⁷ This follows a teaching given by Father Bernard Payrous.

¹⁸ Decree of recognition of the Statutes of the Emmanuel Community and of the Fraternity of Jesus by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, 8 December 1992.

Bernard, who was two years younger than Pierre. Unfortunately, his parents separated and divorced. Pierre's mother was the one who brought up the children. She was a deeply Christian woman, who ran a residential hotel. She raised Pierre and Bernard in the Christian faith from their childhood. Pierre and Bernard really saw their mother pray.

Another drama that upset Pierre at the age of 12 was the death of his brother Bernard, who died in a few hours when they were on holiday from appendicitis, a condition that was not at that time treated as well as it is nowadays. The death of Bernard, who was really a great friend of Pierre, was one of the most painful trials of his existence.

In growing up, Pierre experienced a period of aesthetic research. He wanted to become the curator of a museum and to this end he began studies in the history of art. At the same time, he led a life, which, without being disordered, was not truly Christian. His mother was worried about him and she used to say to him: "*Pierre, I find that you pray less now.*" He did not lose his faith, but he distanced himself from it little by little, until at the age of 19 he was affected by tuberculosis.

At that time, the only way to treat tuberculosis was to go into the mountains and breathe good air in a sanatorium. Pierre was treated near Mont Blanc, at Plateau d'Assy. That was where he was converted. At almost the same time, Pierre experienced a great suffering: he loved a young girl, who was also affected by tuberculosis, and who died of it.

Pierre's conversion

Pierre was at the sanatorium of Plateau d'Assy when, one day, he had an extremely strong feeling of the presence of his brother Bernard. It was as though Bernard was saying to him: "*You no longer think much about me; that is because you are full of pride.*" Pierre remained on his knees at the foot of his bed, radically converted. This conversion accompanied him all his life. A priest, who was also being treated at the sanatorium, assisted him. This priest helped him to discover the Church, and from that day onwards, Pierre understood the wisdom of the Church, and he loved it.

When he returned to Paris after his conversion, Pierre began to meet with his cousin, who was a priest, so that he could help him a little. This cousin, Father Jacques Goursat, put him in touch with Father Henri Caffarel, founder of the Teams of Our Lady. Father Caffarel accompanied Pierre during his period of discernment, which preceded the Second World War. He put a little pressure on Pierre to become a priest, but Pierre did not feel it was for him.

During the Second World War, Pierre was in close contact with Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard, archbishop of Paris, who was his spiritual director. Pierre gave the cardinal his opinion on the world situation; the situation of unbelieving environments, and, from his side, Cardinal Suhard accompanied Pierre. He understood that Pierre was not called to the priesthood, and he confirmed him in his call to live as an adorer in the world.

Secretary of the Catholic Central office for the Cinema

From that moment onwards, Pierre truly found his way: to live in the world, as a layman consecrated in the world, and as an adorer. He spent long times of adoration in the parish of Saint Philippe-du-Roule and in the basilica of Montmartre, and at the same time, he began to evangelize in various ways, in particular through the press, through reviews, through books and through the cinema. After the war he became in fact secretary of the Catholic Central Office on the Cinema, which was a huge concern at that time, since this central office gave opinions on all the films that appeared in France. In this way he knew all areas of the cinema: actors, producers, organisers, and participants in the festivals at Cannes and Moscow. He took early retirement when he perceived that the cinema was turning bad, that his action was limited, and that it was no longer supported.

It was at that moment, when his life seemed almost at an end – he had always been ill – that the Lord came to Pierre and made him encounter the Charismatic Renewal.

The experience of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit

The Charismatic Renewal had begun in the United States, a few years before. In the years 1971-1972 people began to talk about it in France, and a Canadian Religious, Father Regimbald, passing through Paris, met Pierre. Pierre was struck by this meeting and he spoke about it to someone he had met at Father Caffarel's home, a young student of medicine called Martine Laffitte.

A little later Brigitte and Xavier Le Pichon, a couple who had encountered the Charismatic Renewal in the United States, returned to France. Their contact with the Charismatic Renewal had completely transformed them. They went to see Father Caffarel, and he organised a prayer weekend, on 12 and 13 February 1972, in the House of Prayer at Troussures, which he had founded. During this the Le Pichons gave their testimony. Father Caffarel had invited to this weekend the people he knew best, or with whom he was most intimate, and among them were Pierre Goursat and Martine Laffitte.

Brigitte and Xavier Le Pichon explained what was happening in the United States. They recounted how the Holy Spirit was in the process of renewing the Church a bit like in the Acts of the Apostles. They asked those present if they wanted to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and they simply received it. Only one person received the gift of singing in tongues. There was nothing extraordinary that was visible, but something amazing happened at that moment. At the end of the weekend, just when they were leaving, Pierre Goursat and Martine Laffitte understood that they were brother and sister, and they decided to pray together. Pierre

returned to Paris and on the Metro he received the gift of singing in tongues. Pierre recounted this with humour: he said that he began to sing in tongues all alone on the Metro, and with the vaults overhead which made his voice resonate, it wasn't bad at all!

From that day on, Pierre and Martine met every day to pray. For several months they continued to pray, either the two of them together or in a small group, with some people who were connected to Father Caffarel. At a certain moment, the Holy Spirit showed them that the time had come to open up more to others. And that was how the Emmanuel Community was founded.

(2) The foundation of the Emmanuel Community

In May 1972 Pierre Goursat and Martine Laffitte decided to invite their friends to pray with them. The first time, there were five, among whom were Francis Kohn and Françou Malcor, now Françou Morin, who was Pierre Goursat's secretary. Pierre and Martine told them about what had happened in the United States, and what they had begun to experience. These five people decided to meet every week. It was the beginning of a prayer group, held in Martine Laffitte's apartment. A year later, in May 1973, there were 500 people in this group. It was decided to split it up. A year later there were three prayer groups: one in the crypt of the church of Saint-Sulpice, one at the convent of the Sisters of the Assumption, and one in the chapel of Saint Bernard, near the Montparnasse station. In these prayer groups marvellous things happened: people were converted, they were renewed, they received the Holy Spirit, they began to live new lives, and one had the impression that a new world was being born.

The same thing was happening in other places in France, more or less at the same time. Prayer groups began to meet together, and the first assemblies of the Renewal took place. One seemed to be living a new Pentecost. In July 1974 at Vézelay, in the great Romanesque basilica, there was the first meeting of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in France. Pierre Goursat and Emmanuel were principally responsible for organizing this gathering, and it brought together several hundred people. The following year, in July 1975, there were the first sessions at Paray-le-Monial.

At the same time, the prayer groups began to be transformed gradually into places with a community life, and certain people said to Pierre, "Can't we go further and truly live together?"

Pierre listened to that and a first "maisonnée", as it was called later, began at Gentilly, in the presbytery, in the university Cité in Paris in 1974-1975. It comprised three people: Hervé-Marie Catta (who would later marry Martine Laffitte), Jean-Marc Morin (who would marry Françou Malcor), and Pierre Goursat. This maisonnée moved the following year to rue Guy-Luzzac, in Paris. It grew in size and several other maisonsnées were opened. Starting with these maisonsnées, and with the

weekends where the prayer groups began to meet, a certain number of people asked if it would not be possible to live together, but not necessarily in the same house.

In the United States something of the kind had already begun. Pierre organised two journeys to the United States, and one in 1976 in particular, to see these new American communities. On his return in September 1976, there took place in Paris what was called the “Three Weeks Retreat”: everyone interested in the community project met every evening and at weekends for three weeks. There were teachings, sharings, and prayer for one another, and at the end of three weeks, it seemed clear that the community should truly be founded.

A certain number of people decided to commit themselves to the Community and the first commitments took place on 18 June 1977 at Chevilly-Larue, at the house of the Holy Spirit Fathers. Fifty people made a commitment in the Community for evangelization, for adoration, and for the renewal of the Church. All this happened in an atmosphere of great joy, of very great enthusiasm, and of very great hope for the future.

Parallel to this birth of the Community, which was very rapidly organized with *maisonnées*, weekends every month, praise, etc., there began the Fraternity of Jesus. What was that about? It is a mystery... In effect, in the first *maisonnée* at Gentilly, one fine morning, Pierre declared to the two other brothers, “*We shall be called the Fraternity of Jesus*”. At the beginning, no one saw very clearly what connection there was between the Fraternity of Jesus and the Emmanuel Community. One felt there was a common grace, and yet there was a different depth. Parallel to the setting up of the Emmanuel Community was the establishment of the Fraternity of Jesus, with its own weekends, and with its retreats, three times a year at the beginning. In December 1977 at Paray-le-Monial there were the first consecrations in the Fraternity (with about fifty people too).

The Emmanuel Community appeared then progressively between 1972 and 1976 with its way of life and its rules. How can one describe this? At first there was a great love of praise, a praise that was moreover renewed by looking to the United States. This praise was experienced truly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and is a result of the outpouring of the Spirit. It is accompanied by special charisms: singing in tongues, texts, exhortations, prophecies, images, words of knowledge... It moves the brothers and sisters to turn away from themselves, and to turn towards the Lord and towards others. It makes them come out of themselves. It is the first driving force of the Emmanuel Community.

Another grace given from the beginning is adoration. The Emmanuel Community is extremely drawn to the Eucharist. The brothers and sisters adore Jesus for hours. They are asked to take a long time of prayer every day, if possible before the Blessed Sacrament. The grace of praise therefore accompanies this interior grace, a grace of a profound life with the Lord, especially in adoration.

The origins of the Emmanuel Community are also very much linked to the care of others, and in particular to those who do not know God. Following Pierre, the first brothers and sisters experienced the grace of compassion, the love of the poor and the sick, but also for those who do not know the Lord. The natural response to this care

for the salvation of souls is evangelization, the desire to make Jesus known. The Emmanuel Community began immediately what is called “direct and explicit evangelization”, that is the clear announcement of the Good News. This was the time of the “Green shop” near the church of Saint Severin in Paris. It was a small bookshop, where they welcomed people: many who were passing by, who were searching, and who were poor (the homeless, drug addicts, or alcoholics...). It was also the beginning of street evangelization: the brothers and sisters went out and directly approached people to talk to them about Jesus. This type of evangelization, which was new for Catholics, made the Community famous at that time, even beyond the frontiers of France.

Everything happened in a very strong fraternal environment. Pierre Goursat insisted on the fact that if “*all rules have exceptions, one rule never has any: one must not criticise, even in jest!*” This rule would accompany the history of the Community and would be very fruitful. It was part of the foundation of the Emmanuel Community, because if one does not criticise, it means one trusts one’s brothers and sisters, in whatever circumstances. It was decided then always to go further in trusting the Holy Spirit, living not only for oneself, but also for others.

This is the basis of another community treasure: fraternal discernment. When we are together to listen to the Lord through the brothers and sisters, in prayer and in fraternal sharing, we welcome the Lord’s will.

Paray-le-Monial

In 1975 Pierre Goursat proposed to continue the gatherings of the Charismatic Renewal, which had begun at Vézelay the previous year, at Paray-le-Monial. That year was the third centenary of the great apparition of Jesus to Saint Margaret Mary, but the cult of the Sacred Heart had fallen somewhat into neglect. Few pilgrims responded to the invitation of the chaplains to come and celebrate that anniversary at Paray-le-Monial. It was the “Charismatics” who invited themselves to that place without being expected, and they surprised the chaplains!

Very rapidly the summer sessions at Paray-le-Monial grew bigger and became international. Little by Little the Emmanuel Community understood that it had not arrived in the town of the Heart of Jesus by chance. There is a very profound link between our call to evangelization and the Heart of Christ, that Heart which had given all for Love of mankind. It is this Love and infinite Mercy that we are called to announce as a Community to people of the third millennium.

In 1985 Mgr. Le Bourgeois, bishop of Autun-Chalon-Maçon, entrusted the pilgrimage of Paray-le-Monial to the Community, and in 1986 we had the joy of welcoming Saint Pope John Paul II there, in the presence of a crowd of 300,000 people.

(3) The development of the Emmanuel Community

The Emmanuel Community was in the beginning totally Parisian. Often at that time in France as in the United States, when new communities were born, they had a very local character. One posed the theoretical question of whether the Emmanuel Community should develop outside Paris, but it was in a practical way that the solution came about. In effect, very rapidly, brothers and sisters left the city to establish themselves elsewhere, and they felt they were still members of the Emmanuel Community. In this way a certain number of people wanted in their turn to live the graces of the Community in the different provinces of France, and then in the various countries of Europe. This developed through a sort of movement and through an interior call, which certainly came from the Holy Spirit.

From 1976 onwards, thanks to Claude and Danielle Proux, the community began in the southeast of France; from 1977 it was planted in Brittany; from 1978 in Poitou; in 1981 in the Southwest; in 1984 in the East; in 1987 in the North, and in 1987 in the Valley of the Loire. Already, at that time, countries beyond France were touched, inculcating the graces of the Community in their own mentality. Communities were established in particular in Italy from 1979 on, in Germany from 1982, and very quickly in Belgium and in the Netherlands.

The Emmanuel Community grew very rapidly at the same time in its capacity for evangelization. Prayer groups multiplied. Different apostolic activities were born, often beginning within the Community, and then, once they had been tried, they were proposed for those outside the Community: Love and Truth for couples and families, Fidesco for missionary cooperation, etc. The Community also founded a magazine, *Il est Vivant*, and the Editions de l'Emmanuel publishing house; and all sorts of other initiatives were developed.

At the same time the number of active members of the Emmanuel Community increased very quickly. In the first years starting in 1977, the Community doubled its active membership every year. The Community began with 50 people who made a commitment in 1977; in 1982 there were already 1,200 members in 7 or 8 countries. In 1988, the Emmanuel Community consisted of 2,500 members in 20 countries; in 1994, there were about 3,600 members; in the year 2000, there were 7,700 members in about 50 countries.¹⁹ Today there are a little more than 9,000 members in about sixty countries in all five continents. The most numerous part of the Community after France is in Rwanda. At the same time as the numbers of active members of the Community increased, one saw the appearance of more and more vocations of men and women to celibacy for the Kingdom, and of priests.

The first priestly ordination took place in 1981. In 1984 the Community had the joy of having four ordinations; in 1985, 2; in 1986, 3; in 1987, 4. There were 14

¹⁹ France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Germany, Austria, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Great Britain, Ireland, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Rumania, Latvia, Egypt, Israel, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Burkino Faso, Cameroon, Benin, Togo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, South Africa, Cape Verde, Angola, India, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, China, Taiwan, Japan, East Timor, Australia, Canada, USA, Nicaragua, Cuba, Haiti, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Chile.

priests by the end of 1987. In 2013, the Community had about 240 priests, 90 seminarians, 187 women and about 20 men living in consecrated celibacy. Six bishops have come from the Community.

Through this growth one can discern the action of God, who has used the docility of certain people, who have received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, to develop a charism to serve the Church. And the Church has recognized this.

Since its birth, the Emmanuel Community has truly wanted to be at the heart of the Church and very soon the Community asked for the Church's recognition. The Catholic Church recognized the Emmanuel Community first as an *Association of the Faithful* in the diocese of Nanterre, where the barge (the "peniche") had long been established as the centre of the Community. Later, Cardinal Lustiger recognized the Emmanuel Community in the diocese of Paris, and numerous other bishops followed his example. Cardinal Lustiger recognized in the Emmanuel Community one of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council.

In 1992 the Holy See also recognized the Emmanuel Community as an *International private association of the Faithful*, to begin with "*ad experimentum*", then definitively in 1998. The Emmanuel Community was the first charismatic community to be recognized by Rome. In 2009 the Holy See recognized the Community as an *International public association of the Faithful*. The change of status from private to public association testifies to the greater recognition and confidence of the Church. By this public status the Holy See recognizes that the Emmanuel Community acts in the name of the Catholic Church, thus participating in the renewal of the missionary consciousness of all the baptized.

V. The fraternity of Jesus

Even before the Emmanuel Community began officially, Pierre Goursat had the inspiration that there should also be the Fraternity of Jesus. In fact, one morning in 1975, Pierre spoke to two members of the first maisonnée in the presbytery at Gentilly,²⁰ Hervé-Marie Catta and Jean-Marc Morin, declaring: "We are the Fraternity of Jesus." Hervé-Marie and Jean-Marc confided later that at the time they did not really understand what Pierre meant by this.

Parallel to the development of the Emmanuel Community, the Fraternity of Jesus would enlarge the heart of the Community. In the beginning, it met three times a year for retreats (at Christmas and at the end of the year; for the Paschal triduum; and during the summer holidays). It is one of the vectors of the Community's growth because Pierre did not hesitate to invite to it people who were not yet members of the Community, but in whom he discerned a call. This was also how the Community began in Italy and Belgium, starting with the Fraternity.

Little by little, Pierre's inspiration became clear. The Fraternity of Jesus cannot be dissociated from the Community. It is its heart. It consists of members of the Emmanuel Community who receive a special call to give themselves totally through

²⁰ See p.

a consecration, in which make themselves available for mission in the framework of the Community. This consecration is a renewal of their baptismal consecration²¹ lived in the Community. It has a definitive character, which means that the people who are consecrated in the Fraternity of Jesus choose the Emmanuel Community as the path of holiness for their whole lives.²² They give themselves to Christ in a definitive manner in order to sustain the Community in its foundations, its daily life, and its mission of evangelization. The gift of self involved in the consecration is also expressed through availability for mission at the heart of the Community, that is to say it is a radical offering of oneself to the will of God through duties, services or missions requested by the Community.

Today the members of the Fraternity of Jesus live all over the world, wherever the Community exists. They gather locally and participate in local retreats or at international retreats at Paray-le-Monial.

Emmanuel, a school of holiness

We have already emphasized above that the Emmanuel Community is a path to holiness. Several of our members have died “in the odour of sanctity”:

- Pierre Goursat, our founder, whose process of canonisation was opened, in the diocese of Paris in January 2010;
- Danièle Proux, the first member of the Community to die;
- Sylvaine Marly, consecrated to celibacy in the Community, who died at L’Ile-Bouchard;
- Several of our brothers and sisters in Rwanda – among whom are Cyprien and Daphrose Rugamba – who died in giving their lives for charity. **The process of Cyprien and Daphrose began in Kigali in September 2015.**

We could add to this list.

Without prejudice to the judgment of the Church, these examples attest that the Emmanuel Community is a true school of sanctity, in the spirit of Vatican II, for men and women of today.

²¹ Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 10: “The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood...”

²² On the contrary, the commitment in the Community is for one year and is renewed every year.

Materials for Further Study

The History of the Community

Holy Scripture

Matthew 1: 19-25: the name Emmanuel

Texts to read and meditate upon

1. On the Nature of the Community and of the Fraternity: the Preamble of the Statutes and that of the Customary

I The Emmanuel Community

The Emmanuel Community is an association of the faithful of all states of life.

The Community takes its name from Scripture: “Behold! The Virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Emmanuel, a name which means “God with us”” (Mt 1:23).

“Emmanuel” is “God with us” in our daily life.

It is for all to recognise Jesus as the centre of their life in order to be “in the world without being of the world.”

For some, this will mean seeking holiness in everyday life, in the family and at work; for others, in celibacy for the Kingdom; for others still, in a life dedicated full time to apostolic works.

The profound grace of the Community comes from Eucharistic Adoration of God: “Emmanuel”, truly present among us. From this Adoration is born compassion for all who are dying of hunger, both materially and spiritually. From this compassion is born the thirst to evangelise throughout the entire world, especially among the poorest of the poor.

Abandon to the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the intercession of Mary, Mother of God, the sacraments and liturgy, deeply establish the communal²³ and apostolic life in the very life of the Church.

II The Fraternity of Jesus²⁴

a) The Fraternity of Jesus takes its name from two texts of Scripture: “With one heart all these were joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (Acts 1:14); “Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:34). To be a brother of Jesus, we must have the Heart of Jesus; for this we need to receive Mary into our lives, and allow the Holy Spirit to renew our heart. “I will remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit in you” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

b) Among the Catholic members of the Emmanuel Community, some may receive a more radical call. At the heart of the Community, the Fraternity of Jesus proposes a gift of self by consecration²⁵, a more specific commitment of fidelity to the Church and availability for mission in the context of the Community. This consecration, of a baptismal type, is made according to the spirit and manner described below (paragraphs d,e,f,g).

c) Certain persons, not members of the Emmanuel Community, but Catholics who are members of communities with a similar spirit, can be admitted to the Fraternity of Jesus. These persons will participate in the graces and spirit of the Fraternity without participating in or being subject to its government.

d) Consecration in the Fraternity of Jesus is a voluntary renewal of one’s baptismal consecration (*Lumen Gentium* n.10) as a total gift of self with a view to a commitment of availability to the Lord, His Church and evangelisation. This consecration expresses the willingness to let oneself be consumed by the love of God. It is lived out firstly in deepening the graces of the Emmanuel Community: in adoration of Jesus in the Eucharist from whom is born compassion for all who are dying of hunger, materially and spiritually, and the thirst to evangelise the entire world, especially the poorest of the poor.

²³ Note on vocabulary:

Community: the term Community is not taken here in the restricted sense of communal living under one roof, nor that of a religious community, but in the sense of a large association animated by a community spirit. Also the terms “community” and “communal” in the present statutes never refer to religious life but always to a common life as proposed in canons 298-311 and 321-329.

²⁴ The Emmanuel Community was founded and established in union with the Fraternity of Jesus, whose goal is to create at the heart of Emmanuel, together with some outside associated members, a more profound path of sanctification and availability for mission. It seemed appropriate, in 1991, to join in the same statutory text the concerted provisions governing the two entities, previously canonically distinct, while respecting their individual spirit and object.

²⁵ The term “consecration” is taken here in the sense of consecration of the baptized according to the constitution *Lumen Gentium*, of the Second Vatican Council: “The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood...” (*Lumen Gentium* n.10); its specific expression is noted in paragraphs d,e,f.

This consecration is made to Jesus present in the Eucharist through the grace of the Heart of Jesus, according to the tradition of Paray-le-Monial.

e) Consecration in the Fraternity of Jesus implies a deeper solidarity with the Community and a very special love of and fidelity to the Church.

f) Consecration is accompanied by a commitment of availability. This availability is first of all a decision to offer oneself radically to the will of God through responsibilities, services or missions requested by the Moderator of the Emmanuel Community for the service of brothers and sisters and of the Church, especially with regard to mission.

g) In this way, consecrated members of the Fraternity give of themselves in order to welcome the fire of Christ's love and to radiate this fire, firstly in the Emmanuel Community, and with the Community, wherever they may be sent.

2. On Paray-le-Monial and the Community, read Appendix 2 of the Customary

“Paray-le-Monial and the Emmanuel Community

1. Paray-le-Monial in the history of the Church

Paray-le-Monial is the place where the Heart of Jesus became known in a new way by the three apparitions to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque:

27th December 1673:

Jesus makes Margaret Mary rest on his chest. He makes known to her the wonders of His love. He chose her to spread the fire of this "burning charity" and save souls. Jesus plunges Margaret Mary's heart into His own, then He gives it back to her all ablaze etc.

a first Friday in 1674:

Jesus appears to Mary Margaret who is adoring the Blessed Sacrament. He shows her his wounds shining like the sun and his chest, which is like a fiery furnace. He complains of the lack of love that people show Him in return for all that He endured to save them etc. He asks for two acts of reparation: Communion on the first Fridays of each month and a Holy Hour on Thursday evenings in union with his agony at Gethsemane.

the major apparition in June 1675:

Jesus presents His Heart: "Behold this Heart which has so loved men that it has spared no effort in exhausting and consuming itself in order to show them its love. And in recognition I mostly only receive ingratitude, by their irreverence and sacrilege, and by the coldness and contempt they have for Me in this Sacrament of Love. But what offends Me even more is that these are hearts that are consecrated to Me."

Jesus asks that on the Friday of the Octave of Corpus Christi a special feast should be instituted in honour of His Heart and to repair the insults He received in the Holy Eucharist. He promised abundant graces to those who pay Him this honour or help this honour to be paid.

The message of Paray therefore focuses on three themes:

- the declaration of Jesus' love for mankind similar to that in the Gospel of St. John.
- the complaint that mankind does not respond to this love
- the call to friendship with Christ, a friendship leading to a substitution, reparation for the sin of not loving, and a consolation of the Heart of Christ.

Paray-le-Monial has a special place in the history of the church.

From the appearances of Christ to St. Margaret Mary grew a world-wide cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Thanks to the apparitions the cult has acquired a universal dimension. The message of Paray has been encouraged by various popes and has been the subject of their writings (Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II²⁶) and Benedict XVI.

Paray-le-Monial is one of three instances of private revelations by Christ that have been recognized by the Church and which have led to the institution of a liturgical celebration. Before the feast of the Sacred Heart, there was Corpus Christi (a feast of the Blessed Sacrament) following revelations to Julian of Cornillon (Liege, Belgium). And since April 30th, 2000, on the occasion of the canonization of Sister Faustina, Pope John Paul II instituted Divine Mercy Sunday, relating to the revelations of Christ to this saint.

We should note the centrality of Eucharistic adoration to the message of Paray. On one hand, it was before the Blessed Sacrament that most of the apparitions occurred. On the other hand, Jesus asked that the Eucharist should be more greatly honoured, especially by souls consecrated to Him etc.

At a time when Jansenism was ravaging the church, God revealed that He is love and mercy. This is why he chose the symbol of the human heart - the humanity of Christ reveals to us His divinity, His human love reveals Divine love. This puts Paray-le-Monial in the perspective of the Incarnation - God became man and "*He loved with a human heart*" (Gaudium et Spes No 22 § 2).

The apparitions, emphasizing reparation, raise the question of the depth and authenticity of our own Eucharist - how do we adore and receive Jesus? At the same time, they lead us to realize that in the Communion of Saints and by our love, we can "console" the Heart of Jesus .. This is the meaning of the Holy Hour - originally, Jesus asks Margaret Mary if she would be with him and share his anguish so that he would not be alone in the garden of Gethsemane. There he suffered the most in realizing that the gift He was making of himself might be useless, since some would refuse to be saved.

²⁶ See in particular the 'Message of Pope John-Paul II to Pilgrims at Paray-le-Monial', 4th June 1999 and the 'Letter of John Paul II on the 100th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Human Race to the Divine Heart of Jesus', and his commentary on the Litanies of the Sacred Heart.

2. The place of the message of Paray-le-Monial in the Community

When Pierre Goursat told Marthe Robin that Paray-le-Monial would be a centre for Emmanuel, Martha corrected him: "Say rather the heart of it!"

So it is no coincidence that the Community was brought to Paray-le-Monial²⁷ in the Heart of Jesus. In fact, as it gradually discovered Paray-le-Monial, the latter constructed in a certain way the graces of the Community as they gradually became incarnate, in the Eucharist, in Adoration, compassion and evangelisation, in becoming open to the Holy Spirit or in its vocation to be a witness to mercy.

The Incarnation

First, as noted above, the cult of the Sacred Heart emphasizes the reality of the Incarnation. *'In this devotion the believer confirms and deepens the acceptance of the mystery of the Incarnation, which has made the Word one with human beings and thus given witness to the Father's search for them'* (*'Letter of John Paul II on the 100th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Human Race to the Divine Heart of Jesus'*). In this sense, we can say that devotion to the Sacred Heart is not one more devotion among others. In the Heart of Jesus is revealed the mystery of Christianity, the religion of Love. The vocation of Emmanuel members is to live this love in order to witness to it in the world.

The Eucharist

The open wound of Jesus' Heart on the Cross is an expression of His love as a total gift, a gift that Christ renews sacramentally in every Eucharist. By offering in this Sacrament His flesh and blood for the salvation of the world, He manifests the Father's infinite love. *'The entire devotion to the Heart of Jesus in its every manifestation is profoundly Eucharistic: it is expressed in religious practices which stir the faithful to live in harmony with Christ, "meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29), and it is intensified in adoration. It is rooted and finds its summit in participation in Holy Mass, especially Sunday Mass, where the hearts of the faithful, fraternally assembled in joy, listen to the word of God and learn to offer with Christ themselves and the whole of their lives (Sacrosanctum Concilium, n. 48). There they are nourished at the paschal banquet of the Redeemer's Body and Blood and, sharing fully the love which beats in his Heart, they strive to be ever more effective evangelizers and witnesses of solidarity and hope.'* (*'Letter of John Paul II on the 100th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Human Race to the Divine Heart of Jesus'*).

Adoration, Compassion, Evangelisation

To have a devotion to the Heart of Jesus always involves, in one way or another, assuming the feelings that are in the Heart of Jesus: *'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus'* (Phil 2:5). What are these feelings? A burning love for His Father and a merciful love for all mankind.

²⁷ For the history of how Emmanuel came to Paray-le-Monial, see *'Fire and Hope'*, by Bernard Peyroux and Hervé-Marie Catta
Emmanuel Editions 2005

The love of the Son for the Father impels Him to perpetual Adoration: in this Adoration He receives from the Father and he gives Himself. Jesus, only Son of God, is the model of perfect Adoration. In His Image, we are invited to Adoration.

The infinitely merciful love of Jesus for mankind is expressed in compassion and evangelisation. He became man to save us by love. To discover the Heart of Jesus is to discover how much we are loved and to be so aflame with love that as far as possible we attract all mankind to Him. Pierre Goursat put it forcefully, *'Let us ask the Lord that we should burn with love for our brothers the sinners. You know that St Dominic spent his nights saying: 'But, Lord, what will become of the sinners?' He pleaded without cease. In fact, pleading in this way helps prayer, because instead of slumbering or feeling dry, when you think of those who suffer, you cannot remain dry. Then, you say: 'Lord, Lord, have pity, have pity. Help me to suffer for them ... Take my little sacrifices, in your love, transform them by your power to convert these sinners. It's a question of habit, since these little sacrifices engender in us the presence of the Lord, and little by little we reach continuous prayer - it's a concrete prayer, not a prayer of feelings, of impressions, of gazing at our navel ... It's just simply love. The more one receives, the more one gives! And that is infectious! If the Holy Spirit is a devouring fire, He is at the same time a peace and sweetness which comes to us and gives us a peaceful strength of abandon so that we will burn with love for the Father and for the Son and for sinners. This love is not natural, it is given to us'*.

To have compassion for the sinner is to enter the Heart of Jesus and love others with the love of Jesus.

We can compare adoration, compassion and evangelisation with the two movements of the human heart:

- Systole: a movement of contraction. This corresponds to the adoration in which God communicates His Heart and his divine love.

- Diastole: a movement of expansion. This corresponds to compassion and evangelisation. This movement impels us towards others in order to tell them what we ourselves have received for free - a love for our neighbour, received in Adoration, which is the engine of true evangelisation. As Pierre Goursat said, *"We need to find that dynamism in love that gives us joy in undertaking to save souls. We are here to save souls and the Lord will hold us to account for it .."*

Diastole is only possible if there has been systole. Evangelisation is a movement of the overflowing of the heart: the abundance of love that we received and which we cannot contain, radiates around us. We are on fire for the salvation of souls .. *"You have to ask to be meek and humble of heart",* said Pierre Goursat, *'and then approaching the pierced Heart of Jesus, which is burning with love for us, we allow ourselves to be wounded in our turn by Him and to be set on fire, burned up, carried away .. You know my little children, it's splendid and it's quite simple!'*

This gentleness and humility evoked by Pierre Goursat above are those of the Heart of Jesus (cf. Mt 11:29). They come also from this double movement of God towards man and man towards God. In Adoration, the gentle Heart of Jesus is revealed to us and is given to us. Adoration causes us also to grow in humility by becoming aware of our condition as creatures in front of the Creator of all things. In this double

movement, divine charity is spreading out to us, and if we want, through us to all humanity.

In the words of Margaret Mary, Jesus wants to unite us to His Heart so that we become like Him. Each member of the Emmanuel Community is called to give Jesus to the world through evangelism .. but more deeply in becoming like Him. To enter into the Heart of Jesus is to be willing to be conformed to Christ in order to say with Paul: *'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me!'* (Gal 2:20) *'We know that all things work together for good ... For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family.'* (Rom 8:28-29). This was what all the saints experienced - Therese of Lisieux, patroness of the missions, wore day and night on her heart this prayer: *"Make me to be like You, Jesus!"*

The outpouring of the Spirit

The Heart of Jesus is like the temple of the Holy Spirit. When it was pierced on the Cross, water and blood flowed forth, signs of the gift of the Spirit to the world. It is therefore not surprising that Paray-le-Monial is also a very special place for the outpouring of the Spirit. Numerous people have received the outpouring and then went world-wide to proclaim the work of the Holy Spirit.

It is not surprising to see many similarities between the experience of the outpouring and the experience of St Margaret Mary²⁸ - the manifestation of God's love for us, a new discovery of the salvation that Jesus brings due to His love for all mankind, sent on mission to participate in the salvation of the world.

Witnesses of mercy

Paray-le-Monial is the place to discover the Father's mercy. This mercy of the Father became incarnate in Jesus who manifests the love of the Father *'whoever sees me sees the Father ..'* (John 14: 9). *'The Saviour's Heart invites us to return to the Father's love, which is the source of every authentic love: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10)... His Heart particularly reveals the generosity of God towards sinners. God's reaction to sin is not to lessen his love, but to expand it into a flow of mercy which becomes the initiative of the Redemption.'* (*'Letter of John Paul II on the 100th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Human Race to the Divine Heart of Jesus'*). Those who experience this merciful love of the Father for themselves naturally in their turn become - if they allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit – witnesses of God's love for all humanity.

A message for the Third Millennium

Paray-le-Monial is thus a Trinitarian place where everyone can discover the Father's love, the gift of the Son and the fire of the Spirit. The message of Paray-le-Monial is more than ever appropriate for our time because, as explained by Pope John Paul II,

²⁸ Regarding this, see the article *'La Communauté de l'Emmanuel et le Coeur du Christ'* in *'Le Coeur du Christ pour un monde nouveau'* Paris, Edition de l'Emmanuel, 1998

‘... an unending spring of life, giving hope to every person, has streamed precisely from the Heart of God's Son, who died on the Cross. From the Heart of Christ crucified is born the new humanity redeemed from sin. The man of the year 2000 needs Christ's Heart to know God and to know himself; he needs it to build the civilization of love’ (General audience of 8th June 1994 cited in ‘Letter of John Paul II on the 100th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Human Race to the Divine Heart of Jesus’.

Questions to ask

Personally

- What has touched me in this teaching?
- What are the more important elements for me to remember about the action of the Holy Spirit in the history of the Community?
- How do I see the relationship between the Community and the Church through its history?

With your companion

- Do I pray for the growth of the Community – a gift of God for the Church of this time – and in particular in my province?

In the Maisonnée

- What has touched me, or come back to me, in the history of the Community?

Decisions you could make

- Pray for the mission of the Community in my province, in my sector, my pole, the place where I live\
- Pray for vocations in the Community

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