EUGENE DE MAZENOD 101

PRESENTATION 8: DARING IN THE MIDST OF A CRISIS

"Daring to Share an Experience of God with Others"

PRAYER USED BY ST. EUGENE BEFORE MEDITATION:

O Mary Immaculate, faithful adorer of the Father, Mother most admirable of the Son, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, inspire within me the same sentiments that were yours while pondering the revealed mysteries which you treasured in your heart. Grant that I may ever live in union with your Son, my Saviour, together with all who, by meditation, give honor to the most Holy Trinity. Amen.

1/ The crisis of a near-death experience

Writing to his father, Eugene described the experience 1814:

> *I have entirely got over an illness that brought me to death's door and from which I recovered only through the countless and very fervent prayers that were made for me to the good God in every quarter of the town… It was at the barracks where some 2000 Austrian prisoners were held that I contracted what they call jail fever. On the morning of St. Joseph's feast day I was close to the end…*

25 years later he reflected on the experience in his journal:

> *I encountered among these poor prisoners whom I helped spiritually and materially… only grateful souls, hearts full of affection who responded perfectly to the caring charity that I felt for them*

35 years later, he recalled how he had nearly died of typhus:

> *I have all my life desired to die a victim of charity. You know that this crown was withheld from me right from the first days of my ministry. The Lord had his designs since He wanted to trust me to give a new family to His Church...*

⇒ Looking back, Eugene found meaning in his difficult experience. In the some of the difficulties you have experienced, how has God helped you to find meaning?

2/ While most people who had contracted typhus died, Eugene's near-miraculous recovery was attributed to the prayers of the young people. He wrote:

> *"That is when they displayed those feelings of faith and trust in God that I pray the Lord will keep them in always. They were not content to come several times a day to my door to get news of me that was every day more alarming: they were not slow to grasp that one must seek from God what men no longer trusted themselves to obtain by their art. They turned in effect to the Supreme Moderator of all things, and relying on the powerful intercession of the B.V.M., of great St. Joseph, and other saints to whom they were most devoted, they began those prayers which, joined to the others that people in their charity made for me, snatched me from the jaws of death whose prey I had nearly become. And how could the goodness of God have failed to be touched by the fervour, trust, perseverance with which these young people prayed the Lord to give them back their father."*

⇒ The Association of Christian Youth was for St. Eugene an experience of community and apostolic life. His fatherly attachment to the young people gave him the strength in his illness to feel closely united to the community. In what way is the faith community to which you belong a support for you in the midst of life's trials? How are you a support to the community?

3/ The crisis of indecision.

Eugene had received an offer to join his priest friend, Forbin Janson, in an association of priests to restore the ravaged Church in France by means of preaching parish missions. This letter shows that the seed of the idea had taken root in Eugene and that he was discerning God's will in this regard. To be in harmony with the will of God was one of the major recurring themes throughout Eugene's life and actions.

> *I still do not know what God wants of me but am so resolved to do his will that as soon as it is known to me I will leave tomorrow for the moon, if I have to.*
>
> *I am hesitating between two plans: either to go off and bury myself in some well regulated community of an Order that I have always loved; or do in my diocese exactly what you have done successfully at Paris.*

Exactly a year later Eugene wrote to this same friend:

> *it is the second time in my life that I am making a decision of the utmost importance as a result of a strong impulse that comes from outside of me.*
>
> *When I reflect on it, I am convinced that is how God wants to put an end to my indecisiveness.*

⇒ In your daily decision-making, how do you dare to discern and respond even when the path is not very clear?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Almighty God,
author of my life,
help me learn to read what you have written on my heart.
Give me discerning eyes
and an untiring spirit
to look within me
in order to understand how to reach outside of me.
And once I have begun to read you aright,
give me the generosity to help others to read you,
to sound you out one letter,
one word of radical giving at a time.

Author Unknown
(https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/discernment