

# Pierre Vigne, C.M. (1670-1740)

## A Missionary of the Eucharist

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### Introduction

This simple portrait of Blessed Pierre Vigne (1670-1740) will allow us to approach him and come to know his spiritual and apostolic richness. We will discover different dimensions of his person: the priest, the missionary and the founder.<sup>1</sup> But, above all, we will discover in him a missionary in love with the Eucharist. Our intention in sharing this article with you is twofold: first, to become acquainted with a confrere who is unknown to most of us, and second, to renew our Vincentian vocation with regard to the Eucharist in order to serve and evangelize the poor.



### 1. His Origins<sup>2</sup>

We can come to know a person by his life and by his writings. Let us now get to know his life and his family. Let us learn a little about his family roots and his first years of life to his entrance in the seminary.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.rsssacramento.it](http://www.rsssacramento.it)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DE CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Petri Vigne (1670-1740). Positio Super vita, Virtutibus et Fama Sanctati*, Roma 2000, 401 pages.

### 1.1. *His Family*

His father's name was Pierre Vigne, and he died in 1699 when he was about 86 years old. His mother, Françoise Gautier, died in 1700 at the age of 75. Both were from Privas in what is now Ardèche, where they were married in 1653 when he was 40 and she was 28.

His father was illiterate and his signature does not appear on the marriage license. He was an honest cloth merchant. The family had a decent standard of living. The mother was well-educated. She was 12 years younger than her husband, a difference in age which was not unusual in those times. This allowed her a greater closeness to their children than to her husband. The couple, Vigne-Gautier, had at least 5 children: Eléonore, Jean-François, Anne-Clémence, Jeanne and Pierre.

Before continuing with the description of the family of Blessed Pierre, it is necessary to consider the problem of the Vigne family's religion. And so it is helpful to recall briefly the religious situation of France, and of Vivarais specifically, in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the second decade of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the condemnation of Luther and Calvin by the Church led to the "Wars of Religion" that bloodied France. The Edict of Nantes (13 April 1598) recognized freedom of conscience but conceded to the Reformers limited freedom of worship everywhere, including, of course, the city of Privas. This region was the scene of revolts and reprisals, of rivalries and violent fratricides. The king (Louis XIII and later Louis XIV), more or less well-informed and advised, sent out the army against the rebels of the supposedly reformed religion: Catholics and Protestants fought each other with reciprocal hatred. The periods of calm alternated with periods of murder and devastation. Imprisonment, the confiscation of properties, tortures, and massacres forced the Protestants into exile, into hiding, or into pretending to abjure their faith.

In this painful history the city of Privas, "*the small Calvinist capital*," played a magnificent and tragic role. It was a rich agricultural and commercial city of 2,500 inhabitants with a Protestant majority. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was conquered and destroyed by royal troops in May of 1629. Once the Edict of Nantes was revoked (17 October 1685), the Catholic missions began years before multiplied. This did not stop the Protestant population of Privas from growing from 47% to 60%. The census of 1689 reveals that Privas had 180 Protestants or new converts out of 310 inhabitants.

Where was the Vigne family situated in this historical-religious context? All the oral tradition indicates that the family was Protestant. The first biographer writes that "*his father and his mother*

were immersed in the heresy." There are important doubts surrounding this hypothesis.

The facts which are available to the well-informed provide some explanations. The parents of Pierre Vigne were married on 26 April 1653. Their burials, in 1699 (the father) and 1700 (the mother), were recorded in the Catholic archives of the parish of Privas. The baptismal records of the last three children are in the parish archives of Saint Thomas. Blessed Pierre Vigne signed the parish records for baptisms, marriages and funerals at least 79 times, from the age of 11 until his priestly ordination. On the eve of his diaconal ordination, he received a clerical title from his family, assuring him of a pension.

In conclusion, nothing indicates expressly that the relatives and neighbors of Pierre were Protestants. Nothing can prove that they were among the New Converts. It is certain that, from the time of his adolescence until Pierre's ordination, his family was Catholic.

## 1.2. *Infancy, Adolescence and Youth*

Pierre Vigne was born 20 August 1670 in Privas. He was baptized on 24 August in the parish of Saint Thomas in Privas with his older sister and brother, Eléonore and Jean-François, as godparents.

When Pierre was born, his father was 57 years old and his mother 45. In his father he had a model of work and initiative. His mother was tender. We do not know much about his childhood, but everything leads us to think that there were no important problems and that as a young boy he was well cared for by his family. Likewise, everything leads us to believe that the personality of the blessed was well-formed as a child and that he showed signs of early maturity.

The character of the young Pierre was marked by his human, intellectual and natural gifts and by the social, family, and natural environment of his early youth.

Although there are no certain facts about where he began his studies, we do know that he entered the seminary when he was 20. We also know that he began important theological and doctrinal studies in 1690 and continued them through 1694. This would not have been possible if he had not had a solid foundation.

## 1.3. *"His Encounter with God"*

A longstanding tradition holds that Pierre Vigne, before he was 20, as a Protestant, had begun a journey to Geneva to study and become a minister of the reformed religions and that he was converted mysteriously in the presence of the Eucharist. It was then

that he decided to enter the seminary and become a priest of the Catholic Church.<sup>3</sup>

The oral tradition, which we have already mentioned, has insisted on highlighting his conversion to Catholicism and his Eucharistic fervor.

In conclusion, the documents and the results of recent investigations do not allow us to discard the hypothesis of a conversion. This permits us access to the spiritual significance of these events. We can deduce two points: 1) Vigne wanted to become a priest of the Catholic Church in order to fight against the Calvinist heresy; 2) he became a priest of Jesus Christ after having an experience of God's presence in the Eucharist and afterward his whole life was marked by the desire to adore, and to promote adoration of, the Blessed Sacrament.



#### 1.4. *His Entrance in the Seminary*

Whichever the context — external or internal — of his conversion, whatever his previous formation, Vigne began his preparation for the priesthood in 1690. We know that he entered the seminary of Viviers because the document that establishes his clerical title in May 1692 presents him as “*a gentleman cleric now in the Seminary of Viviers.*” In the same document it says that he “*... had received the four minor clerical (orders) from the Bishop of Viviers.*” He had come to the seminary at Viviers, at least to receive minor orders. The rule stipulated at least ten days in the seminary before each of the Minor Orders.

All this leads us to believe that from 1690 to 1694 Vigne had done studies for the priesthood. He received priestly ordination on

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<sup>3</sup> His first biographer, Msgr. Marzolini, is quite sober in his description. Throughout the years the story has been constructed and built up and precise details have appeared: the encounter with a priest who had the Blessed Sacrament with him, the rejection of the greeting, the intervention of the fellow travelers, the fall from the horse, the return to Privas or else the departure for Viviers, depending on the version of the story.

18 September 1694 at the hands of Charles-Antoine de la Garde de Chambonas, Bishop of Viviers, in the chapel of his episcopal palace of Bourg Saint-Andéol. We know this information thanks to his ordination certificate, written in Latin.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. His Priestly and Missionary Life (1694-1712)

Let us approach the first years of his priestly ministry. These years are important for us as members of the Congregation of the Mission, since he formed part of our community.

### 2.1. *The Vicar of Saint-Agrève (1694-1700)*

Toward the end of November 1694 he was named Vicar of Saint-Agrève, a small city with a somewhat rigid atmosphere, where he assisted the pastor, Msgr. Jean Chambe. His first signature appears in the parish registers of this city throughout the whole month of October. The last signature is on 2 November 1699. We know that toward the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the parochial vicar was housed, fed and maintained by the parish and he received a certain “incidental” amount of money. The two priests developed a close relationship. The elder, initiating the younger in the multiple pastoral responsibilities and activities; the younger, supporting the elder with all his generosity, and his availability. Msgr. Chambe died in July 1699. Vigne remained in the parish until 11 May 1700.

### 2.2. *Lazarist (1700-1706)*

Several months after the arrival of the new pastor, Pierre Vigne left Saint-Agrève and on 27 May 1700 he returned to Lyon to enter the Internal Seminary of the Congregation of the Mission. In the *Positio* we see that “*he felt the need for a substantial spirituality, for an extended formation in the mission, and that brought forth in him the ardent desire to announce Jesus Christ, particularly to the poorest, to the poor people of the countryside, that is, to those who are the special object of the mission of the sons of St. Vincent de Paul. Let us add that he was seeking a fraternal community life, a stimulating association with the confreres who were animated by the same desire for the interior life and the same missionary fire. And the Congregation of the Mission could offer it to him.*”<sup>5</sup>

Lyon is the city nearest to the birthplace of Vigne. There was a house of the Mission there that was founded in 1668. He was

<sup>4</sup> Cf. CONGREGATIO DEI CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Positio*, 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, 36.

received by André Gallien, one of the most well-loved of the superiors of the house of Lyon.

Along with the work of the missions, the internal seminary was established toward the end of 1670 or early in 1671, "*with the end of providing workers for the Company.*" The Superior General at the time, Fr. René Alméras,<sup>6</sup> sent an eminent teacher, Fr Grégoire, who had been the director of Saint Lazare.

The Director of the Internal Seminary when Vigne arrived was Pierre Badeulh. He was assisted by various collaborators, in particular by Jean-Jacques Porte, who would later become the director of the Seminary.

In order to be accepted in the seminary of Lyon, Pierre Vigne, who had been a priest for six years, presented his ordination certificate along with a description of the services he had carried out. Those who received him into the Community asked for information from his ecclesiastical superiors, and they were assured that there were no obstacles for his admission.

Once admitted in the Vincentian seminary of Lyon, Vigne lived like all the other postulants, a trial period of two years, designed to initiate them into the spirit and the life of the little Company, and to prove the authenticity of their Vincentian vocation.<sup>7</sup>

Vigne made his Internal Seminary in the context of a community life that was very structured and demanding. The rhythm of the day was marked by the tasks and the pious exercises of the time. He received spiritual direction. The formation was completed by lessons on the nature of the vows and the way of living them out, and lessons on the missions.<sup>8</sup> Vigne received a formation that was quite close to that which he had received in the seminary of Viviers. But here the formation was a good model for what was specifically Vincentian: quite rigorous, community based, and clearly oriented toward the missions among the country folk.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, "Lecciones de Historia de la Congregación de la Misión," in *Anales de la Congregación de la Misión y de las Hijas de la Caridad*, no. 4-5, July-October 2005, 333-347.

<sup>7</sup> The objective of the seminary, according to the Rule of the Seminary at that time, was to deepen and to acquire the spirit of the Congregation, to become aware of the rules. And so Pierre Vigne was attracted by the five Vincentian virtues and the spirit of the Seminary: mortification, obedience, poverty, silence, compliance to the Rules.

<sup>8</sup> In the index of the books used in the Internal Seminary of the time are found, along with the writings that are particular to the C.M., a good number of texts of the Fathers of the Church and of masters of the spiritual life, all of this to strengthen the life and the activity of the Christian, the priest, the religious, the apostle.

At the end of the first year he made his “*Good Purposes*,” in which he committed himself to live for a year according to the Rule of the Congregation of the Mission. At the end of the second year he made Vows on 28 May 1702. Now he was ready to begin work in the missions.

He was sent to Valfleury, near St. Etienne. There he found a Marian sanctuary dedicated to the Virgin of Genêt d’Or. He collaborated in the spiritual support of the pilgrims. This ministry reinforced his admiration of, devotion to, and confidence in the Virgin Mary.

The spiritual life of Fr. Pierre was strengthened by the atmosphere of recollection in Valfleury. Then he decided, along with Fr. Jean Blanc, a “holy man of God,” to live out his apostolate among the humble country people in what is now the Department of the Loire.

During the missions, his principal occupation was preaching, following the “*Little Method*” of St. Vincent. For Vigne this method became a school upon which he would base his own way of preaching. Other activities filled the day of the missionary.<sup>9</sup>

In 1703 his missionary activity extended beyond the area of Valfleury to Savoy, Grand Bonard and Cluze in the diocese of Annecy. In 1704 he left Lyon and moved to Béziers.

### 2.3. *His Departure from the Lazarists*

He left the Congregation of the Mission in 1706. This departure was not the result of a hurried decision. Rather it was the conclusion of a long interior struggle. He left the Community of his own will, and actually against the will of his superiors.

After two years of reflection and various pastoral experiences, Vigne seems to have found his personal vocation as a missionary in the countryside. He gave missions in the dioceses of Viviers, Mende, and in Puy.

## 3. **Calvary and the Foundation of the Congregation (1712-1722)**

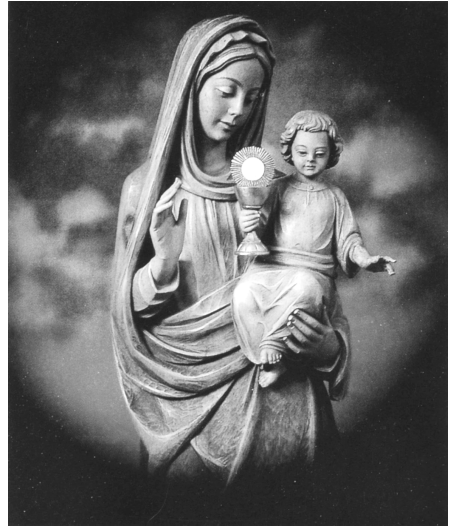
In the heart of Vigne, “the flame of love was fed by a double devotion: **the Eucharist and the Passion of Jesus**. “*Fr. Vigne had two particular devotions to which he gave himself completely, to which*

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<sup>9</sup> The principal activities of the Vincentian mission were: the explanation of the big and the little catechism, the administration of the sacraments, especially confession and communion, and the visits to the sick, arguments with heretics, and the reconciliation of people.

he sought to lead others with all the fire of which he was capable: Calvary and the altar, the Passion and the Eucharist.”<sup>10</sup> These were the arms of war to convert sinners and to stir up the lukewarm.

These affirmations which come from the two biographies of the blessed express well the vision and the meaning of his activity in this fertile period of his life. The Passion and Calvary help him to convert Christians and to animate them on the road to Calvary. The Eucharist and the altar shall be the source and the center of the life of the Congregation of the Most Blessed Sacrament which he founded.



In 1712 he arrived in the town of Boucieu-le-Roi, in Ardèche, where he erected the Way of the Cross. Helped by the faithful of the surrounding areas, he set up 39 stations which went from the countryside through the town. In this way, he taught Christians to follow Jesus from the Last Supper to Pentecost. Boucieu became his residence. There he gathered some women together and entrusted them with the task of “*accompanying the pilgrims*” on the Way of the Cross in order to help them to meditate and pray. Thus was born the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Blessed Sacrament. On 30 November 1715, in the church of Boucieu, he gave them the cross and the religious habit, inviting his daughters to combine the adoration of Jesus present in the Eucharist with the communal life lived in fraternal union.

Even while dedicating himself to the formation of the new Congregation, Pierre Vigne continued his apostolic endeavors. To extend the fruits of his mission, he discovered the possibility of writing books: *The Rule of Life*, a work on spirituality, and, above all, the meditations in “*The Most Beautiful Book: Jesus Christ Who Suffers and Dies on the Cross for Us.*”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> CONGREGATIO DEI CAUSIS SANCTORUM, *Positio*, 59.

<sup>11</sup> PIERRE VIGNE, *Il più bel libro. Gesù chi soffre e muore in croce per noi*, Leberit, Rome s/a, 99 pages.



Around 70 years old, this vigorous “itinerant of God” now began to feel the weariness of a life totally dedicated to announcing the Word of God. During a mission in Rencurel, in the mountains of Vercors, startled by a sudden illness, he was forced to stop preaching. Despite all his efforts to celebrate the Eucharist and to exhort the faithful to the love of Jesus, he knew that the end was approaching. He once again expressed his missionary zeal and recollected himself in prayer. A priest, and later two sisters, accompanied him in the final moments of his life. On 8 July 1740, Pierre Vigne was united with him whom he always loved, adored and served. He was buried in the church of Boucieu-le-Roi.

#### 4. In the Line of French Spirituality<sup>12</sup>

When Pierre Vigne was 30 years old, a new century began. The Church of the 17<sup>th</sup> century had inherited the spirituality of the French School. The century of “light,” with the exaltation of reason, seemed to relegate the world of spirituality to the dark ages. But the Spirit was not held back, not by enlightened minds, such as Voltaire, nor by the encyclopedists. The Spirit continued to raise up new saints such as Louis Grignon de Montfort who was able to bring again to the world the wisdom of the cross, and Alphonsus Maria Liguori, who knew how to overcome the entanglements of outdated doctrines such as Quietism<sup>13</sup> and Jansenism.<sup>14</sup>

Vigne knew how to respond to the expectations of his time. His simple yet substantial spirituality can inspire even now our living of the Gospel. It can be summed up in three basic elements: the Word, the Cross and the Eucharist.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. FABIO CIARDI, “Pietro Vigne, un uomo per l’anno eucaristico,” in *Unità e Carisma* (No. 6, November-December 2004), pp. 19-22.

<sup>13</sup> Mystical religious doctrine especially popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It viewed the union of the soul with God as a state of total “quiet” and passivity that practically excluded the will and desire. Its principal proponent was the Spanish priest, Miguel de Molinos (1628-1696). Cf. “Quietismo,” in *Dizionario Storico del Cristianismo*, Pauline, Turin.

<sup>14</sup> Doctrinal, political and ecclesiastical movement of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. It began in Holland and other European countries and takes its name from the theologian of Leuven, Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638). Jansenism understands grace in terms of predestination as do the Calvinists. Other aspects of Jansenism include the rejection of philosophy in the realm of theology, the predominant place of the Bible and of the Holy Fathers, moral severity. Cf. “Giansenismo,” in *Dizionario Storico del Cristianismo*, Pauline, Turin.

#### 4.1. *The Word*

Vigne is above all a missionary. Carrying a heavy box he traveled the highways of France, from village to village, to light the fire of the love of God in the people whom he encountered. From the box he would take out books which he had written to explain how great was the love of Christ. Animated by Sacred Scripture, from which he was continually nourished, and with which he also nourished the country folk that he directed, his spirituality was authentically biblical.

His was a time in which people thrived on devotions. Vigne explains that *"It is necessary to be nourished with the Word of God, and so to nourish and instruct others."* *"Whoever does evil,"* he explains with conviction, *"does so because he does not know God. Who would dare not to obey him, not to love him, if only he truly knew him? Who would dare offend him? When one has the habit of meditating on his love, one also has the certainty of expecting everything from his mercy."*<sup>15</sup>

His writings illustrate the constant biblical references that invite to a continual meditation of the Word of God. He calls for a direct meditation on the Sacred Scriptures day and night.

#### 4.2. *The Cross*

The cross remains always as *"the knowledge of the saints,"* and it is the *"only knowledge"* of Vigne, whose heart was firmly attached to Jesus in the Eucharist and was open, by the Holy Spirit, to the wisdom of the Scriptures.

Like all authentic saints, Pierre Vigne knew how to inculcate the Gospel and he synthesized it in the cross. He was a man who knew how to depict the passion of Christ to the people and show them the sign of divine love. While to all he pointed to the Sacred Scriptures as the source of Christian life, he concentrated the whole Word of God in him, whom he called *"The Most Beautiful Book. Jesus Who Suffers and Dies on the Cross for Us."* In order for the people to "read" it, he built a Calvary which responded to the popular piety that desired to see and to touch.

All the representation of the scenes of the Way of the Cross is at the service of the mystery. He gives it an extraordinarily pastoral interpretation. He knows how to respond to the needs of the people and he knows how to transmit the genuine content of the faith. *"Calvary,"* he explains, *"contains the place, the time, and the state, in which Jesus primarily demonstrated his infinite love."*

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<sup>15</sup> FABIO CIARDI, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

We can all discover in the cross of Christ the synthesis and the school of each virtue. *“Do you seek humility? Go to the Cross! Do you seek purity? Go to the Cross! Do you seek hope? Are you attracted by pride? Look at the crucifix....”* The response to each question, the remedy for every vice, is always there: *“Are you subject to greed? Look at your God who gives all that he has: his blood, his body, his soul, his life. Are you attracted by sensuality? Look at Jesus whose body was subjected to the greatest suffering! Are you envious? Contemplate Jesus on the cross, burning with desire and love because he wants only the happiness of those who were putting him to death!... Are you overcome with anger? See this sweet Savior who does not speak a word before the cruelty of his executioners!... All can attain inexhaustible graces contemplating Jesus on the Cross.”*<sup>16</sup>

In the writings of Vigne resounds the simple but effective preaching, directed to the people of the countryside, to inspire in them the love of Christ, as he is in love with them: *“Oh my Lord, you have suffered so much for us, no gift you have given us is as beautiful as the cross. There you have shed your blood with tremendous suffering! Yes, all that you have made, the heavens and the earth, has cost you nothing, for with one word you have created everything; but all that you have redeemed, what pain, what suffering.... Such love, such tenderness in thinking that he himself has died for me! Behold God, the Lord of the world, in Christ Jesus suffers the passion to give us life. I do not understand how my heart is not overcome with sorrow, with repentance, how could it forget you, oh my Savior, there on the cross! Oh my sweet Jesus, could I now dare offend you, considering all that you have suffered for me?”*<sup>17</sup>

#### 4.3. The Eucharist

The third focal point in the spirituality of Pierre Vigne is the Eucharist. For him, the love manifested in the crucifix is given in the Eucharist. When speaking of the Eucharist, he uses language which is so convincing because he speaks from his own personal experience: *“We beg you, Lord of heaven and earth, by the merits of your Son, to give us a spirit which does not esteem passing things, but rather those which raise us up, that which is eternal. May we contemplate as from the summit of the mountain, the littleness of temporal and ephemeral goods, and the greatness of those which await us in heaven.... Directed toward heaven, we will receive more easily the gifts of grace and we shall see the beauty that faith reveals to us in the darkness of this life to be able to defend ourselves from numerous and*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, 21.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, 22.

*powerful enemies. Grant, oh Jesus, that my soul always be formed by your virtues, and my body be purified of all that your infinitely pure eyes view with horror, for I am predestined to be your living tabernacle.*"<sup>18</sup>

It is not possible to think of the Eucharist separate from the cross that leads us to conversion and the imitation of Christ: *"Oh God, turn your gaze on your Son and because this divine Host is elevated, forgive us who are sinners, grant us the grace to recognize ourselves as such, and to lift up our spirit and our heart to you.... We should imitate his virtues; we should fulfill our obligation, orient our intentions to him, in short, maintain our soul adorned with his sentiments, in the purity of love, avoiding sin."*<sup>19</sup>

## 5. A Living Spirituality<sup>20</sup>

Vigne was an apostle dedicated to the contemplation of Jesus on the Cross; he knew that love calls for love. He wanted to be immolated, not by justice, but by love; only those who consent to becoming little are led by the way of love. The life of Pierre Vigne teaches the profound secret of *"spiritual poverty"*: *"Where there is no love, sow love, and you shall reap love"* was a maxim of St. John of the Cross. From the mystery of the cross flows the mystery of the Eucharist, sacrament of love. Clinging to Christ and burning with the desire to announce him is what Vigne proposes. The attraction of his words and the invitation to conversion to the hardest of hearts, flowed from the fire of his faith, of his charity and of his immense compassion for sinners. He had consecrated himself to the salvation of the people of the countryside; for this he had renounced the outcome. He sought the poor. He hoped to obtain from sinners a sincere repentance of heart. If we only knew this great God well — he used to say — who would not fear or be filled with confusion for having offended him so frequently?

The usual themes of his preaching were the same, to awaken the fear of God in the heart of the sinner and to persuade him to repentance, the sense of the fragility of human things and the infinite greatness of God.

He wrote two books. In one, *The Most Beautiful Book. Jesus Suffers and Dies on the Cross for Us*, we find the following passage which he loved to cite to the people who came to listen to him: *"Let us then read once again and study with diligence and perseverance the book of books which God has authored in the fullness of his love for*

<sup>18</sup> VIGNE, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 90-91.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. [www.rsssacramento.it](http://www.rsssacramento.it)

us, and that he has written, not with ink, but with his blood, not on paper, but on his very body. This is his masterpiece, his book par excellence, which he uses to convert us to himself and draw us to his love.”<sup>21</sup>

“Cross and Eucharist” are the two key words for Vigne, for they kindled his spirit and fed his apostolic zeal. As priest, as missionary, as founder, Vigne gave himself completely with an extraordinary capacity for love, which was nourished in the Eucharist. The bishops, who appreciated his zeal, his doctrine, and his holiness, sought him out to preach in the parishes of their dioceses. He always responded to the best of his ability. He never showed off a spirit of ownership; his name does not appear in his writings, only simply “a missionary of the clergy.” For the same reason he did not sign the Rules for his religious sisters. In the last moments of his life, he relived the sufferings of Jesus Christ.



The spirituality of Vigne continues to be lively and inspiring. When the missionary became aware that alone he could not fulfill the increasing workload of welcoming and accompanying pilgrims along the way that led to the Calvary, he brought together a group of women from which would be born, “Sisters of the Most Holy Calvary,” who would later be known as “Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament.” He taught them to pray and to live in contemplation before the Eucharist, and so, immersed in the Eucharist, they would be able to guide people in the daily way of the cross that is the way of holiness. For him, the Eucharist was at the center of his evangelization. The mystery of the Eucharist constituted the foundation of the “*Rule of Life*” that he left to his religious. Jesus has given his life freely on the cross so that we might live a new life. Today we too participate in this gift as we receive the Eucharist and contemplate Christ present in the host. For Pierre Vigne, the Last Supper and the Passion express the same reality: God gives the gift of his life so that humanity might live in a new way.

<sup>21</sup> VIGNE, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

## Conclusion

In this article we have discovered in Pierre Vigne a man in love with Jesus Christ who died on the Cross and is present in the Eucharist, an upright and faithful priest, a zealous missionary willing to work to announce the Good News, a friend of the poor and of the unlearned who sought by all means possible to help them grow both spiritually and as human beings — all this with the simplicity of a daily life oriented toward God and toward others.

Priests, religious men and women, laypeople... all can find in Vigne a model and guide for making of our ordinary life, a faithful, rich, and fruitful Christian life, rooted in the Gospel.

Pierre Vigne was beatified on 3 October 2004 by Pope John Paul II in Rome, in the Year of the Eucharist. He summed up Vigne's spirituality and message in these words: "*Contemplating Christ present in the Eucharist and the saving Passion, [he] was led to be... a faithful missionary.... May the Church in France find in [him] an example to raise up new sowers of the Gospel!*"<sup>22</sup>

We conclude with these words: "Blessed Pierre Vigne....

- Invites us to discover: the Eucharist, mystery of love and redemption.
- Invites us to be witnesses of missionary zeal and of the Eucharist.
- Invites us to contribute to the life, the communion, and the mission of the Church.
- Invites us to commit ourselves: to give a privileged place to the Eucharist celebrated and adored; to welcome and to live the Word of God; to be signs of communion and of solidarity, and to participate in the work of evangelization."<sup>23</sup>

Let us be true adorers of the Father and of his Son Jesus Christ, present in the Eucharist, and let us continue his work for, with, and among the poor.

(GILBERT R. WALKER, C.M., translator)

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<sup>22</sup> JOHN PAUL II, "Homily on His Beatification," in *L'Osservatore Romano* (4-5 October 2004), pp. 6-7.

<sup>23</sup> COMUNITÀ PARROCCHIALE LANUVIO, *Bolettino parrocchiale*, Anno VII, no. Speciale, 2004, p. 2.