



CONNECTIONS

Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family

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Birth and Baptism of Father Eymard February 4-5

Birthdays are celebrated in virtually every land and culture. Customs vary greatly, but the marking of the anniversary of a person's birth is a way to recognize the gift of his or her unique life and impact on others.

Peter Julian Eymard was born 204 years ago on February 4, 1811, in a bedroom on the ground floor of his parents' rented house at 69 Rue de Breuil in La Mure d'Isère, France. Peter Julian's mother, Marie-Madeleine Pelorce, was the second wife of Julien Eymard, a hardworking man and a devout Christian. Peter Julian was his tenth child from two marriages; only Peter Julian, a sister Marianne, and an adopted girl would survive. Julien's heart must have been overflowing as he beheld his newborn son, on whom he pinned his hopes for the future of his beleaguered family and business ventures.

Peter Julian was baptized the following day, February 5, by the parish priest, Father Joseph Second, in the nearby church that served the town. Young Peter Julian was an altar server there and made his First Holy Communion on March 16, 1823.



Eymard biographer Father André Guitton, SSS, says that "whenever Father Eymard later returned to his native place, he never forgot to venerate the baptismal font in the parish church [above]. He loved to celebrate the anniversary of his baptism and remind his godmother [his sister Marianne] of this: the name Julian was that of his father who had likewise given it to several of his children. It may also have been a souvenir of the holy patron of the parish of Auris, Saint Julian of Brioude, which possesses a relic" (13). Auris is where Peter Julian's father, Julien, was born, and his family had lived there three generations.

On February 5, 1845, Father Eymard, then the provincial of the Marist order, wrote to Marianne: "It's such a beautiful day for me. It's *the most beautiful day of my life* since this is the day when I had the good fortune to be baptized."

One hundred and fifty years ago, he followed up this letter with a powerful meditation on "The Grace of My Baptism" during the Great Retreat of Rome (January 25-March 30, 1865): "I made my meditation on the gratuitous and all-merciful grace of the holy baptism that I received. I understood what it is: a new creation in our Lord Jesus Christ, a second life in Jesus Christ, but in Jesus crucified. 'For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ' (Gal 3:27). 'We were buried with Christ by baptism into death' (Rom 6:4). I saw the graces that made up the dowry of my baptism — beyond all computing: a son of God, a member of Jesus Christ, a child of the church, a brother of the saints, a right to the grace and to the glory of Jesus Christ. How good and wonderful Providence has been to me! It is an endless miracle."

Vatican II teaches that baptism is the basic sacrament of Christian life and mission. Every call and grace flow from it, and are deepened by faith-filled participation in the Eucharist.

Father Anthony Schueller

"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*

CENTER FOR
EUCCHARISTIC EVANGELIZING

*A Ministry of the
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament*

5384 Wilson Mills Road
Cleveland, OH 44143

440.442.4734
eucharisticevangelizing.com
cee@blessedsacrament.com

James W. Brown
Father William Fickel, SSS
Father Anthony Schueller, SSS

A Prayer to Begin Your Reflection on Your Baptismal Call

O Lord, you gave Saint Peter Julian Eymard a deep sense of gratitude for the gift of his baptism. He saw it as the beginning of a life filled with grace.

Through his intercession, may we discover what you have called us to be at the time of our own baptism.

Grant us the grace to live our Christian vocation in creative fidelity to your call. Amen.



Church of Father Eymard's Baptism

Follow the Associates Program and Life in the Eucharist (LITE) in Bread Broken & Shared, the Provincial Newsletter.

CONNECTIONS

What's Expected of an Associate?

Travelling around the province over the past several years with former CEE directors Fathers Bill Fickel and Anthony Schueller, we were often asked the question by aspiring and even committed associates: *What is expected of me as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation?* This is a very fair question for someone who commits to being or doing *more* as a disciple of Jesus.

In the initial formation program to become an associate, you may recall hearing *this* answer to the question:

1. If you are already involved in some ministry, please keep doing what you do now. *And*, do it with a clear sense of its connection to the Eucharist and an Eymardian spirituality.

2. For those who feel called to do more, please reflect on the *Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA)*, especially numbers 5 through 17, and make some choices.

3. Subscribe to *Emmanuel Magazine* and strive to appropriate its vision of "seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist."

Over the next year, I would like to point out some specific activities aspiring and current associates could consider in addition to *what you do now*.

In *ROLA*, 10b, we read: "We joyously celebrate the feasts special to our association: the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ,

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament on May 13, the feast of Saint Peter Julian Eymard on August 2, and the day of his baptism, on February 5."

I would add the following feasts as special to the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament: the feast of the Epiphany, the anniversary of the first solemn exposition in Paris; March 21, the anniversary of Saint Peter Julian's "Gift of Self"; May 13, the anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament; and November 17, the anniversary of the canonical approval of the Lay Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

On this, the eve of the anniversary of the baptism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, we remember a date so very special to the founder. As we read in Father Tony's reflection, he loved to celebrate the anniversary of his baptism, and, in fact, considered his baptism date even more important than his birthday.

Those of us who have been called to associate ourselves with the global Eymardian family might consider the following: attend Mass on February 5 to celebrate this important anniversary; spend time in adoration or in your own "inner room" (Mt 5:6), contemplating the meaning of your own baptismal call; telephone or write a thoughtful note to one or all of your godchildren. Celebrate the gift of your own baptism!

Jim Brown

GOOD NEWS IN NORWALK!

The charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard is blossoming at Saint Philip's Church, a diocesan parish in Norwalk, Connecticut. Led by Associate Dan Krenicki, and with the support of his pastor, Father Mike Boccaccio, nine of his fellow parishioners are in initial formation to become Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. Dan had gone through the program at Saint Jean Baptiste in New York City with his late wife Kathy.

So moved by his experience, Dan proposed to his pastor to start an associates program at Saint Philip's. Father Mike, who often spends a few days at Saint Jean's, and was familiar with the congregation, heartily embraced the idea. In fact, he too is going through the twelve sessions and intends to become an associate when the group celebrates the commitment ceremony in the fall.

Father Tony and I visited the group in mid-January and experienced the wonderful hospitality and goodness of Saint Philip's, which truly exemplifies what we call the 3Cs: careful attention to the *celebration* of the Eucharist through music, preaching, art, and lay participation; a value on *contemplation* with weekly adoration time; and a commitment to *communion* with our brothers and sisters through strong social outreach, especially to the poor and the homeless.

Jim Brown