



CONNECTIONS

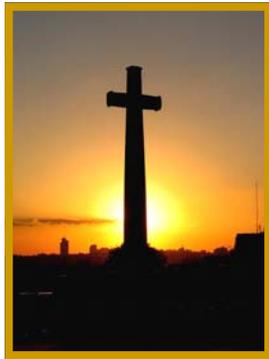
Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family

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An Ancient Homily for Holy Saturday

Something strange is happening — there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still, because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and he has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh, and hell trembles with fear.



Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, he has gone to free from sorrow Adam and Eve, he who is both God and the son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the cross, the weapon that had won him the victory. At the sight of him, Adam, the first man that he created, struck his breast and cried out to everyone: “My Lord be with you all.” Christ answered him: “And with your spirit.” He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: “Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by my own authority command all who are held in bondage

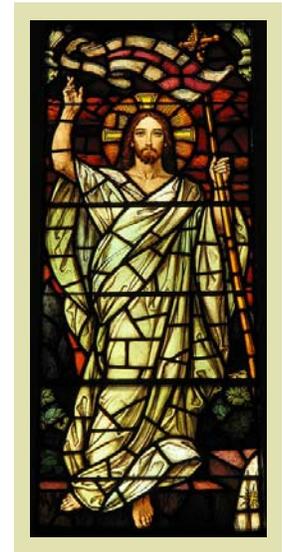
to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the life of the dead. Rise up, work of my hands. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.

For your sake I, your God, became your son; I, the Lord, took the form of a slave; I, whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of all, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

See on my face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your fallen nature in my image. On my back, see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See my hands, nailed to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.

I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side for you. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep. The sword that pierced me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

Rise, let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise. I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will enthrone you in heaven. I forbade you the tree that was only a symbol of life, but see, I who am life myself am now one with you. The bridal chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open, the eternal kingdom prepared for you awaits.



Alleluia!

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What's Expected of an Associate?

The *Rule of Life for Associates of the Blessed Sacrament* was introduced to the Congregation throughout the world in early 2010. Father Bill Fickel, SSS, then Director of the CEE, asked me to interview people in Houston and Cleveland who had been "associated" with the Province since the early 1990s, particularly in their participation in the Life in the Eucharist ministry. The goal was to tap into the lived experience of these dedicated women and men in terms of what it meant to be an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. Those reflections were captured in the *Associates Handbook*, the purple book that is given out to associate candidates beginning the formation process.

In continuing this series on answering the question *What is expected of an Associate?* I simply want to use their own words expressed back in 2010. For so many of them, it came down to responding to a "vocational call" and the invitation from one or more Blessed Sacrament religious to share the mission and charism of the Congregation. These are their words:

"We experience a call to witness and live our lives by sharing the mission and charism of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and to form communities centered on the Eucharist."

"We desire to know more about Saint Peter Julian Eymard and his charism and

to promote it and live it."

"We feel a deep connection with the Blessed Sacrament family and its eucharistic spirituality, and have been touched by the love and hospitality the community offers."

"We are empowered and trusted to collaborate with them in the ministry of the Congregation. We desire to share our time, talent, and treasure in a commitment to the ministry of eucharistic evangelizing."

In summary, these associates "share personal experiences of the transformative influence the Eucharist has in their lives" whenever they have the opportunity.

Jim Brown



"The gift of self is a sacrifice; it is the most glorious and the most noble act that we could do — to give oneself completely to God."

Saint Peter Julian Eymard

On March 25, Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, and I were delighted to participate in a commemorative celebration at Saint Vincent de Paul Church in honor of Saint Peter Julian Eymard's Vow of Personality, the "Gift of Self," made 150 years ago on March 21 during the "Great Retreat" in Rome.

The day began with Morning Prayer, which is led by the associates, followed by the celebration of the Eucharist. There was a luncheon and a Holy Hour led by Father Bill Fickel, SSS, the Pastor at Saint Vincent, and then a lively exchange with the associates and those who are in formation to become associates. We are so very grateful to Gloria Jung who organized the day.

SOCIAL CONCERNS MINISTRY

During our visit to Saint Vincent de Paul Church, we learned about a most unique way that some of the associates share the mission and charism of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation through their involvement in the Social Concerns Council of the parish as it implements the Respect Life Program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Associate Joan Milloy is the Chair of the council, and this is their program:

Issue: Abortion

We sponsor two full days coverage for 40 Days for Life Campaigns and in the past have sponsored a bus to the Florida March for Life in Saint Augustine. We also participate in the USCCB's Fortnight for Freedom Campaign.

Issue: The Death Penalty

We hold an Execution Vigil Service, ideally during the scheduled time of execution. We pray for the repentance of the condemned, comfort for the family of the victim, and for an end to the use of the death penalty.

Issue: The Homeless

We provide an evening meal to the residents of Pinellas Hope, a Catholic Charities homeless shelter. We do this once or twice a year and have collections for the homeless in the diocese and/or our county, whenever we receive a request.

Issue: Legislative Advocacy

We keep informed on legislation affecting life issues at the federal and state levels.

NEW ASSOCIATES GROUP BEING FORMED IN WINTER SPRINGS, FLORIDA

Father Tony and I were privileged to meet with 19 parishioners at Saint Stephen Church on Sunday, March 22, to discuss the beginning of an initial formation program for prospective associates there. Under the leadership of Father George Dunne, SSS, and Colleen Aboud, Chair of the Leadership Core Group of the LITE ministry, the group will start the yearlong initial formation experience in May. God's blessings!

Jim Brown