



# CONNECTIONS

*Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family*

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## The Bust of Father Pierre-Julien Eymard by Auguste Rodin

Many of you are familiar with the sculpture of Saint Peter Julian Eymard by the French artist and sculptor Auguste Rodin. As Bernard Champigneulle tells the story in his book *Rodin* (Oxford University Press, 1967), Rodin met Father Eymard due to a tragedy in his family.

In 1862, Rodin's beloved sister Maria died from complications due to peritonitis. Auguste was so distraught over her death that he shut himself up in their darkened house. Inconsolable, friends feared that he might even take his life. The town pastor was unable to make any progress with Auguste and so he "put Rodin in touch with Father Eymard, a man who had a reputation for saving lost souls" (24).

Little is known about what actually happened in their initial encounter except that soon afterward Rodin joined the growing Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament as a novice, under the name of Brother Augustin. While there, Rodin asked Father Eymard for his permission to make a bust of him. The process would have afforded Eymard time with Auguste and likely an opportunity to help him discern his real vocation.

The bust of Father Eymard was Rodin's first major work. In Champigneulle's words, Rodin felt it was "solid, vital, and expressive of the enduring respect which the novice felt for a superior who had shown him the light when he was lost in darkness" (26).

The narrative below the bust states that "Eymard was not happy with his likeness. Rodin made the Father's hair sweep up in tufts above the temple, and Eymard thought this made him look like the devil. He asked Rodin to remove them, and the artist refused." It should be noted that Rodin often pushed the limits in his sculpting, sometimes receiving negative reviews from critics.

The bust is one of two Rodin originals (the other is housed at the Rodin Museum in Paris, France). It was commissioned by Philadelphian philanthropist Jules E. Mastbaum who started the Rodin Museum in Philadelphia. It was bronzed in 1925 using the original casting by Rodin.

*Jim Brown*

*Jim Brown with the bust of Father Pierre-Julien Eymard in the Rodin Museum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 21, 2017*



**Come,  
Holy Spirit!  
Renew  
the face  
of the earth!**

PRAY FOR THE 35TH  
GENERAL CHAPTER  
OF THE CONGREGATION  
OF THE  
BLESSED SACRAMENT  
JUNE 4-24 · CHICAGO

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### Trip to the Northeast

Earlier this month, I had the opportunity to visit Saint Philip Church in Norwalk, Connecticut. I met a group of mostly monolingual Spanish-speaking women and men who are participating in the initial formation program for aspiring Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. There are 20 people discerning the call to become associates. They are being led in Spanish by Ana Comacho, who was in the first group of associates at Saint Philip's in 2013. The group represents a number of parishes in the area and they are already speaking about starting a program in their own parishes. They are on fire with their love of the Eucharist and becoming associated with our Congregation devoted to the Blessed Sacrament.



*Spanish-speaking associates-in-formation at Saint Philip's*

The diocesan director is Father Michael Boccaccio, now retired after 27 years as the pastor at Saint Philip's. He was appointed director by Bishop Frank Caggiano. Father Michael is currently on sabbatical and intends to start an associates program in the parish where he will be helping out.

A team of current associates is facilitating five aspiring associates and the rest of the associates are going through the *Course of Study on Saint Peter Julian Eymard* as part of their ongoing formation.

Following my time in Norwalk, I spent a few days visiting the community at Saint Jean Baptiste in New York City. While there, I met with a small group of current associates at Saint Jean's and facilitated a session in the initial formation program of twelve women and men who are discerning becoming Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. The group is being led by Father John Kamas, SSS, the pastor. The group is so "New York" — representing a rich mix of women and men, ages, professions, and ethnicities.

*Jim Brown*

### From God's Word

The following passage from Saint Luke (24:29-35) reflects powerfully the experiences recounted in this issue of *Connections* and the post-Easter season.

"But they urged him, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that, their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?'"

"So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, 'The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!' Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread."

*Jim Brown*

### Messengers of His Real Presence

A little over six years ago, a group of Catholic men living in the San Antonio, Texas, area began to meet on a monthly basis. All of them had been involved in ACTS retreat ministry which was started at a parish in the Archdiocese. ACTS is an acronym for “Adoration Community Theology Service.”

Over the years, two ideas became clear to the men: 1. keep meeting monthly for time in adoration, a meal together, prayer and song and learning focused on the Blessed Sacrament; and 2. discern a clear apostolic mission for the group. Nineteen men committed to the process.

Through prayer and conversation, the Holy Spirit led them to call themselves “Messengers of His Real Presence” and “to evangelize peoples of all faiths to this truth and encourage adoration of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Eucharist.” They now speak at parishes and give retreats promoting adoration and the real presence. A number of these men were parishioners of Saint Joseph’s Church, served by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. They became friends with Father Mario Marzocchi, SSS, the pastor, and received his support and assistance in developing their mission focus.

In 2014, Father Bill Fickel, SSS, then the director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing, traveled to Saint Joseph’s to lead the men and many of their wives in a retreat on the Eucharist. Following the retreat, the group began to use themes from the Life in the Eucharist programs for the focus of their monthly meetings.

It became clear to Father Mario that these men were engaged in the mission of the Congregation and wanted them to be Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. We worked out a program tailored to what eucharistic formation they had already been through. And Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, facilitated a formation meeting this past March.



*Messengers of His Real Presence in dialogue*

On May 12-13, I was invited to lead a retreat for the men. The focus was on introducing the group to Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the history of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament. Forty people showed up, including many of the wives, four invited couples, and others interested in becoming Associates of the Blessed Sacrament.

Dr. William (Billy) Stewart, the chief contact person for the Messengers, had this to say following the retreat: “It was an amazing retreat. Thank you for your time, knowledge, and love of the Most Holy Eucharist! We are on fire to evangelize the central mystery of our faith. We look forward to becoming a part of the Eymardian Family!”

That Saturday afternoon, I met with a number of the participants to explore possibilities for those among the participants who are also interested in entering the formation program to become Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. “May God Be Praised!”

A final note: Two years ago, they took on a major project, organizing a procession on Corpus Christi Sunday in downtown San Antonio. The procession this year will take place on June 18, led by Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, and culminating with the noon Mass at the Cathedral of San Fernando. They have developed a video promoting this event and are hoping for a crowd of over 200,000 participants.

*Jim Brown*