



CONNECTIONS

Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family

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Saint Peter Julian Eymard: “The Magnet-Tizer!”

In addition to my being a fulltime pastor of Saint Philip Church, Norwalk, Connecticut, I also serve in our Diocesan Tribunal Office at our Catholic Center. Mass is celebrated at the center at noon. I had been invited to preside at some of these Masses.

The first time I did I noticed a floor-to-ceiling triangular wall cabinet in the corner of the sacristy. When I looked into it, I noticed there were some relics. I asked the deacon assisting me to open the cabinet. He did not know where the key was, so he said he would try to locate the key.

Weekly, I would seek information as to the whereabouts of the key. Something [little did I know it was *Someone* — and not just any someone] insisted I open the cabinet. After a few weeks, and still no key, the deacon recommended I check with the center’s “Keeper of the Keys.” I did; still no find. I asked that the search continue. I *could not/would not* give up! At this point, I had become “obsessed” with wanting to find the key. I was not sure why, but I knew I just *had* to have the cabinet unlocked. Finally, on Tuesday, October

6, at 11:50 a.m., I learned the key had been found. Before vesting for the Mass, I opened the cabinet. Yes, there were a few relics there, which I admired “from a distance.” Then, my eye caught an oblong red box, with a stole on it, in a lower shelf. I lifted the stole and saw a booklet of prayer to our Blessed Sacrament founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard. The booklet was published September 20, 1962, a mere three months short of Eymard’s canonization on December 9, 1962. I opened the box; it was empty, yet there was an indentation designed to hold a particular item.

The hollowed-out space was in the shape of a small monstrance used for Eucharistic Adoration. My glance returned to the reliquaries in the cabinet; yes, there was one in the form of a monstrance. I picked it up and read the Latin inscription inside, “*Ex ossibus S. Eymard*” [“From the bones of Saint Eymard”]. Wonderfully, I then learned that this particular reliquary fit exactly in the box I had discovered below. I was so awestruck, delighted, excited, etc., that I called those who were gathering for Mass into the sacristy to explain why they had

heard my very loud “Wow!”

I explained that just nine days earlier I had been received as an Associate of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, the religious order founder by Saint Eymard. Additionally, I explained how *compelled* I had become to find the key; and how *pushed* I felt I was. Now, I know it was Saint Peter Julian Eymard who was behind my drive!

Research conducted by our diocesan archivist as to when and why this first class relic had come to be housed in our Catholic Center proved naught, unfortunately. Still, I shall seek the permission of our diocesan bishop, Most Reverend Frank Caggiano, to allow me to occasionally bring the relic to our parish, especially for our ten associates and those now in formation, to reverence.

To repeat, at first I never knew why I *had* to locate the key. Now, I do: it was Saint Eymard saying, “*I’m here,*” to which I say, “*Thanks so very much, very much!*” Hence the title of this reflection: as a magnet draws, so did Saint Peter Julian Eymard lure me to his relic. How supremely miraculous and in-

credible and inspiring, to say the least!

These words do not do justice to the overwhelming delight I experienced, let alone surprise and wonder, when I finally found the reliquary. That it is shaped to represent a eucharistic monstrance, as mentioned, is of no surprise, since Saint Peter Julian Eymard’s devotion and dedication, his meaning and ministry, his prayer and purpose, all center in the Eucharist, which we all *seek*. This discovery serves now as an “official” endorsement of my being an associate, made none other than by our founder himself!!!

Father Michael Boccaccio



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What's Expected of an Associate?

Throughout this year, we have been focusing one of our columns in the monthly *Connections* on clarifying in a variety of ways, perspectives and answers to the question *What's expected of an Associate?* A few of our associates have contributed reflections, especially on the impact being an associate has had on them.

About a year ago, one of the Blessed Sacrament religious asked me how the associates program was going and if it was clear to them what was expected of an associate. As the conversation developed, I asked him what *he* expected of associates. One of his answers was this: "I hope one of the activities they would engage in is helping us recruit men to join our Congregation — either by encouraging a child, a grandchild, or a young person in their parish to consider religious life as a vocation."

Recently, Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, our provincial superior, sent out a letter to the religious of the Province of Saint Ann. In it, he noted that in 2016 we will be celebrating the 160th anniversary of the founding of the Congregation. He also said, "As part of this year and within the context of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, our Province is hosting, as you know, a convocation of religious, associates, and friends in Cleveland next July 29 -31. The theme is 'Celebrating the Gift of Self in the Year of Mercy.'"

I would like to quote here other sections of his letter to

offer it for your reflection as we celebrate on November 17 another important anniversary, the founding of the Lay Aggregation by Father Eymard in 1859. I invite you to consider Father Tony's words as an invitation to us associates as well:

"I am writing to you about another possibility for the upcoming anniversary. At the Amplified General Council meeting in Rome last April, one of the provincials from Asia arose and addressed those present: 'I have a dream. My dream is that whenever any of us are asked if we have vocations, we would immediately respond, "Yes, we have many vocations. They may not be here, in this place at this time, but our Congregation has many vocations." A vocation anywhere is a vocation for all of us!'"

"This is true, and we rejoice in the many vocations God is sending the Congregation in the newer Provinces and Regions and in the instances of interprovincial collaboration happening in our Province and elsewhere. We are grateful, too, for our partnership with increasing numbers of dedicated lay associates across the country and for the aspirants our Province vocation ministry is fostering and guiding in their discernment."

"I believe that the Congregation's 160th anniversary presents us with an opportunity to redouble our efforts to invite men to consider our Eymardian way of life."

"Pope Francis has challenged

religious to 'Wake up the world! Be witnesses of a different way of doing things, of acting, of living! It is possible to live differently in this world. . . . The witness [of religious life] that can really attract is that associated with attitudes which are uncommon — generosity, detachment, sacrifice, self-forgetfulness — in order to care for others. This is the witness, the martyrdom of religious life.'"

"Generosity, detachment, sacrifice, and self-forgetfulness, and many others, are eucharistic attitudes. They express how Jesus lived and, therefore, how we are to live as committed disciples, called to an evangelical and eucharistic way of life according to the inspiration and example of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist."

"*Rule of Life*, 47 presents some fundamental principles for our vocation efforts: 'It is the Lord who calls laborers to his harvest. In our prayer and in all our pastoral activities, we will be concerned to arouse the faithful, especially the youth, to take up their personal responsibility of service to the Gospel in the church. We work in coordination with the diocese to foster vocations to ministries and to religious life. Always respecting the ways of God in individual lives, we should know how to discern the promptings of the Spirit and to welcome those who wish to share our way of life.'"

"Experience has shown that the personal encounter with a prospective candidate and asking the question, 'Have you ever thought of serving God as a Blessed Sacrament religious?' works best for us, inasmuch as we do not run schools or serve in campus

ministries. Our parishes and other ministries are where we meet people and offer them a vision of the Eucharist and its transforming power."

"In closing, I urge you to reread Pope Francis' apostolic letter *To All Consecrated People*. In it, he invites us to 'look to the past with gratitude,' and adds: 'Recounting our history is essential for preserving our identity, for strengthening our unity as a family and our common sense of belonging. More than an exercise in archaeology or the cultivation of mere nostalgia, it calls for following in the footsteps of past generations in order to grasp the high ideals and the vision and values which inspired them, beginning with the founders and foundresses and the first communities. In this way, we come to see how the charism has been lived over the years, the creativity it has sparked, the difficulties it encountered, and the concrete ways those difficulties were surmounted. We may also encounter cases of inconsistency, the result of human weakness and even at times a neglect of some essential aspects of the charism. Yet everything proves instructive and, taken as a whole, acts as a summons to conversion. To tell our story is to praise God and to thank him for all his gifts.'"

When you meet the Province's vocation director, Father Anthony Marshall, SSS, during his visits to your community, I encourage you to support his ministry in any way you can. Let me end with Father Tony's closing words in his letter: "Let us pray for one another and encourage each other as disciples of the Apostle of the Eucharist!" *Jim Brown*