



# CONNECTIONS

*Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family*

JANUARY 31, 2020

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1

## A New Decade for the Eymardian Family



A new decade is upon us! We at the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE) who produce this *Connections* newsletter, Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, our Provincial Superior, and I wish all of you who partner with us in the mission and ministry of Eucharistic evangelizing a grace-filled and healthy new year. We pray that together we might continue to promote the legacy of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and in his own words “bring all the world to the knowledge and love of our Lord; to preach nothing but Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Eucharistic.”

Back in 2015 we devoted all our issues of *Connections* to not only telling the stories of so many of our Associates of the Blessed Sacrament but also the topics *What is an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament?* and *What is expected of an Associate?*

Since that year, some 300 lay women and men have made their Promise Commitment to become an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament in our Province. And many of you who have joined us have little or no connection to the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and especially the goings-on of the wider Congregation and what our leadership in Rome has been saying to us lay associates.

We would like to take up this theme in 2020 and familiarize you, our readers, with not only what is happening across the Province of Saint Ann (the American Province), but also what is going on globally as this lay movement evolves, and what we are called to be as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament.

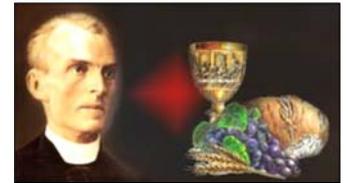
Let us begin with the 35th General Chapter of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament that was held in June 2017. The newly elected Superior General, Father Eugênio Barbosa Martins, SSS, issued this statement in his Final Message:

*The Eucharist leads us to experience community, prayer, and service. It is on these three pillars that all we are and project as an Eymardian Family is founded and becomes evident.*

Without a doubt, Father Eugênio’s words were both a great clarification and also a daunting challenge — not only for us in the CEE who provide direction, resources, and support for the local leaders of our seven branches, and certainly for the local leadership boards who themselves provide guidance and opportunities in the context of their local situation.

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The 209th  
Anniversary  
of the Birth  
and the Baptism  
of the Apostle  
of the Eucharist



SAINT  
PETER JULIAN  
EYMARD

Born February 4, 1811  
Baptized February 5  
La Mure d’Isère, France

CENTER FOR  
EUCHARISTIC EVANGELIZING  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

A Ministry of the  
Congregation of the  
Blessed Sacrament

5384 Wilson Mills Road  
Cleveland, OH 44143

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## A New Decade for the Eymardian Family (*Continued*)

The leadership of each local branch of associates is committed to providing opportunities for prayer, (monthly) gatherings of associates (“community experiences”), as well as ongoing formation programs. And each of us associates discerns how best to make a “gift of self” as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament for God’s Eucharistic kingdom — given our age, state in life, parish, or community.

### 2020

Looking ahead, we can see the variety of ways our associates gather, pray, and serve as they live out their Promise Commitment. In addition to participating in many of these scheduled programs, the vast majority of our associates are very involved in their parishes as lectors, catechists, extraordinary ministers, liturgical ministries, in choir, on councils and commissions as well as the parishes outreach programs to their local communities.

#### Corpus Christi, Houston, Texas

- Initiating a new initial formation program for some ten people.
- A monthly ongoing formation program based on the *Counsels for Spiritual Life* book.
- Participation and planning of monthly Holy Hours.

#### Saint Jean Baptiste, New York, New York

- Eleven people will make their Promise Commitment at Saint Jean Baptiste.
- Ongoing involvement in the parish’s adoration and Liturgy of the Hours.
- Another joint retreat being planned with the associates at Saint Philip Church in Norwalk.

#### Saint Joseph, San Antonio, Texas

- Retreat for the current associates on February 1 led by Father Anthony Schueller, SSS. and Jim Brown on the theme of a “Spirituality of Communion.”
- With the involvement of 35-plus current associates, 55 people are in initial formation at Prince of Peace Church, an archdiocesan parish.
- A “Come & See” informational meeting will be held at Saint Joseph Church Downtown.

#### Saint Paschal Baylon, Cleveland, Ohio

- Monthly ongoing formation meetings using the *Manna I* program.
- Monthly Taizé (adoration) service.
- Prayer and meals with the religious community.
- Eymard Days with guest speaker Sister Catherine Marie Caron, SSS, to celebrate Father Eymard’s feast day.
- “Come & See” information meeting for prospective associates in the fall.
- Associates retreat in November.

#### Saint Philip, Norwalk, Connecticut

- “Come & See” informational meeting being held with hopes of a new program for prospective associates,
- Monthly business meeting/time for on-going formation and some members leading the initial formation program for prospective associates.
- Joint retreat with the associates at Saint Jean Baptiste, New York City.

#### Saint Stephen, Winter Springs, Florida

- Monthly study sessions on the *Rule of Life for Associates* (one number monthly) led by Father George Dunne, SSS.
- Joint retreat with the associates at Saint Vincent de Paul, Holiday, in March.
- Plan to host a lunch for the parish’s First Communion class during their sacramental preparation retreat.
- Completion of the “Pathways to Care Extreme Makeover Project.”
- Presentation of the Life in the Eucharist program to neighboring parishes.

#### Saint Vincent de Paul, Holiday, Florida

- Completion of an initial formation program for seven parishioners of Saint Paul Church, a diocesan parish.

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## A New Decade for the Eymardian Family (*Continued*)

- Lead Morning Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours on weekdays.
- Monthly Holy Hour followed by a social.
- Monthly Mass, formation, and meal for the Mothers of the Blessed Sacrament program.
- Joint retreat with the associates of Saint Stephen Church, Winter Springs in March.
- Annual associates retreat in November.

(Note to Board leaders: If I have left out anything planned for 2020, please let me know.)

### **In Conclusion**

At the last Provincial Council meeting of November 2018, Provincial Superior Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, said this in his “State of the Province” report:

*I am fully convinced that among God’s greatest gifts to us at this juncture in our history is a deepening relationship with the dedicated community of Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. They are talented, committed, and energetic. Their preparation is solid, due to an ever-evolving program of initial and ongoing formation. All they ask is our encouragement and our trust in welcoming them as partners in the ministry of Eucharistic evangelizing.*

*Jim Brown  
Director, CEE*

## A Historical Note: Origins of the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament

### **The Third Order of Mary**

In December 1845, the Founder and Superior General of the Society of Mary (Marists), Father Jean-Claude Colin appointed Father Peter Julian Eymard, SM, as the director of the Third Order of Mary. It had begun in 1832.

By 1845, this secular branch of the Marists only numbered fourteen members, all women. The men’s group had dissolved. By June 1850, the Third Order, under the guidance and animation of Father Eymard, numbered more than 300 members. Though the Order remained in Lyons, Father Eymard established “affiliations” in other cities. His sister Marianne started one in La Mure. His old friend, Father Jean-Marie Vianney, the Curé of Ars, was also a member of the Third Order of Mary. Marguerite Guillot, a laywoman from Lyons, was also a member of the Third Order. This woman who Father Eymard considered a “partner in ministry” he later appointed Superior General of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, the second branch of the Eymardian Family.

During the five years Father Eymard directed the Third Order of Mary, he devoted his entire self, in the confessional or through letters, to the formation of these lay people. He walked with these women and men from every walk of life, trying to understand them, assisting them in discerning their unique call from the Lord.

Father Eymard visited the Marist community in Paris in January 1849. There he experienced women and men engaged in perpetual adoration. He wrote to his sister Marianne:

*There are beautiful souls in Paris, and many prayers are said there. Everyday, in one of the city churches, there is perpetual adoration and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament day and night: women are the adorers during the day and men at night. I believe that so many prayers will touch the heart of God.*

All these experiences of observing and working with lay women and men committed to the Blessed Sacrament touched something inside Father Eymard and his own internal discernment. As a result of what Father Eymard later called a “grace of vocation” and what the Congregation has historically called the “Grace of Fourvière,” a new idea came to him.

Father Eymard began to imagine a group of religious men devoted to adoration in a fashion that so many women did in Lyons. In a letter dated February 3, 1851, one that Father Eymard never sent and yet has been preserved, he wrote about founding a community of men who:

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### A Historical Note: Origins of the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament (*Continued*)

would form a community, and this community would have associates in the city, who would come to renew themselves in the community, share in the hours of adoration, and come there to make private retreats. This special body would be linked to the Society of Mary by a spiritual bond. It would be its Third Order, but with independent existence.

Clearly by 1851 something important was stirring in Father Eymard's prayer life and in his own imagination. The Eucharist was taking on a primary focus in his prayer life and even as he thought about ministry. What he had discovered in Paris and what was going on in Lyons was beginning to shape an idea in his mind. It had three facets:

1. The Eucharist at the center.
2. The importance of prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.
3. The role of lay women and men as partners in a new mission focus.

#### **The Work of First Communion of Adults**

On May 13, 1856, Father Eymard met with the Archbishop of Paris to propose the founding of a new order of religious men devoted to the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharistic Project that he had envisioned as a work of the Marists had not been accepted by its leadership. So Father Eymard broke with the Society of Mary and then travelled to Paris to see Archbishop Marie-Dominique Sibour. The following describes what happened in Father Eymard's own words:

*On returning, he (the archbishop) noticed two priests and said to them, "Who are you?"*

*"Two visiting priests (Fathers Eymard and de Cuers)."*

*What do you want? "Your Excellency, it's Bishop de Tripoli that we are waiting for."*

*"But isn't it true," continued quickly Archbishop Sibour, "that what Bishop de Tripoli does here the archbishop can also do? What is it you want?"*

*"I mentioned the answer which we were expecting."*

*"You are a Marist priest?"*

*"Yes, Your Excellency."*

*"Bishop de Tripoli has kept me posted," continued the archbishop. "Oh no, it's purely contemplative. . . . I am not in favor. . . . no, no, no!"*

*I continued with insistence: "But Your Excellency is mistaken about our purpose. It is not a purely contemplative society. Yes, we adore certainly, but we also want to lead others to adore. We must take care of the First Communion of Adults. We want to set fire to the four corners of France, beginning with the four corners of Paris, which needs it so much."*

*On hearing these words, the archbishop's face suddenly lit up. "The First Communion of adults!" he exclaimed. "That's what's missing. . . . That's what I desire most!"*

*He seemed enthusiastic.*

And so, a new religious community was founded. Within weeks, Father Eymard began to write the Constitutions of the Society of the Blessed Sacrament (SSS — in Latin: *Societas Sanctissimi Sacramenti*). In it, we see mentioned among the ministries he envisioned the First Communion of Adults.

Father Eymard immediately reached out to his lay friends from Lyons to come to Paris and join him in the new Eucharistic Work. This group included Marguerite Guillot who he put in charge of a number of women who would form a community of sisters who would quickly be known as "the lady catechists" of "The Work of the First Communion of Adults." It seems clear that early on Father Eymard wanted to tap into the many adoration groups to find "apostles" to enlist others to adore. "In this way," believes Father André Guitton, SSS, "he linked the worship of the Eucharist with catechesis and missionary action." And yet, it must always be remembered that "it is to the ministry of the First Communion of Adults in which Father Eymard was engaged and his Institute with him, that the Society (of the Blessed Sacrament) owes its existence."

Unfortunately, this noble ministry to the poor workers and their children in the slums of Paris ended with Father Eymard's early death. What is clear is that he envisioned a group of lay women and men associated with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament involved in promoting adorers and catechists for the preparation of First Communicants.

(Source: *Peter Julian Eymard* by André Guitton, SSS)

*To Be Continued in the Next Issue*