



# CONNECTIONS

*Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family*

FEBRUARY 29, 2020 – LENT

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 2

## Around the Province

### Saint Stephen Life in the Eucharist Team Presents 3-Day LITE Weekend

The New Year started with 25 LITE team members from Saint Stephen Catholic Community in Winter Springs, Florida, presenting a 3-Day Life in the Eucharist (LITE) retreat weekend January 17-19 at the San Pedro Spiritual Development Center, a 200-acre retreat center in Winter Park.

The weekend offered extended table discussion and large group presentation time with several private reflection periods throughout the weekend for participants to enjoy the large lake and beautiful grounds of San Pedro. During the presentations of the five topics, attendees moved from the natural light-filled conference space to the Mary, Mother of God Chapel for prayer around the altar, evening candlelight adoration and a 11:30 a.m. closing Mass celebrated on Sunday. Father George Dunne, SSS, celebrated the Mass and was assisted by Deacon Ralph Martinez of the Diocese of Jacksonville, who attended the weekend with his wife.



The Mission topic was presented on Sunday morning after breakfast. Six attendee volunteers represented the poor, the disabled, victims of war, the elderly, children, and those who are alone in having their feet washed by Father George during the closing Mass.

Adult attendees came from a number of states including Michigan, Wisconsin, Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, in addition to attendees from the Saint Petersburg, Jacksonville, and Orlando Dioceses.

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*Live  
Lent  
passionately!*



“Love cannot triumph until it becomes the one passion of our life. Without such passion, we may produce isolated acts of love, but our life is not really won over or consecrated to an ideal.”

*Saint Peter Julian  
Eymard*

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The attendee feedback was very positive. One-hundred percent would recommend the weekend to others. Below are some of the comments written on the evaluation surveys.

“The witness – story – teaching combination gave an excellent balance to emphasize the different points. Everything was perfect!”

“I feel more connected to and aware of the importance of the Eucharist in my life. The presentations were written and presented so well! I loved hearing the personal stories and meeting new people. I loved talking with others; the witnesses were so moving!”

“Got a deeper, clearer understanding of the power of the Eucharist. Hearing from lay people is a deeper way to be strengthened. I liked the easy, casual way the weekend was done. The music helped with the flow.”

“We had cried and laughed together with Christ! I loved all the presentations; the witnesses were the crying part.”

“It changed my belief into a deeper understanding and gift of the Eucharist. Everyone’s witnesses were outstanding! Could not express enough how all this touched me.”

“All were well-prepared. The event was wonderfully organized; so glad I came! Everyone was easy to understand, did not speak too fast. A worthwhile experience the entire weekend, everything was just perfect! Thank you for this super, meaningful weekend.”

“Thank you for all your time, warmth, and blessings! Loved the team! Wonderful retreat!”

The Saint Stephen Life in the Eucharist team will be presenting another 3-Day LITE retreat weekend April 30-May 2, 2021, and their Journey Through The Mass 1-Day retreat July 11, 2020, both at the San Pedro retreat center.

*Diana McGinty  
Saint Stephen LITE Team Member  
and Associate of the Blessed Sacrament*

### “Come and See” at Saint Vincent de Paul Church

The Lay Associates of the Blessed Sacrament of Saint Vincent de Paul Church in Holiday, Florida, inspired by the Eywardian mission to invite all people to deepen their love of God and live in the presence of the Eucharist, hosted a special “Come and See” celebration on January 29. Our associates were encouraged to invite at least one guest to join us. About 32 people participated, 16 of them guests.

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### Around the Province (*Continued*)

The evening included a special holy hour of prayer and meditation based on the theme “I Call You Friends” (John 15:5, 7), led by our Spiritual Director, Father Bill Fickel, SSS, recitation of Evening Prayer, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. We shared dinner and fellowship.

The session concluded with an open discussion, which gave participants an opportunity for questions and for our associates to witness to the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and how living in God’s abiding love has impacted their lives. The evening was a success, well-attended, and inspiring. Several of our guests expressed a sincere desire to begin to discern their call to live the Eucharist as a Lay Associate of the Blessed Sacrament. We look forward to making 2020 a year to celebrate embracing many new associates!

*Margaret Flanders  
Associate of the Blessed Sacrament  
and Board Member*

#### Retreat for the Associates in San Antonio



On February 1, 2020, a hundred Associates of the Blessed Sacrament of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas, met for a retreat led by Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, the pastor of Saint Joseph Church Downtown and the Provincial Superior of the Province of Saint Ann. I had the honor of assisting him. The theme for the retreat was “A Spirituality of Communion” inspired by Number 5 in the *Rule of Life for Associates*, which in part states:

The Eucharistic lifestyle of Christians is ecclesial and communal.  
We commit ourselves to being associates by sharing in gatherings of prayer and formation.

The retreat was held at Prince of Peace Church, where the associate leadership conducted a formation program for 120 people who were received this past fall, and where 55 prospective associates are currently being formed. A team of associates provided hospitality, including breakfast and lunch for the 100 participants. The retreat included an adoration prayer service and small group-sharing where the participants shared their thoughts and stories of faith, of their experiences in adoration, of their love of the Eucharist, of being inspired by others in the room. Faith-based songs were provided by Manny Cruz and Mario Arias and their music group.

The retreat concluded with an animated conversation on how this large group of associates in San Antonio, now numbering 165, can move forward in the future with regular opportunities for ongoing formation, shared prayer, and community. The local Leadership Board along with Father Tony, the Archdiocesan Director, will be taking up that challenge in upcoming board meetings.

*Jim Brown*

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

#### Father Eymard's Commitment to the Poor

We recall the importance of the work of First Communion of Adults for the founding of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament by Father Eymard. Archbishop Sibour of Paris was enthused about this ministry and what he believed differentiated this new religious community from other adoration movements in France. The ministry would primarily serve the working poor in the city, in fact, in the so-called “red band” of slums which encircled mid-nineteenth century Paris.

To understand Father Eymard's commitment to the poor, we need to look at his experience while stationed in Lyons as Provincial of the Society of Mary (the Marists), especially during the revolution of 1848. Two things are clear: 1. He often mingled with the jobless workers; and 2. He was known, accepted, and appreciated by these often-violent workers.

During this time, social and political unrest marked much of France. Riots broke out in the city of Lyons over a dispute within the silk industry. These factories employed poor workers who could hardly eke out a meager existence. Some religious communities tried to intervene by setting up workrooms where the workers could earn a decent wage. Workers in these silk factories reacted negatively to what they perceived as religious institutions meddling in their affairs and producing products with “cheap labor.” Religious houses and the clergy were often the targets of the workers' anger. Many religious communities shut down their houses. However, Father Eymard and a few other Marists decided to stay at their house.

One day while walking, Father Eymard was spotted by a group of rioters. In their frenzy, they grabbed him and threatened to throw him into the Rhone River, that is, until some in the crowd yelled, “No, no, not him! Father Eymard is a friend of the workers. . . . He does much good in the city.” They took him back to the house and “as they deposited him on his doorstep, they guaranteed his safety and that of the other priests in the house by hoisting the tri-color flag above the door of the house” (Guitton, 79). A few days later, Father Eymard went back out onto the streets to find the men from the mob to thank them for keeping him safe.

During his time in provincial leadership in Lyons, Father Eymard was involved in many ministries in this urban setting, preaching missions, guiding lay people in their spiritual development, and coming into contact with the workers in factories. It was during this time that he started to notice religious indifference among the workers and people alienated from the Church he loved. He also discovered how so many were not involved in their faith. In writing to a friend, he said:

“I wish the world were full of zealous apostles to shake it from its lethargy and indolence. As far as results, I'm waiting for the good ladies of Lyons (of the Third Order) to obtain some conversions. There are only a few men. What a sad city!” (Letter to Mme. Franchet, March 11, 1851)

As Father Eymard encountered the misery of the working class and the religious indifference and lax religious practice of so many of the baptized, he began to formulate in his own head a religious solution. Writing to one of the women in the Third Order of Mary, he said:

“I have often reflected upon remedies for this universal indifference which takes hold of so many Catholics in a terrifying way, and I find only one: the Eucharist, the love of Jesus Eucharistic. The loss of faith comes from the loss of love; darkness, from the loss of light; the coldness of death, from the absence of fire. Oh, Jesus did not say: I came to bring the revelation of the most sublime mysteries, but very clearly, ‘I came to bring fire on the earth, and all I desire is to see it enkindle the world.’ Madame, light this divine fire around you, and you will bring joy to the heart of our Lord.” (Letter to Mme. Tholin-Bost, October 20, 1851)

Clearly, Father Eymard looked to his lay “associates” in the Third Order of Mary and among the many lay adorers he had met to assist him in his (evolving) mission of spreading the love of Jesus in the Eucharist.