



CONNECTIONS

Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family

MARCH 31, 2020 — TOWARD HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 3

Wishing You Good Health



Pope Francis' *Urbi et Orbi* blessing on March 27

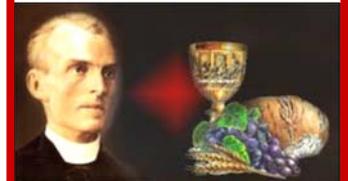
We want to take this opportunity to wish you, our partners in Eucharistic evangelizing, well, and that you are staying safe and healthy. On the off chance that you have missed any of the letters we have written over the last two weeks about our collaboration with Father John Christman, SSS, the editor of *Emmanuel* magazine, and associate Kay Vincent, we announce here the following:

- Father John has offered a free subscription for a year to the digital edition of *Emmanuel*. To subscribe, all you need to do is email the circulation manager, Betty Zaller, at emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com. Please let her know that you are an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament and give her your name and what parish you belong to. Betty will then send you an email with a username and password that will allow you to sign on to the digital subscription at emmanuelpublishing.org.
- Secondly, we have been posting videos, reflections by our associates, articles and other resources intended to be used for your own personal spiritual reflection and prayer as well as providing resources for the leaders of each branch of the association around the Province of Saint Ann in serving their local associates during these unprecedented times. Please go to the “Eucharistic Evangelizing” link on the Blessed Sacrament website and under “Associate Formation” click on “Associates Ongoing Formation.”

We will continue publishing the monthly *Connections* newsletter and sharing what our partners in Eucharistic evangelizing are doing as well as telling the “Story of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament” in the “A Historical Note” feature.

Jim Brown
Father Anthony Schueller, SSS

*Forward in faith
to the new life
of Easter!*



“We are called
to live
an authentically
Eucharistic
Christian
spirituality,
and we are moved
by the spirit of love
that led Christ
to give his life
for the world
and to perpetuate
this gift
in the Eucharist.”

*Rule of Life
for Associates, 4*

CENTER FOR
EUCHARISTIC
EVANGELIZING

A Ministry of the
Congregation of the
Blessed Sacrament

Life in the Eucharist in the Buffalo Diocese

A large percentage of our associates who have made their Promise Commitment in the last couple of years, especially in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, are unfamiliar with the Life in the Eucharist ministry, a preeminent program of the CEE created in 1990. Utilizing best practices and theory of adult religious education, it was developed to teach laity and clergy a comprehensive understanding of the Eucharist and a dynamic Eucharistic spirituality. For more information, go to the Province website and click on “Eucharistic Evangelizing” at the top of the menu (blue space), then click on the Life in the Eucharist page.

A year ago, a traveling LITE team (Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, Mary Muehle, and Carol Ann Brooks (from the Saint Paschal Baylon LITE Team) and I travelled to Ransomville, New York, (near Niagara Falls) to put on a Life in the Eucharist program at Immaculate Conception Church. The pastor, Father Jim Bastian, had asked his Pastoral Associate, Laurie Muth, to scout out a program focused on the Eucharist to present to the parish. She called me at the CEE and the rest is history.

To make a long story short, we presented the program (after a number of trips were cancelled because of snow storms) and trained a group of participants to themselves put on the program for the rest of the parish. The results and feedback the team at ICC received moved them to think about going out to other parishes in their vicariate.

Fast forward to a vicariate meeting later in the year. Father Jim was explaining the program to his fellow pastors. (Now recall that the diocese had gone through a gut-wrenching experience over the removal of their bishop related to the sex abuse crisis.) One of the priests exclaimed at the meeting, “The Eucharist! The Eucharist! What better way to heal the wounds of our diocese!”

Propelled by an enthusiastic response from the pastors, Laurie applied for a grant from the diocese. Once approved, she and Father Jim began an incredible organizing effort. In promoting the program, they emphasized **the five Fs**: it would be **Free**; there would be **Food**; the pastors had to make available their **Facilities**; each pastor had to provide **Five** parishioners to be trained; and the program would take place over the **Five** weeks of Lent. Through their diligent efforts, six pastors in the vicariate signed up for the LITE program.

The goal was to present over five weeks the five themes of the LITE program (Nourishment, Reconciliation, Transformation, Abiding Presence, and Mission). During the first week of March, I had the privilege to participate in a variety of ways depending on the requests of the six teams. The focus was Nourishment. They had scheduled the program at six parish sites in the vicariate at different times, including an afternoon session. Over the course of the week, over 550 people attended, including people from the Eastern Vicariate who wanted to experience what they had been hearing about. The second week, the LITE teams presented the Reconciliation theme.

Unfortunately, the rest of the Lenten program covering the last three LITE themes had to be postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the “shelter-in-place” policy adopted in the state of New York.

The person most responsible for organizing this vicariate program, Laurie Muth, shared with me her bountiful thanks and appreciation to the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for creating such a Eucharistic program. She said that “it has changed in fundamental ways how so many of us now experience and participate in the Mass. Father Jim and I don’t know how to thank you all enough.”

In all humility, I could not thank her enough for taking a program that has touched the lives of thousands of people not only in this country, but throughout the world and making it such a special experience for the people of the Western Vicariate of the Diocese of Buffalo. We hope that they will be able to complete the last three weeks of the program in the near future.

Jim Brown

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1. Father Jim Bastian introducing the Wednesday night program.
2. Laurie Muth gets comments from a small group discussion.
3. Painting in oils by Father John Christman, SSS (cover of the July/August 2019 *Emmanuel* magazine).
4. Jim Brown using an enlarged photo of Father Christman's painting in his presentation on Nourishment.

A Historical Note

The Story of the Aggregation (*Continued*)

From the time he revived and led the Sodality of Mary (lay associates) as a Marist religious, Father Eymard believed that devoted lay people should have access to spiritual resources and have the opportunity for formation in their faith. Within a year after he founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in 1856, he listed among the members of the Society “the lay Aggregation comprised of faithful living in the world and who wish to be united with the Society in a fraternal bond and share its goal” (*Peter Julian Eymard* by André Guitton, SSS, 164).

In 1859, the Aggregation received canonical approbation from Bishop de Mazenod of Marseilles, where Father Eymard had erected a religious community. In November, he gave the lay faithful a Eucharistic retreat. Throughout the rest of his life, he stayed close to the growing Aggregation, giving retreats and spiritual instruction in the chapels of the communities he founded. When he was unable to do so, he asked fellow religious to preach these annual retreats.

Beyond Paris, where lay members of the Aggregation assisted him in the ministry of First Communion of youth and adults, the Aggregation was largely involved in matters related to worship: adoration and funding the expenses for candles and altar decorations. We also know (cf. past *Connections*) that individual lay people associated with the Congregation were among the generous benefactors who supported Father Eymard and his lay associates, especially in providing food, clothing, and other material needs related to the First Communion ministry in Paris (e.g., Louis Perret, Mrs. d’Andigne, Mme. Fraguier, and Mme. de Grandville).

Father Eymard died on August 1, 1868. In a letter he had written to Mme. Jordan in 1856, we see the vision that he had for the future of the Congregation and to which the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament has remained faithful to this day:

The religious of the Blessed Sacrament dedicate themselves to the Eucharistic ministry: preaching Forty Hours in the parishes, First Communion retreats, the work of First Communion, the Aggregation of adoration.

In succeeding *Connections* we will trace the development of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament following Father Eymard’s death — from a Eucharistic lifestyle principally focused on adoration to a Eucharistic lifestyle marked by both adoration *and* collaboration with the religious of the Congregation in the ministry of Eucharistic evangelizing.

Jim Brown