

[ussssprovince@aol.com](mailto:ussssprovince@aol.com)

To:ussssprovince@aol.com

Sun, Mar 22 at 1:28 AM

Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament  
Province of Saint Ann

March 22, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Eymardian Family,

As Italy was gripped ever more powerfully by the Coronavirus pandemic in recent days and weeks, the phrase "Eucharistic fast" appeared in the literature of Church leaders and members there and elsewhere. I struggled to grasp the full meaning of it until last Sunday, March 15. As Father Joseph Tran, SSS, and I celebrated a "private" Mass in our rectory, feet away from the church where no one could partake of the Eucharist that day because of the fear of transmission of Covid-19, it finally hit home. Millions of Catholics worldwide and now in our own country were absent from Mass on the Lord's Day, "fasting from the Eucharist" for the sake of the health and well-being of others.

As Father Joseph and I received Holy Communion in that intimate setting, I became deeply aware of those who were missing. Communing in Christ's Body and drinking of the Cup, I realized the profound union between the *sacramental* Body of Christ and his *mystical* Body, the Church, in all its beauty, diversity, goodness, and holiness. Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 11:29 about "discerning the Body" means recognizing the Lord's presence in both.

We are now at the second weekend of no Sunday Masses in many parts of the United States. I long for the day when the whole Church will again be able to partake of the sacrament of its life and nourishment in Christ. This is the time to deepen our communion in the mystical Body of Christ, to care for one another and unite in fervent prayer, as we await the day when full communion by all in the sacrament will be possible.

San Antonio Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSpS, wrote the following in a letter to the priests of the Archdiocese a few days ago: "Our Holy Church has endured these many centuries and has faced wars, famines, plagues, and disasters of every sort. We will survive this challenge, too. Perhaps we may see God's presence in the opportunity for all of society to slow down, reflect on what is truly important, and the humility to recognize that even in our age of advanced technologies we are ultimately dependent on his grace. This is not the sort of fasting we have asked for this Lent, but it is an opportunity given us to collaborate with one another and to show the face of God's mercy through our faithfulness. . . ."

The Provincial Council and I invite, indeed encourage, all in the Eymardian Family to come together in a spirit of shared faith, friendship, and hope in this challenging moment in the history of our Church and the world.

On behalf of Jim Brown, the director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing, and Father John Christman, SSS, the editor of *Emmanuel*, thank you, all, very much for the feedback, reflections, and suggestions that have already been received relative to the email and article sent out this past Thursday night. Jim and Father John and Kay Vincent are currently updating the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE) website and setting up Zoom video-conferencing meetings to help us continue to stay connected and support one another in this difficult time. They are making progress and you will be hearing from them within the next week.

God's blessings always,

Father Tony

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Father Anthony Schueller, SSS  
Office of the Provincial  
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament  
5384 Wilson Mills Road  
Cleveland, OH 44143

Saint Joseph Church Downtown  
623 East Commerce Street  
San Antonio, TX 78205