



CONNECTIONS

Celebrating Our Eucharistic Partnership in the Eymardian Family

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A Farewell Thank You!



Jim Brown with his wife Mary and their four “grandboys”

As I retire from being the Director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE) and the Coordinator of the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament for the Province of Saint Ann, I am feeling extremely grateful for so many people and memorable moments. I also come to the end of a professional relationship of 34 years, including years of organizational consulting and advising and over 15 years directly connected to the CEE.

I fondly remember the late Father Jack Dowling, SSS, then-Provincial Superior, who in late 1986 hired me and the consulting company I worked for to facilitate the Province’s first Assembly of all the religious. This led to the first of what would become a standard practice, Chapters of the Whole. In 1991, Father Jack hired me to be a consultant to him and the Provincial Council. From that year forward and under four successive Provincial administrations, I attended and participated in every Provincial Council meeting through 2018.

In 2006, Provincial Superior Father Norman Pelletier, SSS, restructured the contract I had with the Province, asking me to assist Father Bill Fickel, SSS, the Director of the CEE. We worked together on revising the Life in the Eucharist training manuals and workbooks and later the formation booklets for some 500 prospective Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. It was during these years that I had the opportunity to study the life and writings of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

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“Our ideal is to live the mystery of the Eucharist fully and to make known its meaning, so that Christ’s reign may come and the glory of God may be revealed to the world.”

Rule of Life for Associates, 2

Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing

A Ministry of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

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A Farewell Thank You! (*Continued*)

During the Fall of 2006, I had the incredible joy of making an Eymard Pilgrimage led by Father Norman. These two religious men played such a role in my life in forming me in the charism of the Congregation and in particular the spirituality of Saint Eymard. I am forever grateful to them.

Then there is Father Anthony Schueller, SSS. I served him as an organizational consultant and adviser during his first two terms as Provincial Superior (1995-2002) and then again the last six years in his third and fourth terms. I also worked closely with him in 2014 when he was the Director of the CEE. Together, we conducted a number of Life in the Eucharist programs and Eucharistic Missions. When he was elected the Provincial Superior in November 2014, he asked me to be the first lay Director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing, an opportunity to collaborate with so many wonderful Associates of the Blessed Sacrament.

I think back over the years to a number of religious with whom I have collaborated on a variety of wonderful projects and programs, especially Thomas Wiese, SSS, John Thomas Lane, SSS, John Kamas, SSS, Thomas Smithson, SSS, John Christman, SSS, Paul Bernier, SSS, George Dunne, SSS, and Michael Perez, SSS.

One of the high points, though, has been the Daily Eucharistic Reflection program we initiated three years ago. Such a group of insightful and creative writers, for whom I am most grateful: Fathers Bernier (our editor), Roger Bourgeois, Bernard Camiré, Christman, Dunne, Ernest Falardeau, Kamas, Lane, Schueller, Wiese (administrator), and Fathers Choy Ramos, SSS, and John Keenan, SSS, who will join the writing team in 2021.

I am most thankful for a group of lay women and men who stepped up to the challenge of participating in this effort: Rick Costanzo, Ivonne and Rick Hernandez, Joe McCormack, Anita McMahan, Nancy MacRoberts, Mary Muehle, Patrick Riley, Patty Pizzitola, and Laura Worhacz.

And lastly, I want to thank a number of lay people who have partnered with us in the CEE in helping increase the community of Associates of the Blessed Sacrament: Mary Muehle and Kay Vincent in Cleveland; Dan Krenicki and Ana Camacho in Norwalk, Connecticut; Gloria Jung and Diana McGinty in Florida; Clare Norton in New York City; Cesar Camacho and Billy Stewart in San Antonio; and many other board members, past and present.

And a special thanks to Kay Vincent and Susan Work, who have assisted me with so many CEE projects over these last 15 years.

To all of you and to countless others, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Jim Brown

A Historical Note

The History of the Aggregation (*Continued*)

“The Graces of the 21st Century in the Province of Saint Ann”

At the turn of the century, Father Thomas Fitzgerald, SSS, the Pastor of Saint Joseph Church in San Antonio invited a group of people to start meeting with him to form a group of associates. Provincial Superior Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, began to form a group of associates in Cleveland. These efforts and other similar ones throughout the Province continued into the first decade of the 21st century. Then the Superiors General of the two Congregations founded by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Father Fiorenzo Salvi, SSS, and Sister Catherine Marie Caron, SSS, published in March 2010 the *Project of Life*, titled in the Province of Saint Ann the *Rule of Life for Associates*.

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A Historical Note (*Continued*)

Provincial Chapter XXIII in November 2010 took up the topic of lay associates in light of the newly promulgated *ROLA*. A number of lay “associates” attended the Chapter and participated in the deliberations. They were installed as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. The Chapter also endorsed a plan submitted by the Director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE) to initiate a twelve-month Initial Formation Program based on a series of booklets. The program was meant to be an introduction to the charism and mission of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament as well as the life of the Founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard. The first formation booklets was evaluated in late 2013 and a revised set was printed at the end of January 2014.

Over the next several years, groups of lay women and men were formed at Saint Paschal Baylon Church in Cleveland, Saint Vincent de Paul Church in Holiday, Florida, Corpus Christi Church in Houston, Saint Eulalia Church in Chicago, and Saint Jean Baptiste Church in New York City.

On May 10, 2014, Pope Francis spoke to members of Institutes of Secular Life. His message was very encouraging for the growing number of people who had made the Covenant Promise as Associates. He said, among other things, that “by vocation, you are lay people in the midst of others. You lead a normal life . . . (and) you are rich in the totalizing experience of God’s love, and are therefore capable of knowing and sharing the burden of life in its many expressions, fermenting them with the light and strength of the Gospel.” By this time, there were some 110 associates in the Province.

Over the next five years, the branches of associates in Cleveland, Holiday, Houston and New York city added to their numbers. And then other grace-filled developments took place. Under the leadership of Father George Dunne, SSS, a group of 19 women and men from the Life in the Eucharist teams were received as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament at a diocesan parish, Saint Stephen, in Winter Springs, Florida. That number of associates is now 45.

A group of parishioners were received at diocesan parish, Saint Philip, in Norwalk, Connecticut. Kathy and Daniel Krenicki had completed their formation at Saint Jean Baptiste Church. Kathy was received on her death bed. Dan then started the Initial Formation program. It included their pastor Father Michael Boccaccio. Father Michael was later appointed by his bishop to be the Local Director for all the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament in the Diocese of Bridgeport. There are now some 30 Associates at Saint Philip Church, including a dozen Spanish-speaking women and men.

A group of 19 men representing a number of parishes in the Archdiocese of San Antonio made their Promise Commitment at Saint Joseph Church in 2017. Leaders from this initial group went on to form an additional 180 Associates of the Blessed Sacrament from a number of parishes in the Archdiocese - the last group of 55 received this past October.

Four people gathered online for a year of formation. They were received as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament in 2018.

As of December 2020, some 500 women and men and one diocesan priest have made their Promise Commitment as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament in the Province of Saint Ann. Our local communities of associates regularly meet for prayer, ongoing formation, and fellowship (often with the local community of religious). Inspired by the *ROLA*, our associates are engaged in many ministries that serve their parishes and local communities. They are catechists, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, members of parish councils and commissions, leaders and planners of faith formation programs, leaders of prayer and Eucharistic Holy Hours, members of Life in the Eucharist teams, and writers in our Daily Eucharistic Reflection program. Many serve their communities promoting pro-life causes, serving the poor, the homeless, the hungry, and more.

In 2015, lay leadership boards were initiated as called for in *ROLA*, 27. They assist the Local Religious Directors in animating and providing opportunities for formation, prayer, and social gatherings. There are now some 25 lay leaders who have responded to this call. They plan the annual retreats to commemorate the November anniversary of the founding of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament in 1859. They partner with the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing in building Eucharistic communities at the local level as well as in promoting the mission of Eucharistic evangelizing in the spirit of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

“May God Be Praised!”

Jim Brown