



SSS Grapevine

An Internal Publication of the Province of Saint Ann,
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for the
Eymardian Family

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Pastoral Visitation in Ohio – May, 2023



Saint Paschal Baylon Church in Highland Heights, Ohio

Traveling to visit our other communities and Associates of the Blessed Sacrament across the country has been a joy. Not to be outdone or forgotten, I have completed a canonical visit of our parish and communities here in Northeast Ohio through May. Most people not from the area will call it “Cleveland” to orient folks. However, the metro area is large, over 8-counties, and can count up to almost 4 million people depending on how you group the geographic area. We have three homes for

our religious here, the one that is attached to the parish of Saint Paschal Baylon (SPB) in Highland Heights, Ohio, a community in University Heights, about six miles away next to John Carroll University, and a unique community for our religious who need extra assistance with their health at Regina Health Center in Richfield, Ohio. It is “easier” when I go away and accompany you all with a pastoral visit and report about it; here, it has been a challenge amid the regular “other hat duties” I had to make a special commitment to work on this canonical visit and give the special attention that each of our religious deserve. It was a challenge during the busiest month since in May; there are First Communions, Confirmation, school staff contracts, the National Day of

Prayer, a parish festival, graduations, and the regular pastoral responsibilities around them. The special canonical visitation moments with our religious and Pastoral Staff and Pastoral Council were a joy. *(I met our Associates – from primarily four parishes in the Diocese of Cleveland – and had a visitation with them – shortly after I became provincial last September; so, this pastoral visitation has lasted a long time! I appreciate the patience of all in Ohio with my dancing between my two ministerial roles.)*

Several religious orders created Regina, our healthcare center, from a former convent and formation building thirty years ago. We have four religious at Regina, Brother Eugene Blee *(the longest resident for almost 13 years)* now lives on the second floor in long-term his new level of palliative care, Deacon Joe Bourgeois, Father Paul Bernier, and Brother Michael Perez all live on the third-floor in assisted living. The facility can accommodate 130 residents.



SSS Religious at Regina Health Center
(l-r standing) Brother Michael Perez, Father Paul Bernier; (l-r seated) Brother Eugene Blee and Deacon Joseph Bourgeois

Two of our religious, Thomas Wiese and Michael O'Leary, reside in University Heights. Peter Van Tuong Nguyen also lived here for a while, doing sabbatical studies in Spiritual Direction at the university.



Brother Michael O'Leary, Father Thomas Wiese and Father Juancho Ramos *(Superior)*

Nine of our religious reside in the building we built in 1953 next to Saint Paschal Baylon parish property. The building was built with the vision of adding a seminary, and so we did during the 1960s. Now we can host up to 30 religious in this building. The seminary residence was converted into "en suite" rooms for our semi-retired religious — currently, six of our religious reside in this East wing or Bethany Center. The lower level of this wing, or Lazarus Landing, is set up for



SSS at Highland Heights: *(left to right)* Brother Michael Perez, Brother Allen Boeckman, Father Roger Bourgeois, Father John Thomas Lane, Father Juancho Ramos, Father Michael Arkins, Father Ernest Falardeau. *(In front)* Brother Gary LaVerdiere. Absent is Father John Keenan (on mission).

guest rooms. We have several guest rooms here as well. The West wing of the building houses the parish offices on the first level and three of us religious living on the second floor.



Many of our Pastoral Staff of Saint Paschal Baylon Parish



Religious Education Staff of Saint Paschal Baylon Parish

I briefly mentioned that in 1953, Archbishop Hoban asked the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament to administer a parish in the growing suburb of Cleveland, Highland Heights. He bought a strawberry farm before a paved road even existed, having the vision of a growing suburb and the need for a parish and pastoral care. Currently, there are 1,430 parish families. Before COVID and our recent parish survey, we had 2,400 registered families. Returning Catholics is the primary goal of the Pastoral Council and our Evangelization Committee. There are almost 60 ministries that keep us quite active, with an award-winning PreK-8th grade Catholic school (370 *students*)



Kindergartners with the Pastor, Father John Thomas Lane SSS

and several important outreach ministries, such as our Helping Hands. This ministry serves those in Northeast Ohio, especially people experiencing homelessness, on Wednesday nights with special vans that visit many sites where people without homes live in tent cities in the inner city.

With my visits with different groups, but especially the Pastoral Staff and the Pastoral Council, I asked them what the “SSS Difference” is for this parish and how they appreciate serving with a religious congregation attached to a parish. Since the religious of the Blessed Sacrament have been



Father John Thomas Lane, Bishop Edward Malesic (*Bishop of Cleveland*) and Father Donald Oleksiak (*Vicar General*)

part of the fabric of this parish from the start, members had to think hard about what it would be like not to have the SSS here. Since the provincial headquarters moved here in 1978, the parish has known the strong presence



Brother Eugene Blee, our oldest religious at Regina Health Center

of our brothers, Deacon Joe, and priests. They cannot imagine a parish without such grand celebrations of the Eucharist, preaching, prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the Liturgy of the Hours, and the many ministries that focus on living a Eucharistic life. They have appreciated the men who have served here and shared their talents and gifts, from gardening, art, and the environment to music, writing, and special retreats.

The provincial offices and our Saint Ann Shrine have also been located here since 1978. The province headquarters moved here to use the former seminary building attached to the original building. Also, an

“annex” of Saint Ann Shrine extended the ministry from the original site in New York City at Eglise Saint Jean Baptiste to here. Since 1987 we have had a special triduum honoring Saint Ann July 24 – 26. Several lay people serve with us in our offices, and in the upcoming issues of *Bread, Broken & Shared*, you will learn more about these excellent staff members who assist us in our ministry. They make us look good and help us to live our charism.

It is hard to summarize something I have enjoyed for the past 14 years as pastor. I have been blessed to have my parents as parishioners, now in their 50th year as parishioners, and different family members and godchildren nearby. With my visits to the individual religious this month, I have grown more in my appreciation of their dedicated service and care in their service and devotion to the Eucharist, living the charism faithfully. I treasure the unique gift of our three locations for one community that still serves Northeast Ohio so well, bringing our mission in a unique way to the Diocese of Cleveland, but also, because of our headquarters here, serving as an international center of hospitality for our religious and others who come to experience the joys of our Eucharistic life and hospitality.

And just as a reminder, we look forward to “showing this off” when we have our 5th Eucharistic Congress here, August 4 – 6, 2023. **Have you signed up?** Please do and come and enjoy the joys of this unique site that grew from a strawberry field to a Eucharistic Center in its 70 years of service at Saint Paschal Baylon Parish and since 1931 in the Diocese of Cleveland.



Father Matt Rizzo, an SSS Associate, Celebrates 50 Years of Priesthood



Father Matt Rizzo

We join the family, friends, SSS Associates, the parishioners in Holiday, Florida, and the many people whose lives he has touched in wishing many blessings upon Father Matt Rizzo, a diocesan priest and an associate of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. He is a family face to our SSS Community and the parishioners of Saint Vincent de Paul Parish in Holiday, Florida, where he offers pastoral assistance in so many ways.



Concelebration for the 50th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination of Father Matt Rizzo

Visit our new and improved website at www.blessedsacrament.com! Many thanks to all who worked so hard on this project, especially Kay Vincent.



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