

SSS Grapevine

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Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for the
Eymardian Family

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Pastoral Visit with the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament and Associates in Connecticut

by Father John Thomas Lane SSS, Provincial Superior



Father John Thomas Lane SSS pictured with the Servants of the
Blessed Sacrament in Waterville, Maine

Before I was elected provincial superior, Sister Catherine Marie Caron SSS and the Waterville, Maine Servants of the Blessed Sacrament invited me to lead their annual retreat with some of their Associates in October 2022. Our religious community of women has witnessed Eucharistic life since 1947 in this hard-working, highly educated city (*home of the famous*

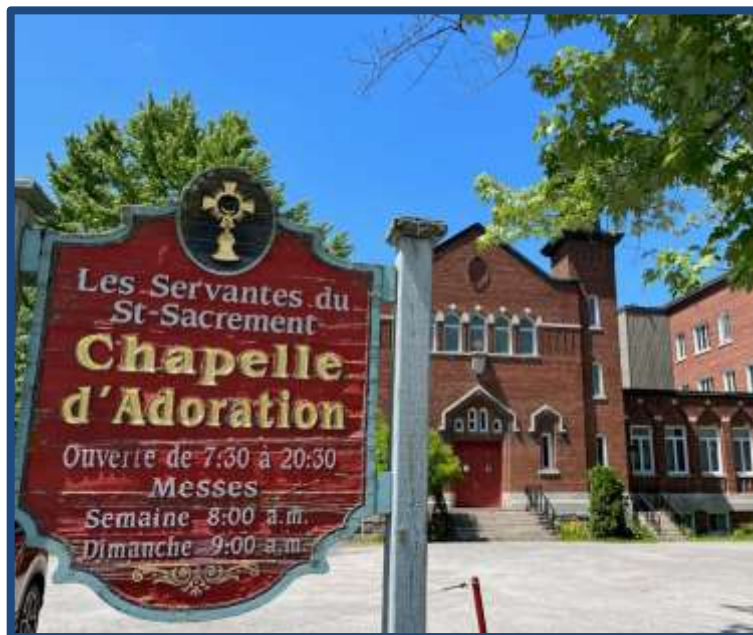
Colby College) in central Maine. Many of our own Blessed Sacrament men religious came from this region, their vocations attributed to these faithful women. Unfortunately, this retreat was cancelled and rescheduled for this past week due to COVID. Knowing of the rescheduling of this retreat and meeting the Superior General Sister Fe Manalo SSS, in Rome during an International Theological Commission meeting in November 2022, Sister Fe also invited me to visit the sister's Generalate in Sherbrook, Quebec, three hours northwest of Waterville. My journey this summer led me to see both communities, with a day trip and overnight in Sherbrooke.

It was a joy to be with these very lively communities. The SSS Vietnamese Province of Servants has immigrated to these two communities for six years. In Sherbrooke, there are 10 sisters (6 Vietnamese, 3 of the General Team, and one native Canadian), and in Waterville, there are 10 sisters (3 Americans



Father John Thomas Lane SSS pictured with the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in Sherbrooke, Canada

in a nursing home nearby, 3 Americans in the convent, and 4 Vietnamese sisters). They keep the full regimented of prayer in both communities, following the church's Liturgy of the Hours, singing the parts accompanied by an organ. (I have posted on my Twitter account the singing of the Magnificat and meal-time prayer of the Sherbrooke sisters because it is so lovely). Their hospitality and care were outstanding! They were quite appreciative of having a visit, and it was amazing to learn of the history of both houses, the story of the sisters in Maine and Canada, and the development of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, especially with the sisters in these two communities creating a formation series. Many lay faithful attend their Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist each day.



The Community of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in Sherbrooke, Canada

The title of my retreat was "The Beatitudes and the Eucharist." I first developed this retreat for the SSS men religious of the Province of Saints Peter and Paul (Ireland, Scotland, and England) in 2017. When planning for the retreat, the sisters thought this would be helpful, especially in light of Pope Francis' 2018 apostolic

exhortation *Rejoice and Be Glad! (Gaudete et exsultate)*. I took the Beatitudes, the scriptures that make up the Beatitudes, our *Rule of Life*, writings of Father Eymard (courtesy of Brother Michael Perez), the pope's exhortation, and parts of the Mass to see how they are interrelated and offer us a fresh way in our call to holiness. This greatly expanded my original retreat, which was given overseas. Also, as part of the retreat, I celebrated Mass. I led two holy



Servants of the Blessed Sacrament and Associates in Waterville, Maine

hours with the *Novena of Saint Peter Julian Eymard* and a Taizé Eucharistic Holy Hour in the setting of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. (Both are available for use elsewhere, and with Father John Kamas' assistance, the *Novena* is in the process of a fourth edition.) I ended the retreat with a Mass with the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick after the homily. This sacrament is always so moving to all who participate, even me since it was a joy to give spiritual direction and



Father Lane visiting Sister Virginia Connors SSS in Waterville, Maine nursing home

confessions for several days to the participants in the retreat. It was also a joy to see our sisters in the nearby nursing home, especially Sister Virginia Connors SSS, formerly the Director of Religious Education at Saint Paschal Baylon, Highland Heights, Ohio, from 1991 – 1997.

After my retreat in Maine, I traveled to our community at Saint Jean Baptiste in New York City. Sadly, I was late for dinner due to thunderstorms that shut down the I-495 freeway through



Dinner at our community of Saint Jean Baptiste with the Congregation of Notre Dame Sisters and a vocation candidate (*right*), Matthew. Father John Kamas in the far back of the photo

Massachusetts. I got into NYC, ready for dessert with our community. Several times a month, our SSS community hosts the Congregation of Notre Dame (CND) sisters, who eat with our community regularly. Father John Kamas SSS is usually the chef for these mutual meals. All live in the same building on different floors, our SSS on floor two and the CNDs on floors three, four, and five. There are 10 CND living in the community, and we have five religious Fathers Bernard Camiré, John Kamas, Jim Hayes, Ravi Earnest Sebastin, and Bro. Thomas Mella. It was a shortened visit by two hours, but a lovely meal, as always, by Chef Kamas.

A vocation candidate for our community, Matthew Vlastelica, an Australian-



Saint Philip Church in Norwalk, Connecticut

Croatian, has been living with our members at Saint Jean Baptiste. He has a degree in project management and works on a construction site nearby in Connecticut, commuting to this work site from our community. We had a 90-minute interview and

walked to discuss his vocation and discernment with our community. We pray for him as he plans his next steps.

Tuesday, June 27, I drove to Norwalk, Connecticut, to spend time with our Associates here. Ever since a LITE retreat was led by Father Anthony Schueller, Jim Brown (*former CEE Director*), and Mary Muehle (*Highland Heights Associates co-leader*) over 10 years ago under the direction of the pastor Father Michael Boccaccio (*now an Associate of the Congregation*), this group formed at Saint Philip Church. The parish has a first-class relic given to them by the bishop of Bridgeport. I first met for lunch with the current pastor Fr.



Father Lane with Father Sudhir D'Souza (*pastor of Saint Philip*) and Father Michael Boccaccio (*Associate of the Congregation*)

Sudhir D'Souza (*originally the parochial vicar of the parish*), a priest from India on loan to the diocese, and retired Deacon Jack Mahon. Later we had an Associates Mass and a lovely dinner on the campus with their parish chef



Sharing a meal at St. Philip in Norwalk, Connecticut

providing the fixings. I shared many resources for the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament and the Norwalk Associates, including the newly revised *Dining in the Kingdom* by Eugene LaVerdiere SSS, which is meant to be a monthly resource for ongoing formation for our Associates and will also be distributed at the Eucharistic Congress, August 4- 6, in Cleveland.



Associates at Saint Philip in Norwalk

One of the many wonderful stories I heard while driving was the one shared by Sister Fe Manalo SSS, Superior General in Sherbrooke. At the time of the canonization of Saint Peter Julian Eymard in 1962, the Congregation gave a reliquary to Pope John XXIII. It is a replica of the façade and interior of our international SSS headquarters and parish in Rome, the Canadian Martyrs. When you open the “door,” you see the original altar retablo and the relic of Father Eymard. Rather than keeping this gift for himself, Pope John XXIII returned it to the Fathers, Deacons, and Brothers. Wishing to have their unique relic and reliquary of Father Eymard, our Superior General in 1962 gave this reliquary to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament. These unique pieces were held at their headquarters in Rome until they located their base in Sherbrooke in the 2000s. It was a surprising, wonderful treasure to see in the sacristy of the sisters’ chapel.

Between the prayer at our sisters’ chapel and Saints Philip and Jean Baptiste, the drive with my own



Statue of Saint Peter Julian in the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament Community in Sherbrooke, Canada



Reliquary of St Peter Julian Eymard in Sherbrooke



Reliquary of St Peter Julian Eymard in Sherbrooke

prayer time and reflection, it was my great retreat of summer 2023, and I am so grateful for the outstanding hospitality the sisters, our community at Saint Jean's and our Associates in Connecticut. The spirit of Eymard and Eucharistic evangelizing is alive, well, and thriving, thanks to all of these members of the Eymardian Family. I look forward to visiting again soon.

Happy Anniversary 26th Father Joselito Hitosis SSS



Recently, Father Joselito Hitosis, assigned to our Blessed Sacrament in Holiday, Florida celebrated his 26th anniversary of priestly ordination.

We wish him well in his new ministry and his many more years of priestly service in the Province of Saint Ann.

Father Provincial on Well-Deserved Vacation

As previously announced, Father John Thomas Lane SSS will be on vacation from July 4-20. Let us pray that he may have a relaxing and rejuvenating time away.



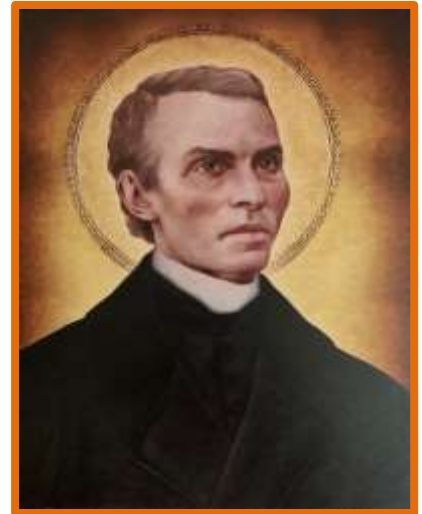
Join us for the **Saint Ann Triduum** in Cleveland, July 24, 25, and 26. For more information contact the Director of Mission Advancement sgongos@blessedsacrament.com, 440.449.2700, www.blessedsacrament.com and www.st-ann-shrine.org.

- Day 1 Mass at 6:30 pm: Special Blessing for Children
- Day 2 Mass at 6:30 pm: Anointing of the Sick
- Day 3 Mass at 6:30 pm: Candlelight Procession. All three Masses will be celebrated by our new provincial superior, Father John Thomas Lane SSS with preaching by Father Paul Bernier SSS, and will include Veneration of the Relic of Saint Ann

Additionally, a nine-day Novena in honor of Saint Ann is celebrated at Saint Jean Baptiste Church in New York City from July 17 through July 26. Contact information for the Novena is: phone: 212-288-5082 or website: www.stjeanbaptisteny.org

The Eucharistic Congress is almost here – August 4-6!

Hopefully, your anticipation is growing as we seek to deepen our understanding of the Eucharist in our personal and communal life. Remember to pray for good weather, safe travel, and enjoying the gardens and grounds at Saint Paschal Baylon Church. If you haven't registered yet, there is still time! Registration information can be found on the Congregation Website, below each Daily Eucharistic Reflection prayer and previous *Bread, Broken & Shared* editions. For information, 440-442-6311.



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