



Glimpses from the General Chapter



November 6-24, 2023
Thú Duc, Vietnam

Glimpse 8 – Our Eymardian Charismatic Family – with a New Superior General – November 18-20, 2023

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After the straw vote on Saturday morning, members from the **Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament** and **Servitium Christi** joined us for presentations. Vietnam is one of the places where **all 4 branches of the Eymardian Family** live and minister together in the country. Just a reminder that we are 1) Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (*men*), 2) Congregation of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (*women*), 3) Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament (*laity and clerics*) and 4) Servitium Christi Secular Institute (*women*).

Here is part of the report, put forward for us from our current **Vicar General José Antonio Rivera Ruiz** (*Spain*). Rivera Ruiz said:

In the document presented to the 35th General Chapter, we recall that the expression Charismatic Family was first used by Pope Francis in his apostolic letter proclaiming the Year of Consecrated Life on 21 November 2014. His thinking was described as follows:



Indeed, around each religious family, every Society of Apostolic Life and every Secular Institute, there is a larger family, a “charismatic family”, which includes a number of Institutes which identify with the same charism, and especially lay faithful who feel called, precisely as lay persons, to share in the same charismatic reality.

The initiative to create a “Charismatic Families group,” with the aim of sharing experiences and reflecting on the importance of this organization, came to realization in 2014. Two meetings are organized during the year, with an elected coordinator leading the activities. A YouTube channel has been created, through which we can follow some of the uploaded content: *Famiglie Carismatiche*.



Retired Servants of the Blessed Sacrament in their new house at their Provincial Headquarters

The **Servants of the Blessed Sacrament** just had their General Chapter in the **Philippines** in October. **Sister Teresa Dinh Thi Anh Dao SSS** (*Vicar General - Vietnam*) presented on behalf of **Sister Fe Manalo SSS** (*Superior General - Philippines*) who was ill and not able to be present for the meeting. Here are some of their statistics:

- 249 perpetually professed – (76 are between the ages of 45-59.)
- 32 Junior professed (*not in perpetual vows*)
- 9 novices, all from Vietnam except 1 from Congo- Brazzaville
- 3 Postulants
- There are only 2 provinces (*Philippines and Vietnam*) with the rest of the houses in regions in France, Canada, Congo, Brazil, United States and the



Netherlands. There is a big gap between the generations of the Asian young and “First World older members” as sister stated. “But the young and old work together!”



Servants of the Blessed Sacrament

Many may not be aware of the **Servitium Christi Secular Institute**. This branch is the inspiration of **our ninth Superior General, Father Godfrey Adrien Spiekman SSS (1949 - 1961)** and Miss Antoinette Maria Jacquelin Colsteun, on 6 January 1952 in the Netherlands. **Mary Keene (General Director– Ireland)** spoke about **Servitium Christi**. As Keene shared, Eymard organized lay women and had a vision of a secular institute, even thought that language did not exist during his time. Eymard wrote, “Should we not have adorers and firebrands? Contemplative and active? One to rise like fire and the other to raise like fire and spread out like the rays of the sun?” **Two arms** from the beginning: women religious and the secular institute. The church recognized secular institutes differed from religious life during the 20th century and codified them in the revised 1983 Code of Canon Law. In a secular institute one embraces the world with the same vows as a religious. We are God’s presence in

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Servants of the Blessed Sacrament headquarters near Saigon



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vows as single women, or widows. There is a specific structure like our chapter, for there is a chapter every six years and their next General Assembly is May 2025.

Servitium Christi is organized into centers and regions. They are run by local regional directors and councils. They rely on the Blessed Sacrament Community women and men for spiritual assistance. The Servants of the Blessed Sacrament assist members in the Vietnam and the Philippines. They do not wear a distinct outfit or emblem to be truly *in the secular world* and bring that witness and spirituality to the world. They, too, have a *Rule of Life* and their regular prayer and service life. They do not live in community, but with their families. They support themselves through their own employment. With their own support of 3-5% of their income, they share their stewardship to support the institute. They make themselves available to the local church in liturgical ministries and hospital chaplains. They also make their lives available to the Religious of the Blessed Sacrament. There are 158 members, 81 in Vietnam, and in the countries of Belgium, Germany, Australia, Brazil, Chile, UK, Ireland, Philippines, Germany, The Netherlands, Uganda, and the Czech Republic.

Next, **Peter Nguyen Van Lap** (*President of the Vietnamese Aggregation*) made a presentation. The Aggregation first came to Vietnam in 1973 thru the parish of Thu Duc. The Vietnamese Aggregation is in 19 dioceses and 92 groups. **There a total of 9,100 members in the country.** There are many events that they schedule throughout the country and they make use of the writings and resources that have been part of their Eucharistic life. They come together regularly for prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Then they have ministry, and for many this is a chance to make visitations to families, especially the elderly and the sick.



Father Norman Pelletier greeting Sister Rose, the oldest Servant in Vietnam



In the Servants' Chapel for prayer



PLEASE NOTE – For Associates in the USA: At our **Zoom Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament Quarterly Meeting, Thursday, November 30, 7:30 – 9:00 pm EST**, I'll share more details of this report and the time we had with the other branches and the movement and coordination of a Council of the Eymardian Charismatic Family. Stay tuned! The link is:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84085076804?pwd=1XX3uEePzy4aRVOHJMcineE97qbRrT.1>



Father Norman Pelletier delivers the homily on Sunday morning

Sunday – the Lord's Day – we started with Mass with **Norman Pelletier SSS** (our USA Delegate). Then we took a “tour of the Eymardian family” around the regions, meeting our sisters at their **provincial headquarters** for lunch and touring the **Servitium Christi** center. We had “tea” with the **SSS Scholastics** and then headed downtown to see the Vietnam History Museum and Cathedral and shopping along the busy avenues. The evening was a dinner on a boat in the Saigon River, enjoying the colorful skyline.

Monday, after the calling of the Holy Spirit during the 6:00 AM Mass, hosted by the Indian Province, and **Father Peter Jayakanthan SSS** presiding, we held the 4th part of the election process for the General Superior at 8:00 AM after breakfast. We entered the Cenacle, our Upper Meeting Room, and chose our new General Superior. We are pleased to announce that Father Philip Benzy Romician SSS of the province of Kristu Jyoti (*India-Austria*), was elected Superior General. Father Benzy, as he is better known, has been on the General Council as treasurer for the last several years. The General Chapter will proceed with the elections of the General Consultors and Treasurer on Tuesday. The photo of the newly-elected Father Superior General is located on page 11. We pray for Father Benzy as he takes up his new responsibilities.





Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament statue in the parish church of the SSS, sight of the former scholasticate, home to a future retirement center for the SSS.



First stop nearby the SSS parish and future site of SSS men's health and retirement center



Sanctuary in the parish church



Inside courtyard and original novitiate





Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in the Scholasticate Chapel



Saint Eymard in the Scholasticate Chapel



Our 54 students greet us with singing!



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Ikon of the Martyrs in Vietnam



Chapel crucifix and tabernacle



Notre Dame de Saigon Cathedral



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Paul Vu (*Vietnamese spiritual director and author who studied in USA at Fordham University while living at Saint Jean's*) Jose Antonio Rivera Ruiz (*studied at CTU*) and Student Director Joseph Thang who also studied at CTU - reunion of CTU grads!



Servitium Christi Gathering



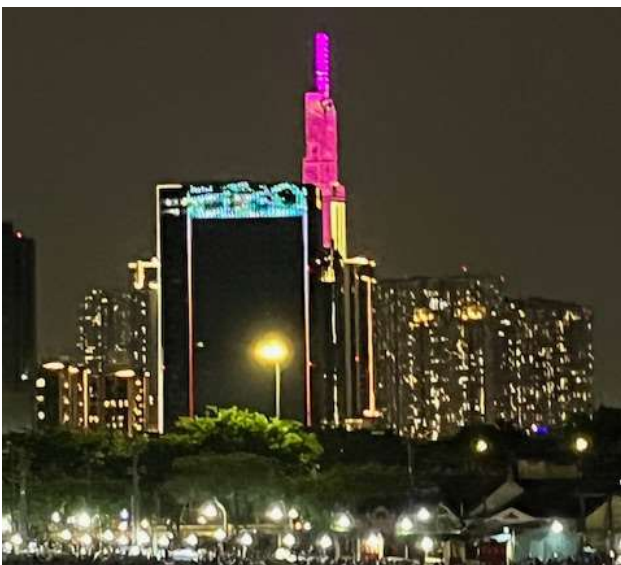
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Our ship for a cruise/dinner on the Saigon River



Saigon by night



Saigon by night





A long day and bus ride beginning at 8 am and until 10 pm

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Father Philip Benzy Romician SSS of the Province of Kristu Jyoti (India) elected as new Superior General for a term of 6 years on Monday, November 20, 2023



Father John Thomas Lane SSS, Provincial Superior of the Province of Saint Ann with the new Superior General



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