



# SSS Grapevine

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## A Christmas Time Pastoral Visit and Welcome to Matthew Vlastelica

By John Thomas Lane SSS

The two weeks to this shortest Christmas liturgical season allow us to gather with family and friends for wonderful holiday cheer. With the opportunity to come and pick up our new postulant Matthew Vlastelica and help move him to Highland Heights and northeast Ohio to begin the next stage of formation, his postulancy, it was also an opportunity to drive and visit our three Associate groups with the newly appointed spiritual advisor, Father Ravi Earnest Sebastin SSS.



As usual, on Tuesday night, December 26, the Saint Jean Baptiste Community was welcoming and warm, catching up on our SSS news with one another and taking an assessment of our Christmas Mass attendance. It is always a joy to pray and eat together: a hallmark of our SSS life that carried into the days ahead, living our Eucharistic charism around the table.

On Wednesday, December 27, Father Earnest and I drove to Norwalk, Connecticut, to meet our group there and spend time with the pastor of Saint Philip, Father Sudhir D'Souza. Unfortunately, for various reasons, Associate members could not come to the special Mass and lunch. However, Fathers Sudhir, Earnest, and I had a fantastic Indian meal, got to know one another further, and made plans.



The Saint Jean Baptiste Associate Community hosted a wonderful Christmas dinner Wednesday evening. Most of the members were able to attend. Thursday, December 28, Father Earnest and I visited the Associates on Long Island by joining with the spiritual advisor, Associate Father Michael Lombardi, and company for Mass at his new parish assignment, Holy Name of Mary parish, Valley Stream, New York. We, too, had a wonderful Italian meal nearby for a meeting.

Each meeting highlighted the news of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE) and the projects that are important for 2024:



- Updated Associate Initial Formation Manual (*Spanish is coming!*)
- Updated Novena with Saint Peter Julian Eymard (*still bilingual*)
- Taking the opportunity to participate in and promote the Life in the Eucharist (LITE) retreat
  - a team is going to Hawai'i in February to our parish and vicariate there
- a team is leading the northeast Ohio parish in March
- **Sign up now** for the November 5–17

Eymard Pilgrimage in the Footsteps of Saint Peter Julian Eymard (France). Contact [ssscommunications@blessedsacrament.com](mailto:ssscommunications@blessedsacrament.com)

- **Register with the CEE** [susandwork@blessedsacrament.com](mailto:susandwork@blessedsacrament.com) for the *Rule of Life* retreat August 5–9 at the Province Center in Highland Heights, Ohio. (*Blessed Sacrament religious may also do this to reserve their place in our home.*) This year, the Rule is 40 years old; Father William Fickel SSS, Brother Michael Perez SSS, and Associate and CEE Co-director Mary Muehle will lead the retreat. The *Rule* is the basis

for Sister Catherine Marie Caron SSS, and Father Fiorenzo Salvi SSS created the Rule of Life for Associates.

- Having groups share in the small group discussions of *Eucharistic Spirituality*, the book by Father Paul Bernier SSS and Jim Brown
- Share in the Eucharistic Holy Hours
- Participate in the Associate Quarterly National Zoom Meeting on Saturday, March 16, 10:00 AM EDT
- Continue organizing the new Province Associates Council; the next meeting is Wednesday, February 21, at 7:30 PM EDT.

Some of our long-term goals are:

- Evangelization and reaching out to new members, priests, and other parishes in our areas and regions
- Youth participation and invitation of families to participate in the LITE retreats



We continue to reconnect our Associate members across the USA. Having Father Earnest support the three groups in the New York-Connecticut region will help them in their continuing formation and new member recruitment with hopes for young members to join. Being with this region is always a joy, and I enjoy excellent hospitality and great discussions.

Meanwhile, we welcome our new postulant, Matthew Vlastelica, to our northeast Ohio communities on Saturday, December 30, living in Highland Heights with the other 12 house members! He will have formation sessions for his classes with his director, Brother Michael



Perez, and the regional SSS team. He will also take an online philosophy class, preparing for his theological studies and prerequisites, serve the local SSS house in its lifestyle of cooking, shopping, cleaning, etc., and serve in the parish of Saint Paschal Baylon. Postulancy is the first formal stage of religious life, lasting at least six months. It's a chance to disengage from work and previous commitments and deepen the commitment to religious life. Please join us in welcoming and praying for Matthew during this time of discernment and formation.

**Happy New Year from the province offices, and may 2024 be filled with love, peace, joy, and excellent health!**