



SSS Grapevine

An Internal Publication of the Province of Saint Ann
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

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1st Meeting of the *Sacramentinos Americas Conference* in Belo Horizonte, Brazil

By John Thomas Lane SSS, *Provincial*
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Father Carlos Rodriguez (*Bogotá*), Francisco Junior (*Brazil, General Council*), Father John Thomas Lane (*USA*), Father General, Father Jose Antonio (*Spain, General Council*), Marcelo da Silva (*Brazil-Argentina-Chile*)

The first meeting since the General Chapter of the Sacramentinos Americas Conference (SAC) took place at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Province (*Argentina-Brazil-Chile*) headquarters (*Emmaus Center*) in Belo Horizonte, the third largest metropolitan city of Brazil, in the state of Minas Gerais (*between the states of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro*). We began the meeting on Wednesday, April 3, and Thursday, April 4, 2024, in English and Spanish (*with some Portuguese*). After welcome, our host, Father Marcelo Silva SSS (*Argentina-Brazil-Chile*), explained that we would attend Mass at the shrine of Our Lady of the Boa

Viagem (*Good Voyage*) church (*the former cathedral*) where it has been arranged to coincide

with the reception of 7 new Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. After the special Mass, a reception continued the festivities after the Mass in the rectory. The local shrine staff and the students of the SSS gave us a wonderful meal and hospitality, with Father General Philip Benzy Romician SSS, giving a dinner talk for those present on a summary of the “Final Message of the 36th General Chapter” of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, held in Thu Duc, Vietnam in November 2023.

Thursday morning, our SAC meeting began in earnest with a full agenda. It was nice to have the outgoing and incoming General Council members responsible for the Americas present with us to give a context of the history of the work of the conference. Father José Antonio Ruiz SSS (*Spain*) – outgoing General Council representative for SAC, and Father Francisco Junior Marquez SSS (*Brazil*) – incoming General Council representative for SAC, not only shared their experiences of the past and present, they were excellent translators when we needed their guidance during our discussions. The general team joined the three provincials, our host and convener of SAC, Father Marcelo Silva SSS, and Father Carlos Sierra Rodriguez SSS (*Columbia-Puerto Rico Province*) with me.



SSS in Sacristy after the Mass

Our Superior General, Father Philip Benzy Romician SSS, joined us to give direction in our first geographical conference meeting since the mandates of the 36th General Chapter. Our *Rule of Life* 93 reminds us of the need and use of geographical conferences:

When several provinces in the same geographical area are living under similar conditions, and closer collaboration is considered available, an inter-provincial conference comprising the provinces and regions concerned may be set up, with the consent of the superior general.



Church of Boa Viagem

The statutes of these conferences are to be approved by the superior general and his council. They shall indicate the conference's competence, composition, and manner of operating.

This is a key animation and supporting body for the provincial/regional administration in their quest to grow in fidelity to the charism. Now, every SSS province is part of a conference, with the USA province joining this one and the existing conferences for Asia, Africa, and Europe. (It was also mentioned that Fathers will revise our statutes—Fathers Marcelo and Francisco and present them to the rest of the team for review.

Father General shared his letter with us:

May this conference give importance to the following things:

- The final message of the 36th General Chapter is the guiding instrument for us. Thus, read and reflect on implementing it at the conference level to be relevant and effective in our Eucharistic life and mission.
- Concentrate on the Ministry of Vocation promotion.
- To be rooted in our Eucharistic Spirituality and Charism, as indicated in our Rule of Life, reflect on the necessary efforts to be taken in the initial formation, ongoing formation, and formation for formators based on the 'Follow Me' document. Formation for formators: Even if it is not possible to have it at the level of the geographical conference, please do have some program for the formators in your province.
- This year, we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the approval of the present *Rule of Life*. We are continuously called to deepen our faithfulness to the *Rule of Life* so that the 'SSS-ness' becomes evident in our life and mission. Please use the works of the Theological Commission on our *Rule of Life*. (*Our province is taking this mandate seriously by having our province retreat in August for this 40th anniversary milestone.*)
- The Commission for the Writings and Works of the Founder has made efforts to make our Founder's writings available to all. I request the conference to encourage our religious people to read it personally, use it in the formation, and make it known to the Eymardian family and others.



Gathering in Belo Horizonte with SSS Religious and Associates

We discussed these points and what each province is doing to work on these goals. *(Besides the retreat, our province is offering the Eymard Pilgrimage in November and a chance for our Spanish-speaking members – associates and vowed members – to attend the International Eucharistic Congress in Quito. More on this in a moment.)*

We spent a bit of the morning focusing on our vocational ministries and how we envision working together since some provinces have teams in place, others do not, but there are few inquiries for all of us. A joint poster with the theme “Apostles of the Eucharist” could be shared and utilized with contact info to the three province leaders on our websites.

We thought about our continuing education of our formators and meeting with updates and wisdom to share the latest materials developed in the 2010s and 2020s. At some point, we hope to organize this meeting.

Our province is unique because it sponsors a “Eucharistic Center,” the CEE (*Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing*). Because we have this valuable resource for the Congregation again, it is hoped that the resources that have been re-developed recently, especially in Spanish, will be shared with the other provinces. We asked Mona Grigsby-Suarez, Co-Director of the CEE, to assist in the coordination of all the Spanish-speaking resources and have a meeting to meet with other associate leaders in SAC who are working with



Statue of Our Lady of Boa Viagem
(Good Voyage)

Eucharistic projects for our laity and SSS. One reality is the formation of booklets for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament (*Associates*). Jim Brown shared this resource at the 2017 Mundelein, IL 35th General Chapter. It has not been fully implemented. Mona is translating this formation process into Spanish, and other theologians are joining to assist with the Spanish. We hope for a common, universal formation for the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament (*SSS*).

We discussed the September 8-15 International Eucharistic Congress and pilgrimage plan for Quito, Ecuador. Father Francisco shared the organizational calendar for the 8-day event and the two days our Eymard Family will get together with Fathers Francisco, Lane, and Mona organizing a Life in the Eucharist Retreat one day and another study day for those gathered at an arranged retreat center house for us.

We will have another SAC meeting in Quito on the evening of September 8 to plan for future SAC projects, and we look forward to collaborating with our resources and challenges in the future. We welcome ideas from across the SAC.

Eugênio Barbosa Martins SSS Ordained 12th SSS Bishop, 5th SSS Bishop in Brazil, and 7th Bishop of the Diocese of São João de Boa Vista

By John Thomas Lane SSS, *Provincial
Province of Saint Ann – USA*

I had the honor of representing the USA SSS by being present on Friday, April 5 to Sunday, April 7, 2024, for the ordination celebrations of our SSS Brazilian and 15th Superior General Eugênio Barbosa Martins SSS in the city of São João de Boa Vista in the state of São Paulo (SP), Brazil. *(The patron saint of the city and diocese is Saint John the Baptist, and due to the beautiful mountains surrounding the valley, city, and diocese, it achieves this name “Good View.”)* Many SSS religious from across the globe, mainly from Brazil and almost a hundred Aggregates of the Blessed Sacrament *(Associates)* from across Brazil also attended.

Here is a brief highlight of some important milestones in his life. Bishop Eugênio Barbosa Martins



Bishop Eugenio blesses the congregation gathered for his
Episcopal Ordination



SSS Bishops and priests with Bishop Eugenio

SSS is the son of Beatriz Barbosa Martins and Manual Martins de Sousa, born in Triângulo Mineiro, Brazil. After graduating with a degree in philosophy, he joined the novitiate of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in 1983 at Belo Horizonte. After his studies, he was ordained a deacon on May 3, 1987, and a priest the following year on January 25, 1988, in Uberaba, Brazil. He served in his province as novice director and pastor twice (*Uberaba and Belo Horizonte*), provincial superior, and president of the Conference of Religious for Brazil.

At the 34th General Chapter held in Rome in 2011, Bishop Eugênio was elected on May 16 as the 15th General Superior. He served for 12 years in the ministry in the leadership of the Congregation. At the 36th General Chapter in Thu Duc, Vietnam, his term ended when, on Monday, November 20, 2023, Indian Blessed Sacrament Father Philip Benzy Romician SSS was elected the 16th General Superior. On January 4, 2024, Pope Francis appointed Eugênio the seventh bishop of São João de Boa Vista, SP. (*The previous bishop died in 2021, so the diocese was without a bishop for almost three years.*)



During Episcopal Ordination of Bishop Eugenio

The principal ordaining bishop was Archbishop Moacir Silva from Ribeirão Preto. The co-ordaining bishops (*there are always three principal bishops who lead the rite*) were the other two current SSS bishops in Brazil, Bishop Jorge Alves Bezerra SSS of the Diocese of Paracatù (*ordained in 2008*), and Bishop Hernaldo Pinto Farias SSS of the Diocese of Bonfim (*ordained in 2019*).

Before the ordination on Friday night (*after an 8-hour bus trip from my SAC meetings in Belo Horizonte*), “Bishop-elect Eugênio” had us over to his new house for a reception and Mass for all the SSS present who had just arrived, Associates, students and priests. We had a beautiful Mass where we shared memories and appreciated the history, life, and ministry of

Bishop Eugênio. He shared his gratitude for his vocation and call to this service in the Church, but his dear admiration and love for the Eymardian family with which he would be sharing this ordination. Later, other diocesan priests attended during the dinner to share in the festivities.



Laying on of Hands during the Ordination

On Saturday, all the visitors went on bus tours of the city, the diocesan museum (*on the lower floor of the bishop's house*), the cathedral, and a special luncheon. In the evening, even more guests, most of the Brazilian SSS (*associates, Servitium Christi, sister servants, pre-novices, 2nd year novices, a few students, brothers, and ordained priests – yes, all 4-branches of the Eymardian Family*) arrived for a pizza party at a nearby large restaurant.

With temperatures in the 80s, sunny skies, and barely a breeze, the warm weather measured the barometer of our hearts, which were just as warm when we saw the Eymardian Family together in

this very small city with a big and welcoming heart. Over 3,000 gathered early the following day to participate in the ordination at the city college's basketball arena, made into a sanctuary for this momentous occasion. So many gathered and knew we visitors were in their city for such an historic occasion in the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

As a Congregation, we are blessed to have been honored by the popes from John Paul II, Benedict, and Francis to have so many bishops for "such a small family in the Church." We were honored to be part of a history-making event with Bishop Eugênio's excellent episcopal motto: *e começou a lavar os pes dos discipulos (Portuguese)* for John 13:3, "And he began to wash the feet of his disciples." In his final words of the Mass, before his first blessing as bishop, Bishop Eugênio promised to "wash the feet of the diocese" to care and serve with

his Eucharistic heart, warm with gratitude and honor. He gave a short catechesis on Saint Peter Julian Eymard and his forever Eymardian family.



Father John Thomas Lane SSS with newly-ordained Bishop *Eugênio* Barbosa Martins SSS

May Bishop Eugênio serve the Diocese of São João de Boa Vista and the Church of Brazil long and well. Our prayers continue to accompany him on this journey, which will always have a “beautiful view!”