



SSS Grapevine

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Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament
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Opening the Jubilee Year!

These articles summarize two jubilee celebrations by John Thomas Lane, SSS, Provincial: one for the Jubilee Year of Hope and the opening of our own Diocesan Shrine of Saint Ann to the public as a pilgrimage center for 2025 and the Diocese of Cleveland. The other is opening up the 125th-anniversary celebrations of the Blessed Sacrament Community (SSS) in the United States.



During the Jubilee Year the statue of Saint Ann will return to the Oratory

Bishop of Cleveland Chooses SSS Shrine of Saint Ann as a Pilgrimage Center for 2025

How did you begin the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope? We are so blessed that Bishop Edward Malesic of the Diocese of Cleveland chose our own Saint Ann Shrine, now a diocesan shrine since 2023, to be a holy site for the Jubilee Year for “pilgrims of hope.” With this elevation, our original seminary chapel, consecrated the Oratory of the Blessed Sacrament, becomes a special devotional and prayer experiences in the



This Oratory was the first the Blessed Sacrament Community seminary chapel dedicated on May 4, 1965 by Bishop Clarence Isenmann

pilgrimage sites, the twelve sites received a special holy cross to adorn the “holy site.” The bishop blessed these crosses in the December 29, 2024 ritual. On January 6, 2025, the 168th anniversary of the first exposition of the Blessed Sacrament by our holy founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, in Paris, the SSS opened the holy door and diocesan shrine to receive pilgrims for this year ahead.

The ritual is very special. It begins in one church, in this case, down the street from the cathedral, Saint Peter Church, currently

church for this holy year. After Pope Francis opened the holy doors in Rome, as a sign that we open our own lives/hearts to Christ for renewed grace, each diocese also opened their holy doors and designated churches and shrines. For the church of Cleveland, 12 sites were chosen: nine parishes and three shrines. We participated in a special diocesan liturgy to open the Jubilee Year for the eight countries of the Diocese of Cleveland and had a special ritual, procession, and Mass to open this Jubilee Year of Hope. To unite the holy



The entrance to the Oratory and Diocesan Shrine of Saint Ann from Wilson Mills Road.



SSS Religious at the Shrine (left to right): Father Roger Bourgeois SSS (*shrine chaplain*), Brother Thomas Mella SSS (*sacristan*), Father Louis Demba Ndione SSS (*parochial vicar*), Father Juancho Ramos SSS (*superior*), and Father Norman Pelletier SSS

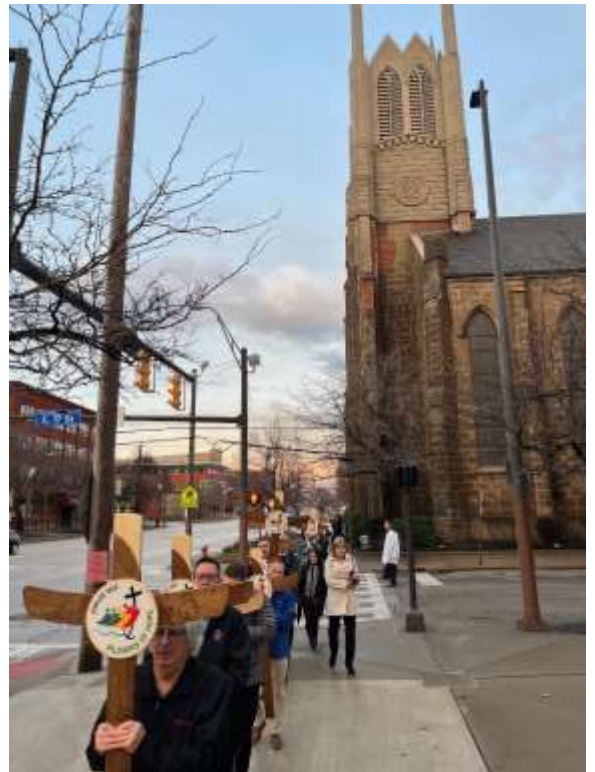
administered by the Capuchin Franciscans. You begin in one nearby church and go to the cathedral to symbolize the walk that each of us, each pilgrim, is to make in our journey of this special year. We began with the jubilee year hymn and then heard from the Gospel of John 14:1-7. Below are paragraphs read from the decree written by Pope Francis from the Bull of Indiction for the Jubilee Year, *Spes non confundit (Hope does not disappoint)*.

1. Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of



Receiving the Jubilee Cross at Saint Peter Church in Cleveland before the procession and blessing at the Cathedral

good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often, we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope that fulfils the ancient promises, leads to glory and, grounded in love, does not disappoint.



Procession with 12 diocesan pilgrimage sites representing three shrines and nine parishes

3. Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross: “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life” (Rom 5:19). That life becomes manifest in our own life of faith, which begins with Baptism, develops in openness to God’s grace and is enlivened by a hope constantly renewed and confirmed by the working of the Holy Spirit.

25. Let us even now be drawn to this hope! Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it. May the way we live our lives say to them in so many words: “Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart and hope in the Lord!” (Ps 27:14). May the power of hope fill our days, as we await with

confidence the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and glory, now and forever.



Auxiliary Bishop Michael Woost and Bishop Edward Malesic after commissioning Mass at the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist to start the Jubilee Year in the Diocese of Cleveland and then returning the crosses to the pilgrimage sites

the full details with our updated devotional schedule for Saint Ann with Brother Thomas Mella SSS (*sacristan*), Fathers Roger Bourgeois SSS (*chaplain*), and Norman Pelletier SSS, assisting in the popular piety that is part of this special event. For the opening Mass in the Oratory, besides the 3 SSS who usually administer the shrine, the local superior Fathers Juancho (Choy) Ramos SSS and Louis Demba Ndione SSS, concelebrated with the crowd gathered to pray for a holy renewal of hope. The Saint Paschal Baylon parish's Art & Environment Committee prepared the Oratory, reception area, and statue of Saint Ann with unique bunting to commemorate this jubilee occasion. (Photos by Cheryl Arstein, committee chair)



Met at the doors of the Cathedral by our bishops

We then processed to the cathedral with our new Jubilee Crosses. Our assistant local superior, Father Joseph Kiet (JK) Nguyen SSS, and Director of Advancement Scott Gongos accompanied me on the “almost mile” journey to the cathedral Mass. We chanted Psalm 118, Psalm 84, and the Litany of Saints with 350 other pilgrims. We were blessed by Bishop Edward Malesic and auxiliary Bishop Michael Woost for creating “the wonderful Blessed Sacrament Community” and thanked by the bishop for our outstanding service to the diocese and for hosting pilgrims at Saint Ann Shrine. Look to our website for

125th Anniversary Year Celebration Begins “at the Beginning”



CNDs and SSS together (missing from the photo is Father Bernard Camiré SSS)

To celebrate the special 125th anniversary of the SSS's presence in the United States, the parish of our first foundation, Église Saint Jean Baptiste, kicked off the yearlong celebration on January 6, 2025. The day chosen to begin the commemoration is also on this very day Saint Peter Julian Eymard started the Congregation's first exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on January 6, 1857. The pastor and our USA Province provincial treasurer, Father John Kamas SSS, framed the occasion as a chance for the Congregation of Notre Dame (CND) sisters and us to celebrate our 125-year-old collaboration in administering the parish of Saint Jean Baptiste. Having both religious institutes host the day provided the opportunity for our staff, Associates of the Blessed Sacrament, and its lay partners gather and celebrate the remarkable history of our Eucharistic mission in New York. From this “mother



CND Province Leader, Sister Maryanne Foley, Bishop Edmund Whalen and Father Lane



Pastor and Provincial Treasurer, Father John Kamas SSS coordinated an inspiring Mass.

house,” the province of Saint Ann, the many foundations in the USA, Australia, the Philippines, Great Britain and Ireland, Vietnam, and Uganda took root. With the Shrine of Saint Ann at this parish, the devotion and well-being of the province easily placed under her patronage helped our order thrive!

Auxiliary Bishop Edmund Whalen (*Manhattan*) presided and preached at the Mass with hundreds gathered in the historic church. He reminded us in his homily, as we used the Epiphany readings that we were the Magi: the three represented through the SSS, CND, and the parishioners attached to the religious congregations. We are all seekers, going to the Christ-child, the world to keep Christ's mission

experiencing the love of Christ, and needing to go into the world to keep Christ's mission alive. He praised and thanked the “magi” for continuing to adore Christ and live that adoration through faithful service.

CND Provincial Leader Sister Maryanne Foley, CND gave remarks after communion on the significance of the SSS and CND’s collaboration, especially with the school that was once a co-ed elementary and high school. Many of our vocations for both orders came from this parish, including the three current religious in NYC (*besides Father Kamas, Fathers Bernard Camiré SSS, and James Hayes SSS*), whose seeds of Eucharistic vocation sprung from Saint Jean’s. Sister Maryanne said that the founder of the CND’s, Marguerite Bourgeoys, named Sister of the Blessed Sacrament, and Saint Eymard were delighted in the heavens this evening for gathering to celebrate our mission



Sister Foley shares her remarks

collaboration. The CNDs came to the parish in 1886 and welcomed the SSS in 1900 with ice cream!

USA Provincial Father John Thomas Lane SSS, after expressing gratitude to Bishop Whalen, Father Kamas and the local community, Sister Foley, the CNDs, and the reception team, shared a brief history:

The Blessed Sacrament Community came to this country from Montreal, Canada with eight religious. On January 18, 1900, the third Archbishop of New York, Michael Augustine Corrigan (+1902), sent the invitation to welcome our religious society here to this French-Canadian parish on the Upper East Side of Manhattan amid the Gilded Age. *(Incidentally, it was Archbishop Corrigan, an advocate for immigrants, who welcomed Mother Cabrini and her Missionaries Sisters of the Sacred Heart to New York during his tenure like he welcomed us and other religious orders to minister to the immigrant church of New York.)*



Saint Anne Shrine at the Saint Jean Baptiste Church with the relic of Good Saint Ann

Blessed Sacrament Father Louis Estèvenon, SSS (+1912 in Italy as the 6th General Superior) and Brother Patrick Welsh, SSS (+1913) came first to lay the groundwork on June 6, 1900. Archbishop Corrigan accepted the proposal to begin an Eymardian house in New York and, on September 22, 1900, gave this French—Canadian parish of Église Saint Jean Baptiste to the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Father Lane gave some info from the SSS Montréal house diary, including one interesting item:

Miss Eliza Cummins, who started the People’s Eucharistic League after the first USA Eucharistic Congress in Washington DC, October 2-3, 1895, welcomed the Fathers and Brothers of the Blessed Sacrament to New York and gave \$50,000 to the SSS to begin the project. This would be equivalent to **\$13.2 million** today! We are so grateful for her gift to start our foundation because of this woman’s Eucharistic vision for the country! And the generosity has continued for 125 years! We are so grateful for our ministry partners, supporters, sustainers, and generous benefactors who sustained us then and now and will sustain us into the future. We thank you for your generous support.

We began in this country as an “international” community—that is, French and Canadians coming to America. Now, our province is growing in this direction again, with associates and sisters, deacons, brothers, and ordained priests coming from all over the earth to serve in the current American Province. Just as the church is developing internationality and our nation has always been about that, so is the face of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in this 125th year and for the future.

We start our jubilee celebrations here in NYC, where it all began with the torch of the Statue of Liberty nearby. We came to an immigrant neighborhood to share the Eymardian dream of placing the world on fire with the Eucharist. That flame still burns in our hearts, regardless of age or years of service.

May the Holy Spirit continue to ignite us, send us vocations both religious and lay, to join in the Eymardian family, and continue to burn brightly with a Eucharistic zeal that makes all of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist known to the world. May this year bear fruit now and for the next 125 years of service to the church of the United States of America. As Saint Peter Julian Eymard would say, “**May thy Eucharistic kingdom come.**”



Reception in the school auditorium celebrates 125 glorious years!

Our SSS Canadian representative, Father Ghislain Cossette SSS, did not make the journey to represent our ties to “our mother province” due to the cancellation of his flight. Besides this, the grand reception recalled many wonderful memories and hopes for the future. The overwhelming joy captured a wonderful evening of gratitude and hope for the future. May God’s Eucharistic mission continue from this mother church of the Province of Saint Ann.