



SSS Grapevine

A Publication of the Province of Saint Ann
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

March 25, 2025 – 2025.5

The Congregation's History in the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Texas



The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament began ministering in Saint Joseph Parish, Downtown San Antonio, on October 4, 1982. The three founding members of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament were Fathers Donald Brouillard SSS, who served as pastor, Roger Bourgeois SSS, and José Barandiaran SSS. A few years later, a fourth would join Father Dominic Luong SSS (*originally from the Vietnamese region and Canadian province*) to begin ministry with a Vietnamese Community that would later become a significant parish in the Archdiocese. Before the Blessed Sacrament Community arrived, this German-founded parish had a rich history. At the time, in the Province of Saint Ann, the Provincial Council led by Father Donald Pelotte, SSS (*later to be named bishop of Gallup, New Mexico*), decided

to expand the province into new regions of our nation, especially the south, with this community and then later a community in Houston, Texas.

In 1868, German settlers built the present-day church. They chose San Antonio's main, busy street, East Commerce, which, in the 1800s, was a center of activity from business to residence to the present era of tourists. Dedicated in 1871 (*After the debt was paid of, the archbishop dedicated the church in 1871. The French immigrant architect Theodore E. Giraud designed the church. James Wahrenberger designed the steeple and it was completed in 1898.*). The present-day pastor just completed an exterior renovation and roof replacement. The church site is on the south side of Alamo Plaza, the famous site of the battle cry, "Remember the Alamo." The last major interior renovation took place under the guidance of Fr. Thomas Fitzgerald SSS in 1999.

Since 1953, the church has been surrounded by a shopping mall and received the nickname "Saint Joske's" due to the popular department store that used to be next to the church until the chain merged into another. Today, the mall is busy, but the department store was converted from one big store into many stores adjacent to the 4-story mall. The Riverwalk flows below East Commerce Street and has a human-made tributary that flows into the Riverwalk shopping center.¹

Due to the tradition of the community being German-speaking, to this day, a unique all-men's choir still sings in German, one Sunday each month and a Mass. The Latino community has moved to other areas around San Antonio, not downtown. Yet, most parishioners come from far and wide to attend Mass at this city center place for prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, confession, and Masses.

We are grateful to the following pastors who have served faithful under the Blessed Sacrament Community administration:

- Donald Brouillard SSS, 1982-1991
- Roland E. Laliberte SSS, 1991-1993
- Roger Bourgeois SSS - Administrator 1993 (*January -April*) with his transfer to Albuquerque after serving as Parochial Vicar since the beginning
- Thomas Fitzgerald SSS, 1993-2008
- Mario Marzocchi SSS, 2008-2019
- Anthony Schueller SSS, 2019-2021
- Norman Pelletier SSS, 2021-2023
- Mark Del Rosario SSS, 2023-present

¹ Some of this history is from the Riverwalk posted signs along the river in the city, created by the San Antonio Historical Society.

125th Anniversary in San Antonio Welcomes New Associates



As part of the Province of Saint Ann (USA) 125th Anniversary celebration, Father John Thomas Lane SSS, Mona Grigsby-Suarez, Co-Director for the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE), Scott Gongos, Mission Advancement Director, and Greg Dufour, Province Associates Council Chair, came to San Antonio to celebrate. Father Jaime Airo Rodriguez Reyes SSS, Parochial Vicar of Corpus Christi Church, Houston, Texas, and part of the Life in the Eucharistic Spanish-speaking team, also joined in the celebration to learn of the history and prepare for future ministry with the Associates of San Antonio.

On Tuesday, March 18, during the vigil of the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, almost 100 associates gathered with the visiting team for a delicious potluck dinner at Prince of Peace Catholic Church. It was a chance for a “business meeting” and gathering for all the Associates. The event, led by Dr. Billy Stewart and Cesar Camacho, local Associates Council leaders,

Father Jaime Airo Rodriguez Reyes SSS from the Houston community, Mona Grigsby-Suarez from the CEE, pastor Father Mark del Rosario SSS, and Province Associates Council chairperson Greg Dufour from Houston all came to San Antonio for our 125th Anniversary celebration.

contained music, prayer, a presentation by Father Lane with a brief 125th-anniversary history of the SSS and the Associates in the USA and San Antonio, our communication tools, and planning for the annual procession with the Blessed Sacrament in downtown San Antonio on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. (*We have featured in last year's Grapevine the incredible event with thousands gathered in procession, millions of*



Almost 100 Associates of the Congregation from the San Antonio area gather at Prince of Peace church for the 125th-anniversary celebration.

rose petals thrown, and the incredible faith displayed in the mile-long procession around the downtown and cathedral plaza). This year’s celebration will be on the Vigil, Saturday, June 7, 2025. Archbishop Gustavo Garcia Siller and the associate leaders created a promotional video, and we watched the beauty of the past event with great admiration and hopes for this year’s celebration. Dr. Billy and Cesar will also address the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of San Antonio to increase parish participation in this event.



The Archbishop with Father Lane, Father Jaime, deacon and altar servers after the Mass.

Eucharistic treatise and homily:

The Associates, the Liederkrantz German choir, and Father Mark del Rosario SSS collaborated on a beautiful Mass and reception for the 125th celebration at Saint Joseph Downtown, the home of the SSS since 1982. Archbishop Gustavo presided and preached at the Mass on the Solemnity of Saint Joseph on March 19 at 5:30 pm. During his homily, the archbishop highlighted the vocation of Saint Joseph, the SSS (religious men and associates) who lived and worked like Saint Joseph, grounded in Christ – the Eucharist and behind the scenes shared the faith and built up the church. Some of the highlights of his delightful

- We fully renew our commitment to living the mystery of the Eucharist as the members of the Congregation have done so for 125 years. They have deepened our love for the Eucharist and helped us increase its understanding.
- The SSS remind us to center our hearts on the Blessed Sacrament, praying before it and allowing its mysteries to guide our actions.
- The mysteries lead us to church every Sunday at Mass to celebrate and be nourished at this heavenly banquet each week to face every moment of our life and work center on Christ.
- Saint Joseph, a man of listening and silence, is an enduring model for our journey, embracing God's mysterious plan without hesitation, welcoming Mary, and protecting the Holy Family with self-sacrificial care. Let us live this testimony, too!
- After the homily, Dr. Billy Stewart and Cesar Camacho presented the newly-formed Associates to Father Lane to accept their promises as new Associates of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. They, with Mona and Greg, placed the Associates cross/emblem on them and welcomed them officially into the Aggregation (*Associates*) of the Blessed Sacrament, founded by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, living the long custom and tradition of our history.



Dr Billy Stewart, Cesar Camacho (the two local San Antonio leaders), and Mona Grigsby Suarez address the gathering.

Our new members are from Our Lady of Grace Parish in San Antonio: **Greg Clary, Shelley Clary, Carla Conha, David Cortez, Patricia E. Donahue, Fernando Flores, Velma Gonzales Flores, Yolanda Garcia, Kathy Gruber, Anne Guerrero, Eduardo Guimbarda, Nathaniel Link, Kinda Perez, Maria Elena Palacios, Ernestine Parelka, Rebecca Prieto, Orlando Rangel, Cecilio Rodriguez, Scott Schuler, Anita Vela-Johnson, James White, Jr (*in memoriam*), Sylvia White.**



The Saint Joseph Liederkrantz German men's choir



Cesar Camacho (*San Antonio Associates*), Scott Gongos (*Director of Mission Advancement for the SSS*) Dr. Billy Stewart (*San Antonio Associates*), Father John Thomas Lane SSS (*Provincial Superior of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament*)





The new Associates in San Antonio, Texas that were installed by Father John Thomas Lane SSS, provincial Superior, in Saint Joseph Downtown Church.

A Visit with Leadership of the Nocturnal Adoration Society and A Brief History

After the first USA Eucharistic Congress in 1895, several Eucharistic groups began, rose to prominence, or returned to the roots and inspiration to build our society around the Eucharist and Eucharistic praying. The origins of the Nocturnal Adoration Society (NAS) began in 1592 with the instruction of Pope Clement VIII, with the society gaining approval and practice in Rome with the first nocturnal vigils of prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Pope Clement offered this devotion to protect Rome from hostile Muslim invasions.

In France, Napoleon rose to power and made Pope Pius VI a political prisoner in France. This led to the French beginning prayer vigils to release the pope after the French Revolution. In 1810, the NAS drafted its first constitutions and received approval from the highest ecclesiastical authority in Rome, Monsignor Attanasio. The movement spread from Rome to other parts of the world in 1847 and to France, where lay people wished to follow the example of religious, consecrated women and men who kept visiting the Blessed Sacrament.



Members in France spread the NAS to Spain, Mexico, Canada, and Boston, Massachusetts. In 1903, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Miss Lummis, who we have mentioned in a previous *Grapevine* with her leadership of the 1895 Eucharistic Congress and bringing the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (SSS) to New York, she, in New York, began the first meeting of the Forty Hours' Devotions. They started at Saint Jean Baptiste. Previously, Saint Patrick Cathedral, New York City, hosted the Nocturnal Adoration Society for a year. However, Archbishop Michael Corrigan transferred the work and administration of the NAS to the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. The first big night for the group was New Year's Eve, 1903, with Father Arthur Letellier SSS appointed the moderator.

In 1925, the National Council of the NAS began with Cardinal Patrick Hayes of New York implementing it at Saint Jean's with a significant event, prayer experience, and reception on January 25, 1925. At its largest membership, in 1950, there were 1,020 centers in the country with 21,000 men and a total of over 1,817,072 hours of prayer by these men in prayer in the presence of our Risen Lord.

For years, until 2015, the national office and council were headquartered at Saint Jean's, where the last director and moderator, the Provincial Superior Father Anthony Schueller

SSS and Father Bernard Camiré SSS. In 2015, the National Council and headquarters transferred to lay leaders' hands under Mr. Raul Mendoza and Spiritual Director Father Alirio Corrales of Laredo, Texas. (*Father Corrales is a priest of the Diocese of Laredo but originally from Columbia.*) Bishop Jaime Tamayo is the present Spiritual Director of the NAS.

As part of the 125th Jubilee Year Celebration and Canonical Visitation of the Province, Father John Thomas Lane SSS, CEE Co-Director Mona Grigsby-Suarez, Mission Advancement Director Scott Gongos, and Province Associates Council Chair Greg Dufour met with the current leadership (*minus Bishop Tamayo*) of the Council in San Antonio, Saint Joseph Downtown church. Father Jaime Ario Rodriguez Reyes SSS, Parochial Vicar from Corpus Christi Church, Houston, Texas, also joined us. Paul Monette, long associated with the NAS from Saint Jean's until his new home in Laredo, Texas, has been responsible for the English-speaking community, and Raul is the President of the Spanish-speaking branch.

We shared stories, histories, and hopes for our continued collaboration since the NAS Council wishes to continue its relationship with its spiritual father, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, and his Congregations (*female, male, and associate branches*). The council and province leaders present agreed to continue the relationship as spiritual advisors and write



History is a circle: The Simon Salas family poses with the Archbishop and Father Lane to celebrate their 42nd wedding anniversary. They were married at another SSS church, Saint Andrew, New York City, with Blessed Sacrament Father James Hayes. (*Father Hayes currently serves at Saint Jean's, NYC*). The Salas Family are Associates of San Antonio.

columns for the monthly NAS newsletter distributed throughout the country to promote nocturnal prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, especially with weekend Forty Hour Devotions. For further information and support, or if you wish to have a chapter in your community to build on your prayer life and that of the Congregations, contact info@nashqusa.org and www.nationalnocturnaladorationsociety.org. Furthermore, NAS materials are still available from the SSS USA headquarters in Highland Heights, including the Office of the Blessed Sacrament. Contact Mona Grigsby-Suarez if you need materials, at (505) 239-1019 (*mobile*) or mgrigsby-suarez@blessedsacrament.com. (*email*).

NB: Part of this history comes from the NAS information sheet/website and *Fifty Years at Saint Jean Baptiste (1900-1950)* by Joseph Lamontagne SSS.