



SSS Grapevine

An Internal Publication of the
Province of Saint Ann (USA)
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

August 27, 2025 – 2025.22

A Texas-sized Welcome for Father General

From Saturday, August 16th until Friday, August 22nd, Blessed Sacrament (SSS) Father Philip Benzy Romician SSS, Superior General of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, Father John Thomas Lane SSS, Provincial Superior, and Mona Grigsby-Suarez, Director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE) embarked on their canonical visit to the great state of Texas and the ministries of the SSS in Houston, San Antonio and Laredo in Texas. The pictures we share following this article highlight part of the story of the fantastic hospitality from our parish in Houston, Corpus Christi Roman Catholic Church, San Antonio's Downtown Saint Joseph Church, and the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament in this Archdiocese, and the pastoral visit with the Nocturnal Adoration Society and Bishop James Tamayo of Laredo, Texas.

Father Benzy spent time with each of the SSS religious in surveying their life, ministry, community life, prayer, worship, and physical well-being. He interviewed each religious privately. In Houston, the local SSS community shared mouth-watering meals, prepared by various religious: Fathers Sekar, Thomas Smithson, Jaime Rodriguez Reyes, Christian Christopher, and novice Matthew Vlastelica. Saturday afternoon, the 16th, Father General presented a meditation to the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament. He instructed them on a few things: some initial history of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament during Father Eymard's time, the theology of the Eucharist "before the Eucharist," during the Eucharist, and "after the Eucharist," and effective ways of living a truly Eucharistic life. Father Benzy preached at all the weekend Masses. After the Saturday evening Mass, the Associates shared a fabulous potluck, accompanied by special gift presentations, including a painting of Saint Peter Julian Eymard by parishioner Joan Steinman. On Sunday afternoon, the Hispanic Community hosted a Latino cultural festival featuring delicious food, dancing, and other experiences to share with Father Benzy, highlighting the parish's heritage from their homelands across Central America. On Monday, August 25, Father Benzy spent time with

the Pastoral Staff of Corpus Christi, learning about the highlights of the parish's ministry and meeting key leaders who joined for lunch.

On Tuesday, August 26, Father Benzy, Father Lane, and Mona traveled to San Antonio to meet with Father Arul Tharcus SSS, the pastor of Saint Joseph Downtown, and the new parochial vicar, Father Anthony Trang Pham SSS. Father Arul is from India and just moved to the parish in June. He would be installed as pastor on Saturday, August 23. Father Anthony is from Vietnam. All five of us traveled to meet the Vicar for Clergy for the Archdiocese of San Antonio, Father John Mefridge, to meet with him for paperwork for the new priests to the Archdiocese, plus provide an overview of the many gifts of the Archdiocese of San Antonio. That night, the Associates of San Antonio (*just over 50*) gathered for a special Mass and reception with Father Benzy. The group celebrated the special votive Mass of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and enjoyed an inspiring presentation about the procession of the Blessed Sacrament that the Associates organize for the Archdiocese each year. The videos and presentations highlighted the moving witness of this faith tradition. Fathers Benzy and Arul encourage the continued growth of living the *Project of Life* in all its aspects, and the special home that they will have at Saint Joseph as they continue their formation and invite new members to join.

On Tuesday, amid record heat, the three amigos (*Father Benzy, Father Lane, and Mona*) drove to Laredo for a special meeting and presentation by the Nocturnal Adoration Society (NAS). For your recollection, this international organization came to the United States with the First National Eucharistic Congress in Washington, DC, in 1895. New York Archbishop Michael Corrigan, in his letter of invitation to NYC in 1900, asked the SSS to become the spiritual leaders of this organization and ministry, which we did until 2015, when the leadership moved to Laredo and requested the Most Reverend Bishop James Tamayo of the Diocese of Laredo to be their host and spiritual guide. Since then, Mr. Raul Mendoza has led both the Spanish and English-speaking branches of this ministry from their office in Laredo, Texas. Father Benzy blessed this office. We also met for lunch with the bishop and other leaders of the NAS, including Rafael Emilio Gracia, Sr, Benjamin De La Garza, Selene Sanchez, and two priests from the Diocese of Laredo who have assisted with spiritual talks. With Bishop Tamayo waiting for Pope Leo XIV to accept his letter of resignation, which had been submitted a year ago, the bishop stated that neither he nor his successor would be available to assist. However, with the NAS returning to many of its roots in Eymardian writings, Father Lane offered to serve as the spiritual advisor once again, as provincials have been for over a hundred years, to the NAS.

Father Benzy and his group drove back to Houston on Wednesday, enjoying some classic Americana at a rest stop and savoring Texas BBQ during their visit. They departed early on Friday, August 22, leaving behind wonderful memories of their time in Texas, as vast as the

state itself. Thank you to everyone in Texas for your warm hospitality, kindness, and Eucharistic witness!



Local SSS community with Deacon William, Fathers Sekar (pastor), Lane (provincial), Benzy (superior general), Christian (hospital chaplain, Jaime (parochial vicar) pause for a photo after the concelebrated Mass. Missing from the photo is Father Thomas Smithson who was busy ministering in the hospital.



Father Benzy with the image of Eymard painting, by parishioner of Corpus Christi Parish, Joan Steinman



Father Benzy receiving gifts and a message from Father Sekar and Greg Dufour, associate and local leader, and national chair of the Province Associate Council



A Texas baseball cap is a big hit



Father Jaime leads exposition prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, with his poem and benediction



Matachinas tradition continues with praise and worship of God and lead us to the parish hall for a cultural festival



Many cultural groups share their native dances and culture



Father Jaime gives Father General a traditional poncho

A Poem Written for the General Superior Visit

*by Jaime Ario Rodriguez Reyes SSS
Corpus Christi Church, Houston, Texas, August 17, 2025*

Oh, holy Host, pure radiant light,
a hidden mystery beyond all sight.
Your throne is humble, your altar love,
pain bows before you, as do heav'n above.

Oh sacred Body, Host of light,
the same that hung on Calvary's height.
Oh precious Blood, chalice of peace,
a flowing spring that will never cease.

Blessed and praised be you, O Lord,
in every chapel, in one accord.
Jesus in the Eucharist, with us abide,
among your people, stay by our side.

(Father Reyes serves at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Houston, and is from the SSS Colombian Province. This was read in Spanish, Latin, and English by the youth of the parish during a special Holy Hour after the 1:30 PM Mass.)



A visit to the Corpus Christi campus and a short visit with the preschool of our Catholic school



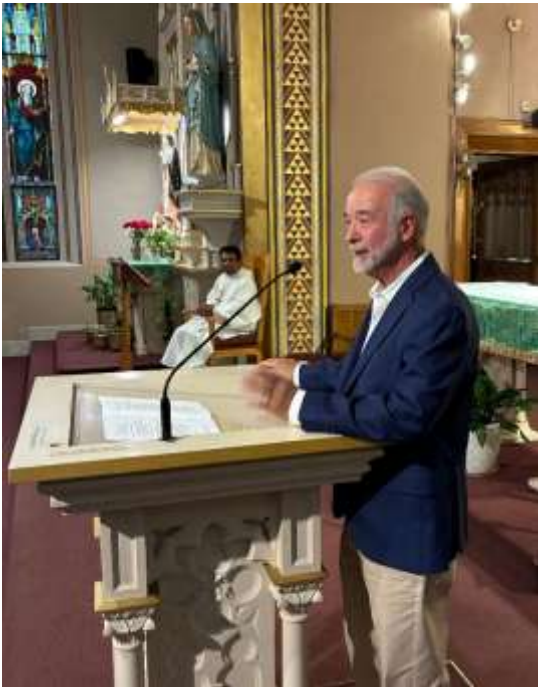
New SSS parochial Vicar, Father Anthony, join Mona and Father Benzy in front of the Alamo and the Cathedral of San Fernando



Local community, Father Anthony and Father Arul on the ends, meet with the Vicar for Clergy, John Mefridge



Parish staff of Downtown Saint Joseph Parish at a concelebrated Mass



Local Associates leader, Dr Billy Stewart, welcomes and addresses Father Benzy and the congregation gathered



In social hall for a potluck supper and a presentation on the ministry of the associates. Father Benzy shares that the 400+ associates are part of the 12,755 associates across the globe registered at the Generalate in Rome



Special thank you of recognition to retiring Diocese of Laredo, Texas Bishop James Tamayo with the Nocturnal Adoration Society's leaders. President Raul Mendoza holds the plaque



Blessing of the Nocturnal Adoration Society in the USA headquarters in Laredo, Texas



Father Benzy gives a retreat to the Diocese of Saint Petersburg associates both in person and on live broadcast from the church



Some of the Diocese of Saint Petersburg associates with leadership based at Saint Vincent de Paul in Holiday, Florida, which encompasses 5 parishes in the diocese.



Pastor Father Long (*left*) and parochial vicar (*right*) with Father William Fickel (*middle*), introducing the parishioners of Saint Vincent de Paul parish



Some of the Diocese of Saint Petersburg associates with leadership based at Saint Vincent de Paul in Holiday, Florida, which encompasses 5 parishes in the diocese.



Farm Market run by the Vietnamese community of Saint Vincent de Paul between the Masses



Five new Associates proclaim their promises into the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament with Father General and Father Fickel receiving them



Father Benzy places the Aggregation emblem on a new member



Birthday cake and a special gift to remember the 50th birthday of Father General



Each of the local leaders from the five parishes in the Diocese of Saint Petersburg, Florida



Some 100 of the Associates from the Diocese of Saint Petersburg for the special visit and prayer with Father General and the five new associates who were received into the Eymardian Family

A Florida Getaway Weekend and Visit – Part 1

Father Benzy, Mona, and Father Lane flew early in the morning to make the same “routine” with the Diocese of Saint Petersburg, Florida SSS community and the Associates from 5 different parishes, including the SSS parish Saint Vincent de Paul, Holiday, Florida. Father General enjoyed a Vietnamese-Japanese meal with our local SSS community of Fathers Joseph Thai Tran SSS, Dominic Long Nguyen SSS, and Joselito Hitosis SSS. *(Father William Fickel would join us Saturday night for a special birthday dinner when he returned home from vacation.)* After the visitation of the local SSS religious, Father Benzy had some personal catch-up and office work to do.

On Saturday, August 23, the routine continued with a retreat similar to those held in Northeast Ohio and Houston, attended by 35 in-person Associates and others who streamed online to the church. Father General also preached at the Mass. On Sunday evening, the Aggregation held a special Holy Hour in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, led by Father Fickel, with the induction of new Associates into the Aggregation, witnessed by Father Benzy. After the holy hour, everyone gathered in the social hall for a special 50th birthday dinner and a large cake to celebrate our Father General’s milestone birthday. With all the rain and cooler temperatures this weekend, Father Benzy felt showered with many wonderful blessings during this singular time in his life.

On September 11th, Father Benzy will return to Florida to meet with Father George Dunne SSS and the Associates of the Orlando Diocese. Stay tuned for these pictures and events! Meanwhile, in the coming week, the trio will meet with the Associates in New Mexico, New York, and Norwalk, Connecticut. Thank you for your continued prayers for our safe travels!