



SSS Grapevine

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Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

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The Last Week with the Superior General in the Province of Saint Ann

By John Thomas Lane SSS

The three-week-long canonical visitation of the Province of Saint Ann (USA) with Superior General Father Philip Benzy Romician, SSS continued from August 25 – 30 with a crisscrossing of the USA to visit Associates in two communities that do not have religious of the Blessed Sacrament present, and also the first foundation of the province in New York City at Saint Jean Baptiste.

After Florida, Fathers Benzy and John Thomas Lane, SSS, Provincial Superior, and Mona Grigsby-Suarez, Director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing (CEE), and nicknamed together as the three amigos by our airline flight attendant, traveled to a formerly administered Blessed Sacrament Community parish, **Saint Charles Borromeo, Albuquerque, New Mexico**. This was the only site in the history of the province and the USA Eymardian Family where all three branches were together: sisters, brothers, and priests (SSS), as well as the Associates (*lay and clerics*). As Father Benzy exhorted the members,

You are still the living presence of Eymard, living the charism of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament that Saint Peter Julian Eymard founded on November 17, 1869. Today, you are part of 12,755 (2024 totals) of Associates, living the *Project of Life* and your eucharistic vocation. You bring the fire of the Eucharist to all you do.

Father Benzy spoke to a small group of Associates during a concelebrated Mass with local spiritual director and pastor of the Shrine of Saint Thérèse of the Little Flower, Archdiocesan Priest Father Vincent Chavez. Father Chavez is an honorary Associate of the

Blessed Sacrament, having hosted meetings for the group since the Associates left Saint Charles in 2003. The Associates are once again welcome by the current pastor, Father Timothy Martinez, and will be gathering with local leaders Carolyn Olona, Sheryl Angell, and Patricia Garcia-Zarrate. *(Other leaders from the recent past, the Mullers and Tony Medley, were not able to attend this special Mass and potluck gathering.)*

Father General, Mona, and Father Lane were also able to take a day off with Father Chavez to visit the ancient city of Santa Fe, the oldest continuously inhabited capital in the country (since 1607), and the oldest continuously operating church, San Miguel (since 1610). We saw the famous staircase made by Saint Joseph. The architecture and climate of the city are distinctly different, complemented by outstanding cuisine that reflects the unique nature of New Mexico. We are grateful to Father Martinez and the New Mexican Associates who were able to gather, keeping the history of the Associates alive since 1948 when the SSS arrived in Albuquerque to found a Shrine of the Blessed Sacrament.

After Albuquerque, the “three amigos” flew to New York City to meet with a few of the Associates of New York City at Saint Jean Baptiste for Evening Prayer and a homily by Father Benzy. A dessert reception followed the prayer service. *(Videos will be posted online of his talks.)* Like the other locations Father Benzy visited, he encouraged them to live “before the Eucharist’s Eucharist, live the Eucharist, and live the “after the Eucharist’s Eucharist” to follow more completely the *Project of Life 2* and the *Rule of Life 1*:

Our ideal is to live the mystery of the Eucharist fully and to make known its meaning so that Christ's reign may come and the glory of God be revealed to the world.

This paragraph is in all three of the branches of the Eymardian Family.

The next day, Father General also had a visiting Blessed Sacrament priest from Uganda, Father Simon Peter Zikusooka, join with Father Lane to visit Ascension Cemetery and the SSS plot there. *(Father Simon Peter is here for the summer, making mission appeals for the three communities of our SSS men in Uganda. The Province of Saint Ann founded this mission in 1960, and we appreciate your continued support of this part of the SSS.)* While unable to have a Eucharist at the cemetery, Father General offered a prayer of thanks and gratitude to the men who have served faithfully the Eymardian charism in the USA since 1900. After the cemetery visit, Father Benzy also had the opportunity to tour the Convent of the Sacred Heart, the school of the Religious of the Sacred Heart Sisters, where Father John Kamas SSS serves as chaplain. This ancient Catholic girls' school, K-12 grade, is located in New York's famed Carnegie Hill. Father Benzy met the head of school, Kate Adams.

The evening was spent on some NYC sightseeing, visiting Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Rockefeller Center, the World Trade Center Observatory, and Times Square. For this tour,

visiting SSS General Treasurer from Rome, Father Roel del la Cruz SSS, joined the tour.

Lastly, the three amigos and Father Simon Peter ventured to meet the pastor, where our Associates of Saint Philip, Norwalk, Connecticut, have served since the late 2000s. The late Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, and diocesan priest Father Michael Boccaccio founded the group with Jim Brown, the former CEE Director. Due to his health, Father Boccaccio and the other Associates were unable to participate. Instead, Deacon Jack Mahon, the writer of *Daily Eucharistic Reflections (DER)*, also joined the pastor, Father Sudhir D'Souza, and us. This parish is unique in having a shrine to Saint Peter Julian Eymard, more prominent than the parish's patronal saint. We had an excellent Indian lunch together and strategized how the CEE and the Associates may revive. A challenge for many of our Associates across the country has been regular participation since the COVID pandemic. With the connections that Father Provincial and Mona from the CEE have made, we are planning additional retreats, resources, and encouraging participation in the quarterly meetings that unite Associates across the country with relevant continuing formation.

N.B. Associates will hold their regular quarterly meeting on Saturday, September 6, at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time, 9:00 a.m. Central Time, and 8:00 a.m. Mountain Time. **Personal Meeting ID: 344 104 0850** with the **Passcode of 140644** with the link as:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/3441040850?pwd=tVYw5gCH5GZvm7gNPUyib3K1eWjoDe.1&omn=83428028608>

We are grateful to Father Benzy for his visits from August 3 (*Province Assembly*) until August 30 (*NYC and the first foundation*). He met with each religious of the Province of Saint Ann, and those Associates who wished to come and see him in person. He enjoyed regional food, fellowship, and the Eucharist – celebrating that which unites us in faith to be faithful Eymardian disciples today! **Thank you, Father Benzy, for your kind encouragement, love, and care for the charism that is lived through you!**

P.S. But wait, there is more! On September 11, Father Benzy will meet one of our SSS priests, Father George Dunne SSS, and the Associates serving in the Diocese of Orlando. This last stop, after Father Benzy visits the Philippine Province ministries in Colorado and Hawai'i, will conclude his United States tour before he returns to Rome. We pray for his continued health and well-being as he travels for the next 12 days.



Father General presides at the Mass in Saint Charles Borromeo Church, Albuquerque, with Deacon Louis Hernandez and Father Vincent Chavez praying the Votive Mass for Saint Eymard



In front of the cathedral basilica of Saint Francis in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which is also the capital of the state



At the shrine of Saint Peter Julian Eymard in Eglise Saint Jean Baptiste, New York City, with Father Roel (*left to right*), Mona, Father Benzy, Father Simon Peter, and a NYC Associate



Some of the Albuquerque, New Mexico Associates



Some of the NYC Associates in the SSS Dining Room



At Ascension Cemetery, remembering our beloved dead



Visiting the 9/11 Memorial in New York



Times Square in New York later that night



Saint Peter Julian Eymard shrine at Saint Philip Church, Norwalk, Connecticut



Father General, Mona, Deacon Jack, Fathers Lane, Simon Peter, and Sudhir gather to plan the future for the Associates of Connecticut



Pray for our vocation candidate, Nelson Ruiz, who met with our vocation director as he discerns his vocation with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. Nelson grew up in our SSS parish, Saint Jean's, NYC