



# SSS Grapevine

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Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

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## International SSS Mission Commission Meets in Person for the First Time

By John Thomas Lane SSS



At the November 2023 General Chapter, several commissions were called into service on behalf of the membership of the Blessed Sacrament Community (SSS) across the globe. From the January 2024 appointment to the present, this commission has met three times via Zoom. In the spirit of the Jubilee Year and Pilgrims of Hope, we chose to have our one “in-person meeting” in Rome during this special time of hope in our Catholic Church, to focus on our Eucharistic

mission as a Congregation. We met on September 22 – 26, 2025, at the international headquarters of SSS.

Father Simon Peter Zikusooka from Uganda, in the USA for mission appeals for our three SSS communities during the summer, accompanied me to the meeting at our International SSS headquarters in Rome near the Piazza Bologna. Upon arriving and trying to stay awake after the plane journey, we immediately wanted to pay our respects to Pope Francis and joined the long line at the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. We were captivated by the throngs of pilgrims, never having seen a full basilica on a Saturday morning. Following our visit there, the first time for Father Simon Peter, we journeyed to Saint Paul Outside the Walls to another “holy door” site, one of the seven in Rome during this jubilee time.

Our meeting schedule began with a 7:00 am Eucharist, presided by our Superior General, Father Philip Benzy Romician SSS. Father Benzy set the tone, using the day's readings to remind us that as members of a commission on mission, we must continue to serve the greater mission of the Congregation and make our light shine a little brighter. With Christ's comparison of the lamp set on a stand, Father Benzy stated that our commission assists the Congregation in helping all of us stand as a bright light of faith and hope, building the mission of the church, especially the Congregation's Eucharistic mission.



Members of the Commission, besides Father Simon Peter mentioned above, include Fathers Philip Watkins SSS (*Australia*), Poli Ty SSS (*Philippines, serving in Hawaii – and not able to be in person due to visa complications*), Darren Maslen SSS (*UK*), Marcelo Silva SSS (*Brazil*), Luca Zanchi SSS (*Italy*), Ferdinand Nidiolène SSS (*Senegal, serving in France*) and the convener, Francisco Marquez SSS (*Brazil and consultor on our General Council*).

Father Benzy reminded us that the final message of the General Chapter 36 provides us with guidance and inspiration. It calls us to rediscover the Cenacle as the heart of our mission: a place of encounter, communion, and sending forth to **be the mission**. In this perspective, the work of the International Mission Commission is expected to help the General Administration and geographical regions to animate:

- **Deepen Eucharistic spirituality** so that it may shape our personal lives, our communities, and our apostolates.
- **Strengthen the Eucharistic identity of our apostolate**, ensuring that all our ministries—whether parishes, shrines, centers of adoration, Eucharistic centers, or social commitments— reflect the Eucharistic charism entrusted to us by Saint Peter Julian Eymard.
- **Promote creative and faithful expressions of our charism** that respond meaningfully to the needs of today's Church and world while remaining rooted in our tradition.



To provide input and animation on the draft working paper proposed by the commission, Fathers Philip and Darren, Society of Divine Missionary Father Marcelo Cattáneo, the General Consultor for Mission for the Society of the Divine Word, gave a presentation. *(This may be found on [blessedsacrament.com/Emmanuel](http://blessedsacrament.com/Emmanuel).)* He shared a perspective from his own missionary congregation and discussed ways that the Eucharist challenges us to live it in unique, incarnational ways.

Father Cattáneo, who is from Argentina, has served around the globe, but is now based in Rome for his order, gave three key points for our reconsideration:

- a. Prayerful life: Contemplating reality through God's eyes
- b. Communal Life<sup>1</sup>: sharing that sheds light on what has been contemplated in service
- c. Life in service: what has been contemplated and shared becomes fruit for mission

Once the General Council confirms our final document for the week, the greater Eymard Family will be able to work with the message and proudly serve those who are a part of the Eucharistic institute, always in mission. Our next meeting will be held via Zoom in December. We are grateful to the curia and parish communities for their hospitality and kindness to us, as usual, making us feel at home. On the last day, we had the opportunity to take a tour of Rome, organized by our General Treasurer, Father Roel de la Cruz SSS. In the front row of the picture, he is third from the left. We are also grateful to our regular translator, Joan, who assists us with the French and the English, the languages of our meetings.

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<sup>1</sup> Father Cattáneo used the term “fraternal” but to be more inclusive for all in the Eymard family, the word has been revised for this purpose.



## USA National Liturgy Meeting Focuses on the Hours and Communal Prayer



Each year, liturgists from around the country and even the globe attend the national liturgy meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (*FDLC*). Created in 1969, this organization serves the bishops of the United States in implementing the liturgical documents of the Church, improving worship and prayer, and providing catechesis and programs to support parishes and their liturgical ministries. Each year, a specific topic is chosen, and we rotate among different regions to host the gathering. This year, the event, which is part continuing education and part retreat, was held in Baltimore, Maryland, the first diocese of the USA. The host committee truly highlighted this by having the papal nuncio, Cardinal Christophe Pierre,

preside at the first Mass in the cathedral of the archdiocese, as well as a special Mass at the original cathedral and now basilica of the USA church. (*See to the left the picture with Cardinal Pierre blessing us with the Book of the Gospels.*)

We were blessed with another cardinal, Cardinal Arthur Roche, the prefect appointed by Pope Francis to be in charge of worship and the sacraments across the globe. He is British by birth and possesses a wonderful sense of humor, as well as a distinctive presentation style. While the theme was *the Liturgy of the Hours – the Church at Prayer*, his talk included a broader perspective and reflection on Pope Francis's last apostolic letter on worship, *Desiderio Desideravi*, in English, from Luke 22:15: 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' The pope issued this document on June 29, 2022, and many folks have been unaware of its significance. There are pearls of wisdom in this letter from the pope, and Cardinal Roche has highlighted key aspects that each parish and religious institute should carefully read and study.



The former Abbot Primate of the Order of Saint Benedict and the worldwide Benedictine Confederation, Abbot Gregory Polan, gave our second keynote address. Having recently retired from his international role, Abbot Polan is back at his home abbey, Conception Abbey in Missouri. Abbot Polan is responsible for translating the psalms into a new English text. This will be used in the revised *Liturgy of the Hours* and the *Lectionary for Mass*. His “Grail Psalms” project, which began in 1998 and was approved in 2018, is something we are eager to receive. Unfortunately, it will be another two years before the revised *Liturgy of the Hours* will be available for our use in the USA. Meanwhile, during his address, Polan gave a “retreat” on the importance of the psalms, highlighting in a mystical style specific psalms, their reason for “being,” and several of them for our own personal use and praying. It was a master class that everyone wished had been videotaped for continued enjoyment. Lastly, several workshops focused on the *Liturgy of the Hours*, its history and theology, music, and the *General Introduction*.

The Hours are the Prayer of the Church, and it is up to every parish to implement them and celebrate them well, especially the key hours of Morning and Evening Prayer. Key suggestions highlighted ways we may implement and/or improve this “prayer of the church.” In future community meetings and Province Aggregation Quarterly Meetings, I hope to share this wisdom to expand our usage of the *Liturgy of the Hours*.

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