



SSS Grapevine

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New Members join the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament

by Greg Dufour, Province Aggregation Council Chair and Local Leader, Houston, Texas



This summer, the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament returned to the original name penned by our founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the third branch of his “society,” the **Aggregation** of the Blessed Sacrament. The General Council urged us in the United States to return to the “original” name of this third branch in the family of Eymard, following the founder’s wishes and the church’s Canon Law. In honor of this, new members of the Aggregation made their promises using a revised formula from the second edition of the Project of Life (*also the name Father Eymard gave it when he wrote it*).

Recently, new members joined the Aggregation: On November 14, 2025, Tom Canare, who completed his formation online with others and is from the Philadelphia area, attended the Northeast Ohio Aggregation Retreat Day to complete his promise ceremony in person, receiving the emblem and signing the official promise formula. Tom joined three others for online formation as an Aggregate, led by Mary Muehle, over the past year. He made his promise in a Zoom meeting with Father John Thomas Lane SSS, and Father William Fickel SSS, the spiritual director of the Aggregation. Tom will be a member of the Aggregation's Northeast Ohio branch. He attended the annual retreat day for NEO Aggregates and, at its conclusion, participated in the Mass, receiving his emblem and signing his promise in front of the congregation. (*See the photo to the left*), with Tom and Father Lane SSS and Father Fickel to the left.)



At Corpus Christi Parish in Houston, Texas, the community welcomed new Aggregates (*Associates*) with their Formator Father Christian Christopher SSS. On Sunday, November 23, 2025, five new Aggregates made their initial Promise Commitment, joined by current Aggregates who renewed their Promise. Father Christian Christopher SSS shared a few words about Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the founding of the Aggregation and Congregation. He thanked the Aggregation for their commitment to their Eucharistic vocation and support in sharing in the mission of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament.



Our new Aggregates (*from left to right in the photo*) are formator Jim Ziegler, Aggregates Carmela Nelson, Vivian Hageney, Father Christian Christopher SSS, Remigius Arokiasamy, Venus Arevalo, Jude Herbolario, and formator Greg Dufour.

We are grateful to these women and men who wish to live their Eucharistic charism and vocation within the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Father General Addresses the Members of the USA Aggregation

From the notes of Very Reverend Philip Benzy Romician SSS, and edited by John Thomas Lane SSS

The quarterly national meeting of the Province of Saint Ann Aggregation met on Saturday, November 29, from 10 – 11:30 am EST, with members joining from Maine to Texas, and



from Florida to Ohio. Father General, Philip Benzy Romician SSS addressed the group from his headquarters office in Rome, Italy, during his six hours ahead of and nighttime there.

Father General gave an overview of his canonical visit to the USA in August and September 2025. It was a first for a Superior General from Rome to come and visit as many of the Aggregation as possible throughout the country. A real effort was made to help him meet and understand the reality of the USA Province. He shared:

1. It was a wonderful experience to encounter the members of the Aggregation in different communities across the country.
2. I witnessed how the members are migrant, enthusiastic, committed, and passionate about the Eucharistic charism.
3. Many of you demonstrate deep knowledge of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and a genuine love for the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.
4. I saw in you a tremendous desire to understand and live the charism of the Aggregation—not just in words, but in daily life.
5. It was clear that you received a solid, periodic formation and accompaniment, which is essential for growth in a Eucharistic vocation.
6. I must highlight, with gratitude, the dedicated accompaniment provided by Fr. John Thomas Lane, SSS, Provincial Superior, and Ms. Mona Grigsby-Suarez, and all other province leaders, whose commitment to organizing meetings, planning sessions, and preparing formation programs is genuinely admirable. *(Father General commented that it is so wonderful that you have a Province Council of leadership for the Aggregation.)*
7. For me, it is deeply satisfying to see the Aggregates living out the Eucharistic charism with conviction and joy.

Then Father Benzy went on to give a spiritual talk and reflection on the role of being a member of the Aggregation today:

1. Remember your ultimate call. Your goal, your objective, your identity as Aggregates is to live and to make fully known the Eucharistic mystery. This is not optional—it is your baptismal and vocational mission. “Our Lord wants you to be apostles of the Eucharist.”

2. Ensure your formation is intentionally Eucharistic. Your formation programs—spiritual, theological, human—must always lead you back to the central objective: To grow in your understanding and living of the Eucharist. Formation should help you:

- deepen your love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament,

- grow in interiority and spirituality,
- and acquire the skills to witness to Christ in the world.

3. Remember that the Eucharistic mission begins with *being*. Many people can perform works of charity or service, but only a Eucharistic disciple can bring Christ's presence, gentleness, and compassion into these works. Your mission flows from:

- who you are,
- what Christ is forming in you,
- and how deeply you are rooted in His Eucharistic love.

The Eucharist transforms your interior life so that your exterior mission becomes fruitful.

4. Ask yourselves: How can we *live* the Eucharist concretely every day? This is the fundamental question for every Aggregate. Practical ways include:

- Bringing a Eucharistic attitude into your family: patience, forgiveness, gentleness.
- Living a spirit of thanksgiving daily.
- Making time for Eucharistic adoration, even short visits.
- Participating actively and consciously in the Eucharist.
- Bringing Christ's presence into your workplace or community.
- Being persons of reconciliation and unity.
- Engaging in simple acts of kindness that radiate Christ.

Father Benzy highlighted some goals for each Aggregate member:

1. Overcoming Spiritual Amnesia and nurturing Spiritual Stamina. One of the subtle dangers in our spiritual journey is what we may call "spiritual amnesia"—the tendency to forget God's constant presence in our lives. God blesses, guides, and protects us continually, yet we often become distracted or indifferent and fail to recognize His loving action. To overcome spiritual amnesia, we must nurture our spiritual stamina. Just as we engage in various exercises to stay physically fit, we must invest effort in prayer, adoration, reflection, and fidelity to the Eucharist to remain spiritually strong and attentive to God's voice.

2. Becoming a "Silent Homily." Our life is called to be a silent homily. Our gestures, our relationships, the way we speak, listen, and serve—our very presence—should communicate the Gospel. Today, more than ever, the world needs people who preach God through their lives: through simplicity, compassion, integrity, and Eucharistic charity.

This type of preaching is not only necessary but deeply effective, for it is rooted in

authenticity and daily witness.

3. Living the Gift of Self in the Spirit of St. Peter Julian Eymard. As members of the Eymardian family, associated with the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, we are called to walk along the path he traced—a path marked by profound self-giving. The gift of self is the offering of one's will to God. It is not passivity, nor is it a denial of our abilities. Rather, it is a form of active discipleship, a readiness to embrace God's will and to collaborate with his grace. To live the gift of self is to participate wholeheartedly in the mission of Christ present in the Eucharist, allowing our life to become an offering of love.

After some clarification, Father General addressed the questions and other topics the Aggregation brought to his attention during his time with us on Zoom. We are most grateful for this further "visit," feeling like another pastoral visitation of the province. As he wished us a wonderful, prayerful Advent season, we wished him the same, and fruitful General Council meetings in Madrid, Spain.



Photo of the many participants (*screen one of two*) in the Zoom meeting – we especially enjoyed having the Waterville Community of the Sister Servants of the Blessed Sacrament present.

New SSS Parochial Vicar Arrives from Uganda in East Africa

On December 3, 2025, the parish community of Église Saint Jean Baptiste in New York City (*Manhattan*) welcomed Father Fred Bugembe SSS. Father Fred is the latest international religious to serve for the next four years in the United States as parochial vicar of our mother-parish in the Province of Saint Ann. A process that began 14 months ago is now complete with the smiling, wonderful presence of our first Ugandan SSS religious.

Father Fred will join the community of Fathers John Kamas and James Hayes, both natives of the parish of Saint Jean's. Father Fred was born in Masaka, Uganda, on June 13, 1992. He is the second of five boys and two girls. He learned about religious life during his novitiate in Senegal and pronounced his vows on September 8, 2017. Father Fred studied for the priesthood in the Philippines with our SSS there, returned to Uganda for his diaconate experience, and was ordained a priest on February 2, 2024.



In his short time as a priest, he has enjoyed celebrating the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, and serving as a chaplain to the parish's youth. We look forward to his presence as we end our 125th anniversary jubilee year, which began at Saint Jean's in 1900 and continues today, as the American SSS was sent on a mission to Uganda and created Eucharistic communities. Now, for the first time, an SSS Uganda mission comes to serve in the USA, and the parish and Shrine of Saint Anne, where all those good benefactors over the years have supported our SSS missions.

We are blessed to have you, Father Fred! Welcome to the United States to serve with God's people!