



SSS Grapevine

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Province of Saint Ann (USA)
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament
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Brother Matthew Professes First Vows in Houston



We congratulate Brother Matthew Vlastelica SSS for completing his first stage of formation in religious life, completing his novitiate, and professing the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (SSS) on Sunday, August 2, 2026, at the 9:00 AM Eucharist at Corpus Christi Catholic Church, Houston, Texas. This day is special to the congregation: it is the solemnity of our founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard. For the last two years, Brother Matthew has been under the tutelage of Father Paul Raj Gnanasekar SSS (*also known as “Father Sekar” on loan to us from the Province of India*), the Novice Director. The profession of vows culminates the two years of the novitiate. Brother Matthew joined the

SSS through our parish in New York City, Église Saint Jean Baptiste, and this religious community. Born and raised in Sydney, Australia, he moved to New York to work as a construction manager, earning his bachelor's degree. Discovering our parish, he was encouraged by the local SSS community, the sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame-Montreal, and the parishioners. His postulancy was then at the SSS provincialate and parish Saint Paschal Baylon, Highland Heights, Ohio (SPB). He also completed six months of his novitiate, January – June 2026, at our SSS community in Liverpool, England, as part of an immersion experience. He will return to SPB to pursue his studies toward the priesthood, with Father Norman



Father Provincial Lane is presiding of the rite, with Fathers Smithson, Christopher, and Pham behind Brother Matthew. On the table is the Rule of Life and the Book of Profession



Fathers Lane & Sekar with Brother Matthew

Pelletier SSS as his director. He will Zoom with the Catholic Theological Union (CTU) in Chicago, Illinois, and, from time to time, participate in CTU campus events.

In the seventy-year history of Corpus Christi Church, there has never been the celebration of the rite of religious profession of vows. The excellent choir, other liturgical ministers, Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, the SSS Houston Community, and Father Sekar provided excellent hospitality. The ritual begins with a renewal of Brother Matthew's and the congregation's baptismal covenant through the Sprinkling Rite. Then, before the homily, the candidate is presented to the congregation for approval of the

vows. After the homily, the provincial superior, Very Reverend John Thomas Lane SSS, led the ritual with Father Sekar. Brother Matthew read the ritual from the *Rule of Life*, received his own copy of it, received the SSS logo necklace cross, and signed the *Book of Profession* in front of the entire congregation. After communion, Father Sekar and Brother Matthew each spoke a moment of gratitude. *(This video is online in the video vocation section of "blessedsacrament.com.")*

Also, during the Mass, presided over by the provincial, he gave an anniversary gift to the parish of a tapestry of the USA SSS province's patron saint, Saint Ann, in thanksgiving for the 39 years the SSS have been present, the inspiration for the icon/tapestry, Father Sekar, and the artist present, Joan Steinman.

We pray for Brother Matthew's continued vocation and education journey with the SSS and for other men to join in our Eucharistic charism and mission.



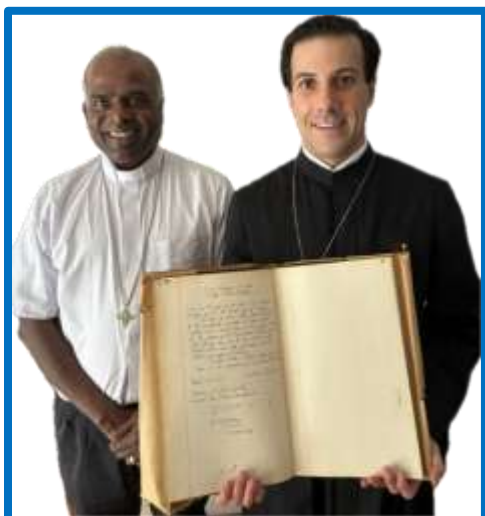
Photos above and below from the three-day event of the Eymard Triduum, celebrating Eymard and Brother Matthew: Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament Annual Reception and Farewell to Brother Matthew.



Fellow Knights of Columbus join in the celebration and support for Brother Matthew



Tapestry of Saint Ann



Our local SSS Community in Houston, with Father Tom Smithson visiting (far left) from San Antonio. Others, left to right, Fathers Christian Christopher, Sekar, Lane, Jaime Reyes, and Anthony Pham to the far right, surrounding Brother Matthew.

Father Anthony Completes CPE



Father Anthony is to the right of Father Jaime Ario Rodriguez Reyes SSS – SSS Colombia who serves on the staff of Corpus Christi, with both of them sharing a joy-filled breakfast with the photographer

Father Anthony Pham, SSS, on loan for the Province of the Martyrs in Vietnam, just completed his summer unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) to be certified to work in the Catholic Chaplain Hospitals of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, Texas. Father Anthony, having studied for a Master of Theology degree that brought him to the USA a few years back, began serving briefly at Downtown Saint Joseph Catholic Church in San Antonio, Texas, last September 2025. Then, with the need for some personnel moves within the USA SSS Province, Father

Anthony came to Houston in May 2026 to take this important three-month class and prepare for hospital chaplaincy. He is now working at two hospitals in the central medical center of Houston, near where he lives at our SSS parish of Corpus Christi.

Father Anthony's highlights in the classes were the ways they helped him learn about cultural sensitivities, listening skills, and how to interact with a wide range of patients, including those from other religions and faith traditions. During his first studies for the priesthood in Vietnam, there was no CPE training, so he found this invaluable in developing his pastoral skills. Now, during his hospital chaplaincy, he will work primarily with Catholic patients and is looking forward to celebrating the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, sharing Holy Communion, celebrating Mass at the hospital's chapel, and giving blessings. We are grateful to Father Anthony for his willingness to serve in the special ministry and, when available, celebrate Mass at Corpus Christi. We are grateful to our anonymous benefactor who provided the scholarship for Father Anthony's summer CPE.

Sister Dianne Bergant CSA Celebrates 90 Years



From her keynote address at
our 2016 SSS Congress

Agnesian Sister Dianne Bergant has been a longtime friend of the SSS, giving retreats and talks at some of our SSS events, contributing to *Emmanuel Magazine*, and teaching generations of our SSS seminarians at CTU. On August 1, 2026, CTU, with the support of several religious congregations and individual donors, including the SSS, honored her by establishing a new scholarship fund for her 90th birthday. In the two weeks leading up to her birthday, the newly endowed scripture study fund in her name collected more than \$100,000. Sister Dianne continues to lead reflection groups for CTU students via Zoom from her religious congregation's mother house in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. She writes and gives workshops still when her schedule allows. We congratulate Sister Dianne and wish her many more years of

service with great
health and

happiness in semi-retirement" from daily teaching
at CTU.



Shortly after her first profession of vows
with the Congregation of Saint Agnes in
Wisconsin

Please Pray for Our Provincial Chapter this Week

Our Provincial Chapter 27 is now here at Regina Health Center in Richfield, Ohio, for two days, and at Saint Paschal Baylon in Highland Heights, Ohio, for the others. Our chapter is held at two sites so that our community of seven at Regina can participate in the primary days. We are blessed to be together with 23 SSS from the Province of Saint Ann present in person (*one will Zoom*), 12 from our international provinces and their convention of transfers, our representative from the General Team (*Father Francisco Junior Marques SSS*), two Sisters Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, and our provincial staff will be present. Sister Rosemary Brennan of the Congregation of Saint Joseph will be our facilitator. Thank you for your prayers this week!



Prayer for the 2026 Provincial Chapter Abound in Hope

Divine Source of Wisdom and Light
we pray to ask for your presence in our midst
for you are the guiding force of our decision-making
and are the fabric of Eucharistic love that binds our province together.
We are grateful for your care for us and the years of guidance.
that helps us to serve in unity.
Give us the strength to collaborate
with the essential matters that forge our future.
May we see the complexities before us
and with your Spirit make long-term choices
that navigate our future with courage and empathy.
With your Spirit, may we listen to your inspiration
and achieve remarkable things together.
May the inspiration of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament
and our holy founder, Saint Peter Julian,
support us still in our mission to serve you.
Through Christ our Eucharist. Amen.