

Eucharistic Associates

by Jim Brown

On Thursday, November 11, 2010, an historic event took place. Eight lay women and men associated with the province of Saint Ann of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament expressed their promise to become an “Associate of the Blessed Sacrament” and be inspired by the *Rule of Life for the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament*.



At a special ceremony during the Liturgy of the Eucharist, these women and men joined the newly-formed Association with these words: *“In wishing to live my baptismal consecration according to Saint Peter Julian Eymard’s charism, I want to place the Paschal Mystery at the center of my life, interiorizing it in prayer and sharing with people the life following from it.”*

These eight lay people represented women and men who have over the last 20 years associated themselves with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament as liturgical ministers, staff people and participants in the Eucharistic Evangelizing ministry of the Congregation called *Life in the Eucharist*.

The participants in the installation ceremony were:

- Parishioners from St. Paschal Baylon Parish in Cleveland, Ohio: Louise Borgione, Marjorie and Frank Zalar.
- Parishioners from Corpus Christi Parish in Houston, Texas: Patty and Bubba Pizzitola, Nancy MacRoberts and Noreen Hoard.
- Susan Work and Jim Brown, who work for the Province.

The idea among the Blessed Sacrament religious of sharing their life and mission with the laity has been for nearly twenty years at the core of Provincial and General Chapters as an integral part of the Eucharistic renewal taking place within the Congregation. This is part of a broader movement in the post-Conciliar Church where religious communities have actively sought ways to involve committed lay persons meaningfully in their life and mission.

From the beginning, Saint Peter Julian Eymard desired to share his charism and Eucharistic mission with the laity. He formed the *Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament*, and left a considerable amount of manuscripts that witness this commitment – which lasted until his death – of defining his proposal of

Eucharistic life for the laity, giving an organization to respond to the various interests and circumstances of the people.

At the 33rd General Chapter in 2005, it was decided that the Congregation needed a clear proposal, at an inspirational and organizational level, for those lay persons who were asking to share the Congregation’s charism and mission as members of a publicly recognized associative membership. A new set of guidelines was formulated for the Aggregation to express a renewed vision of associative life for the laity that takes into consideration a reorientation to the *Rule of Life* of the Congregation. The document was published in 2009 and called *Project of Life* by the Generalate and has been re-titled in the province of St. Ann the *Rule of Life for Associates*. It stems from the long tradition in the Blessed Sacrament family, which, starting from Fr. Eymard, gave life to a “Public Association of lay faithful” called Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, in order to share the Eucharistic mission with the laity. Former expressions of these associative groups were the *Peoples’ Eucharistic League* and the *Guard of Honor*.

In pledging their desire to become a member of the canonically constituted Association, these 8 women and men committed themselves to the following:

- On-going formation and education focused on the Eucharist being at

Continued on next page...

Eucharistic Associates...Continued from previous page

- the center of their lives.
- Putting the celebration of the Eucharist at the center of their spirituality.
- A commitment to the prayer of contemplation and adoration.
- To participate in and pray the Liturgy of the Hours.
- To celebrate the various feasts special to the Congregation, e.g., the feast of St. Peter Julian Eymard on August 2, the day of his baptism on February 5th, the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament on May 13, to name a few.
- To share in and participate in the Eucharistic evangelizing mission of the Congregation.

At the close of the ceremony and following a public signing of the "Formula of the Promise," these 8 women and men received from the Superior General of the Congregation, Father Fiorenzo Salvi SSS, a special

medal designed for the induction. On one side is the logo for the Congregation (*the cup and bread within the globe*) and on the other side, a relief of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

The event was truly moving. It brought tears to both inductees and religious who were present. Comments about the ceremony included: *"It was an awesome and unforgettable experience."* *"Simply, thanksgiving!"* *"I felt such joy in finally accomplishing what we so long ago requested!"* *"I was so touched and grateful for being asked."* One couple put it this way: *"It was a validation of a ministry we have participated in for 20 years. It was a truly humbling experience and something we have both worked and prayed for over the course of many years, and look forward to the day that so many other existing associates are inducted into the Association."* And finally, a comment which expresses what many

current "associates" feel: *"We are so thankful and exhilarated to have been chosen by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament to assist them in their mission of setting the world on fire with the Eucharist."*

As indicated earlier, these women and men represent many other dedicated lay persons throughout the province who have been associated with the Congregation in spirit and ministry over the last twenty years. As one of the newly received Associates said: "I am eager to share the charism of St. Peter Julian Eymard with my fellow parishioners and others who more deeply live the Eucharist as a way of life, in the hopes that they, too, will find contentment in becoming Lay Associates." Ceremonies will be planned in the various Blessed Sacrament communities to induct additional women and men into the Eucharistic Association. ✠



[L-R] Jim Brown, Susan Work, Nancy MacRoberts, Bubba Pizzitola, Patty Pizzitola, Father Norman Pelletier sss, Noreen Hoard, Louise Borgione, Marjorie Zalar, Frank Zalar

