

# Bread Broken & Shared

A Newsletter for friends of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament of the Province of Saint Ann

## 150th Anniversary of the Founding of the Congregation

by Norman B. Pelletier, SSS

It all began on a cold January day in the heart of Paris. The occasion was the feast of the Epiphany and the little chapel on Rue d'Enfer had been scrubbed clean. Fresh flowers had been carefully placed by the altar and a simple array of candles adorned the wooden throne upon which the first solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament was to take place. Peter Julian Eymard wrote a few days later to a friend: *"What a joy for us to see Jesus, our King, on January 6, mount his throne for the first time, to manifest his presence in this unique way! My heart was too full for words to express my feelings."* The year was 1856 and the moment marked the beginning of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

That was 150 years ago. Since that defining moment, the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament has grown and expanded to every continent on the globe. From that first simple chapel in Paris, France, St. Peter Julian's eucharistic inspiration has taken shape in a multitude of exquisite shrines of adoration and in an even greater number of fully active eucharistic parishes. Presently, like many religious communities, the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament is facing serious growth problems in North America and Europe, however, the numbers are steadily increasing in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Amidst the changes in our Church and world, the eucharistic charism of St. Peter Julian Eymard continues unwaveringly to inspire and to lead people to the mystery of the Eucharist as the center of Christian living.

One hundred and fifty years is a wonderful milestone to celebrate. Apart from celebrations in all of our communities and parishes and a special reunion in Cleveland, Ohio, that we hope to hold for many of our friends and former students and members, our deepest desire is a greater appreciation for our eucharistic mission to the Church and Society. This 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, if it is to have any meaning and lasting implications, must be a serious time of spiritual renewal for all of us, disciples of St. Peter Julian Eymard. His legacy to the Church is best defined by the living tabernacles that harbor the real presence of Christ in the souls of Christians.



May that Epiphany in 1856 in Paris continue to reveal to all of us – 150 years later – the precious gift we have in the Eucharist. I invite all of you, our readers, to give thanks to God for the eucharistic vocation we have all received at baptism. We have been set on a journey that requires food from heaven which will ultimately transform us into the One who feeds us, the Bread of Life Himself. Help us celebrate who we are, who you are, in this small but still vibrant and vital eucharistic family under the protection and inspiration of St. Peter Julian Eymard. ☒

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