



# SSS Grapevine

An Internal Publication of the Province of Saint Ann,  
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for the  
Eymardian Family

April 17, 2023 – 2023.5

## Pastoral Visit to the Southwest – April 10-15, 2023

Many know the USA Province of Saint Ann's history and how Donald E. Pelotte SSS, our provincial superior in 1986, was chosen bishop for the Diocese of Gallup, New Mexico. This diocese straddles two states, New Mexico and Arizona – the territory of the Navajo Nation. Until his retirement in 2009, Bishop Pelotte had a great devotion and love for Saint Michael Catholic Indian School (SMIS) in the town of the same name in Arizona. After his untimely death and that of his twin brother, Father Dana G. Pelotte SSS, in 2014, I distributed the Bishop Pelotte trust, sharing funds earmarked for this pre-K thru 12<sup>th</sup> grade Catholic school founded in 1902 by Saint Katherine Drexel. *(It is the only remaining elementary school still in existence founded by this great saint of Philadelphia who founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, devoted to the Eucharist and ministry to Native and Black Americans. This religious congregation is a cousin to our Eymardian family since Saint Katherine borrowed excerpts from our Constitutions to form her own. One sister, Sister Marilyn, is in the picture with Dot Teso, who serves at the school.)*



*Sister Marilyn and Dot Teso*

After the distribution of the Pelotte Trust, the school contacted me to thank me, and SMIS president Dot Teso and I met while I was on summer vacation in 2015 in Albuquerque. At that lunch, we brainstormed about continuing the partnership of bringing the Eucharistic spirituality and programs to the students of this school – something very near and dear to the heart of Bishop Pelotte. Our Blessed Sacrament parish, Saint Paschal Baylon (SPB), Highland Heights, Ohio, developed a partnership with Saint Michael's and our SPB youth minister, Evamarie Mickol



*Students with beds made by students of Saint Paschal Baylon*

Cross, and I enlisted the teen Life in the Eucharist Retreats (LITE) from our SPB's youth group to fly to SMIS. In our service trips, we not only shared LITE retreats but also special Masses, raised funds and donated hymnals, built beds for a newly remodeled retreat center, and painted and tutored students each Easter break until the pandemic. Even during the summer, Associates Chris and Tom Anderson, chaperones from our first trip, continued to share a summer workshop each for math and college readiness.

While I could not bring our youth group this time, I promised to return "when things got better" and have a special Easter Mass and vocation talks with the students. I visited April 10 - 11. The students gave me a tour of how the place has improved and how they continue to cope with the RSV (*respiratory syncytial virus*) pandemic that is currently striking the Navajo Nation. SMIS aims to have students come to SPB and share a service project.



*Associates Gathering*



*Saint Charles Borromeo Parishioner Potluck*

On Wednesday, April 12, I met with former parishioners, Blessed Sacrament Community benefactors, Associates of the Blessed Sacrament, and Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church (SCB) staff in Albuquerque. For many years, all three branches of the Eymardian Family were in Albuquerque, one of the rare places Eymard's dream was alive. (*Our congregation came to Albuquerque in 1948, founded a shrine dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, began the Peoples' Eucharist League and Associates, and later moved to Saint Charles Borromeo to combine the shrine and parish in*



1966.) The Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (*currently in Pueblo, Colorado, and Waterville, Maine*) also served the parish. They assisted in forming the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament from 1986 until their departure in 1997. The potluck was delicious, as always, and Deacon Louis Hernandez gave me a tour of the updated campus.



Knowing that I was coming and that a few students were interested in the religious life and not being diocesan priests, a few parishioners contacted the Chesterton Academy, a new private-Catholic high school, for me to do a vocation presentation and discernment with students. This was an unexpected opportunity to meet these juniors and their

headmaster. A few of us are pictured here in the Blessed Sacrament Shrine. In the photo, you can also see the Stations of Eymard that inspired the *Novena with Saint Peter Julian Eymard*, a project I am currently revising!

Later that day, I celebrated a Mass with the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament and pastor of the Shrine of the Little Flower of Saint Therese, a diocesan priest Father Vincent Chavez. A few parishioners also attended, with a special octave of Easter Mass accompanied by music, servers, and incense! We, too, had a potluck gathering to catch up. I had hoped to meet with Santa Fe's Archbishop John Wester, but this did not occur. Instead, I visited our homebound Associate board leaders, Kathy and Tony Medley, who have been hit hard by illnesses this past year. We pray for their health.



*Sprinkling Rite at Saint Michael's Indian School*

Lastly, another event brought to the Southwest at this time was my goddaughter's First Communion, Kaylin Luna's, and her cousin Mateo's baptism. Knowing that her parish San Clemente, Los Lunas, always celebrates this sacrament of grace on

Saturday of the Octave of Easter, I joined the family and participated in these celebrations. Between these events, I met with long-time priest friends to hear their creative ways of bringing their parishioners back to worship and the struggles of an Archdiocese rebuilding after bankruptcy due to the settlements in abuse of minors cases.



*With my goddaughter, Kaylin Luna*

It was wonderful to be back with the good people of the Southwest who live their faith so well; they are so devoted, and their unique cuisine, humility, and hospitality helped me truly enjoy an Easter Octave to be remembered. The Eucharist keeps us connected to celebrate, pray and serve the Body of Christ.



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