



Associates Handbook

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Following in the steps of Father Eymard, we invite all those whom the Spirit directs to the Eucharist, both priests and lay people, to become associated with our family and share in its mission. We offer them our continuing support so that they may find in the Eucharist the inspiration for their whole life and commitments.

Rule of Life 43

**Associates of the
Blessed Sacrament
Initial Formation Program**

Associates Handbook

Guidelines for the Province of Saint Ann for the *Rule of Life for Associates of the Blessed Sacrament*

A. Introduction

This *Associates Handbook* is offered “to all those, who moved by the Holy Spirit, feel themselves as belonging to the one spiritual family which draws inspiration from Saint Peter Julian Eymard.” [Nov. 30, 2008, Project of Life]. These guidelines for *Associates of the Blessed Sacrament* offer directives to members who under the inspiration of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and the guidance of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament pledge themselves to place the Eucharist at the center of their lives. They are an application of the *Rule of Life for Associates* for the Province of St. Ann. The Handbook is an expression of the sharing of life that takes place among members of the Congregation and the Associates. Lay Associates are an integral part of Saint Ann Province.

The words contained in this Handbook reflect the lived experience of lay women and men and religious of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation who have grown together in the spirituality of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and over the last 20 years collaborated in the ministry of Eucharistic Evangelizing. The Handbook is presented to each Associate of the Blessed Sacrament as a guide to membership in the reformulation of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament for the Province of Saint Ann. Both laity and professed religious are invited to form associations that center their lives in the Eucharist.

B. Mission Statement

We share in the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard as lived by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament to make known the love of God present in the Eucharist as Eucharistic evangelizers.

Objective: Leading lives animated by the Eucharist we spread the love of God through...

- **Celebration of the Eucharist in public worship and liturgy,**
- **Contemplation of the abiding presence of God in prayer,**
- **Communion with all peoples in self-giving service.**

C. Rule of Life for Associates

The subject of sharing our life and mission with the laity has been at the core of Provincial and General Chapters as an essential part of the Eucharistic renewal taking place within the Congregation. The report presented to the 33rd General Chapter in 2005 recognized the need for an authoritative point of reference in proposing a “*Eucharistic life for the laity.*” The Congregation needed a clear proposal, at an inspirational and organizational level, for those lay people who were asking to share our 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. This document is called *Project of Life* by the Generalate and has been re-titled, “***Rule of Life for Associates of the Blessed Sacrament.***” This “Rule” stems from the long tradition of our religious family, which, starting from Father Eymard, gave expression to a “public association of lay faithful” called Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, to share our Eucharistic mission with the laity.

D. Vocational Call

Blessed Sacrament associates experience a call to make a formal covenant to spiritual formation in leading lives centered on the Eucharist, the celebration of the liturgy and prayer before the Eucharist, and in making the love of God known to others in living a Eucharistic style of life. Associates are members of the larger Blessed Sacrament family within the Church through their shared covenant with one another.

- We experience a *call* to witness and live our lives by sharing the mission and charism of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and to form communities centered on the Eucharist.
- We desire to know more about Saint Peter Julian Eymard and his charism and to promote it and live it.
- We feel a deep connection with the Blessed Sacrament family and its Eucharistic spirituality and have been touched by the love and hospitality the community offers.
- We are empowered and trusted to collaborate with them in the ministry of the Congregation.
- We desire to share our time, talent and treasure in a commitment to the ministry of Eucharistic evangelizing.

The Associates share personal experiences of the transformative influence the Eucharist has in their lives. *“The bread and wine which becomes the Body and Blood of Christ changes our lives to give witness to the presence of God in the life of the Church.”*

E. Inspiration of Founder

The spirit proposed by Saint Peter Julian Eymard is the very same as that which animates the laity and the religious of the congregation in our time: *“the gift of oneself to God and to our neighbor out of love, as Jesus has given himself and still gives himself to us in the Eucharist.”* [P. Giuseppe Vassalli, sss]. Saint Peter Julian recognized the need to have committed lay people promote the knowledge and worship of the Eucharist, as the source of spiritual renewal in the Church and Society. He wrote on October 8, 1865, to Clotilde Tholin-Bost *“...the love of Jesus is really neglected and even humiliated in the Christian world...Feed this fire which God has enkindled through you; that is your mission, you can’t have a more beautiful one.”* [letter 1643]

F. Formation

The Eucharist shapes what it means to be church in service to the world. Through regular gatherings Associates make use of a wealth of resources drawn from sacred scripture, Church documents, writings of the saints, along with presentations in Eucharistic theology and spirituality. Each community participates in the formation of its members following the modules provided by the province of St. Ann. Additional materials are available from the province resource center. Communities gather periodically, usually on a monthly basis, to share prayer and fellowship.

Associates share a Eucharistic way of life by entering into the power of Christ’s death and resurrection as the point of departure for ongoing personal growth and spiritual development. Their experience of life is enriched through personal and communal prayer in the presence of the Eucharist. They learn to accept the challenge of responding to the moral and social circumstances of our society today with a conviction of justice and truth the Eucharist requires of us. They are united in their comprehensive understanding of the Eucharist as **Celebration** (Word and Sacrament), **Contemplation**, (prayer in the presence of the Eucharist), and **Communion**, (being sent in a spirit of solidarity and service to all, especially the poor and suffering).

Formation in:

- Communities of friendship and faith, where we learn, pray together, share life and care for one another.
- A spirit of collegiality and commitment to a shared vocation of Eucharistic evangelizing in the spirit of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.
- Direction and a framework for initial and on-going formation.
- A willingness to help each other grow in understanding and living the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.
- A commitment to on-going formation through prayer, reflection, teaching and table fellowship.

G. Discernment

Discernment involves prayer for guidance from the Holy Spirit and is a central part of the candidates' initial formation experience. Discerning the will of God continues in the life of the Associates as they progress in their spiritual development.

Discerning membership:

- Candidates first discern the call to embrace the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard and to live a fully Eucharistic lifestyle.
- The community discerns the readiness of the candidate for membership.
- The Associates discern the ways they live their covenant according to the *Rule of Life for Associates*.
- Each year members make a review of life to discern the ways they live their covenant promise.

H. Covenant Commitment

At the completion of the period of preparation the candidates make the Promise or Covenant to commit themselves to live their baptismal consecration along the evangelical path traced out by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, in accordance with the *Rule of Life* as a Blessed Sacrament

Companion. Being admitted entails inscription in the Register of Companion members of the Association.

As fitting, the occasion of admission will be marked by a public celebration of welcome, with the giving of a membership cross, and pronouncing of the Covenant of Commitment. This formal commitment is manifested in the form of a *covenant*. The covenant is the focal point of the first year of formation and is renewed annually. The covenant is a special type of commitment. It has meaning and symbolism that resonates with our biblical and spiritual traditions.

The Covenant:

- Is made to live as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament, to share in the charism and mission of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the context of one's daily life.
- Is a communal and spiritual bond that is not binding in a legal sense, but freely undertaken to assist one another in living the Eucharistic and Eymardian charism.

The covenant is usually celebrated in each community with some kind of ritual. Family members and friends may be invited. The covenant is formalized by having the member sign a covenant form which is kept on file. The initial covenants are affirmed by the Director, normally the local Superior, and celebrated with community members.

I. Elements and Practices

While Associates do not live in community with each other or with vowed Blessed Sacrament religious, they are committed to developing healthy, trusting relationships with each other. Associates show mutual esteem and care for each other, and assist one another to live lives centered in the Eucharist.

The Blessed Sacrament Associates share a spirit of hospitality through regular gatherings to socialize, grow in friendship, and enhance their spiritual lives through prayer, shared study and dialogue. They are

invited to participate in Province wide gatherings, retreats, convocations or workshops wherein Associates can meet other Associates from throughout the Province, and grow together in their spiritual lives.

These elements and practices suggest ways of incorporating the vocational charism, values and ideals into the daily life of an Associate as she or he lives out their baptismal call to a Gospel centered life with a Eucharistic focus. They aim to engender a lifestyle, a tone of life, centered on values inspired by Saint Peter Julian's vision and spirituality.

There are five basic elements Associates of the Blessed Sacrament seek to inculcate into their lives:

The Centrality of Eucharistic Worship
Hospitality and a Welcoming Spirit
Community Bond of Belonging to the Body of Christ
Communal and Personal Prayer
Ministry of Service

Practices:

- Develop a Eucharistic attitude toward all of life.
- Participate in the worship life of your parish.
- Practice charity and be generous in the sharing of your gifts with others.
- Promote justice and be involved in outreach to the needy, visits to the sick, comfort of the suffering and seeing the face of Christ in every person.
- Support the parish religious educational programs, and offer leadership in prayer.
- Serve the needs of your family, your primary faith community, so that they may know the love of God alive within you.
- Follow the Spirit's lead in responding to the will of God found in your daily life.

Appendix A

A Sample Enrichment Resource:

The Life of Christ in our Lives – A Series of Scriptural Eucharistic Reflections

Scriptures are suggested for each of the themes to be prayed in the style of Lectio Divina, the participants are invited to connect the scripture insight to their life experience.

Nourishment.....	Meals With God – Becoming What We Eat
Reconciliation	Given for You – That Sins May Be Forgiven
Transformation.....	Make Them Holy – To Become the Body of Christ
Presence	Abide in Me – And I In You
Mission	Be on Your Way – To Love and Serve
Covenant	Promises of Love – New and Everlasting
Sacrifice	We Offer You – A Living Sacrifice of Praise
Memorial	We Remember – How you Love Us
Blessing	Giving Thanks and Praise – Berakah
Prophetic Service ...	Chosen and Anointed – Word of God

READING & RESOURCES LIST

- *Tomorrow Will Be Too Late* by Norman Pelletier, S.S.S.
- *An Eymardian Spirituality* by Donald Cave, S.S.S.
- *The Eucharist and Saint Peter Julian Eymard* by Bernard Camire, S.S.S.
- *The Breaking of Bread* by Cardinal Cahal Daly
- Retreat Notes by Peter Julian Eymard, S.S.S.
- Letters by Peter Julian Eymard, S.S.S.
- *The Bread That We Break* by Ernesto Fernandez, S.S.S.
- *Living the Eucharist* by Paul Bernier, S.S.S.
- *Ministry in the Church* by Paul Bernier, S.S.S.
- *One Bread And Cup* by Ernest Falardeau, S.S.S.
- *The Breaking of the Bread* by Eugene LaVerdiere, S.S.S.
- *Dining in the Kingdom of God* by Eugene LaVerdiere, S.S.S.
- *Real Presence* by Nathan Mitchell
- *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples* by Susan Blum Gerding and Frank DeSieno, C.S.P.
- *With Burning Hearts* by Rev. Henri Nouwen
- *The Eucharist* by Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O
- *Emmanuel Magazine*
- Manna Series - Three Volumes

Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament

