



XII



# Preparing for the Covenant Commitment Ceremony

We are ready to assume lay ministries in liturgy, in sharing of faith and in the pastoral structures of the church.

We receive the inspiration and the strength for our service of charity and our commitment to transform society, from Christ, who offers himself totally to us in the Eucharist.

At the end of the period of preparation and probation, candidates make the Promise to commit themselves to live their baptismal consecration along the evangelical way taught by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, in accordance with the *Rule of Life for Associates* of the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

*Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA), 12c, 17a, 20a*

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

## Preparing for the Covenant Commitment Ceremony

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### 1. Opening Prayer

*Leader:* God of loving mercy,  
to restore creation and to bring all people to intimacy with you,  
you sent Jesus, your Son, into our world.  
His mission was to reveal your love  
and to build your rule of perfect justice and peace.

*All:* As we gather here for this time of reflection and prayer,  
we accept our rightful share in Christ's mission today.  
He has no eyes but ours,  
no ears but ours,  
no hands but ours.  
Use them to touch and heal our world.

*Leader:* In your love, you invite us to the table of the Eucharist  
which foretells the banquet of everlasting life and joy  
in your presence one day.  
In your love, you invite us to communion with you  
and one another.  
Bring us to love you and the world so much  
that we will give freely of ourselves for your glory  
and the good of all.

*All:* Jesus said, "I have come to light a fire on the earth."  
Kindle in our hearts the fire of the Holy Spirit  
that our words will give you honor  
and our deeds will help to bring about your reign on earth.

We make this prayer  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who gave his life out of love for the world  
and lives with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.

## 2. Introduction to the Theme

The Eucharist discloses the many gifts that are given to be used in building up the body of Christ in faith and in service. As Saint Paul says in First Corinthians, “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them for everyone” (12: 4–7).

The *Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA)* invites us to “collaborate with men and women of good will towards the building of a world of justice and solidarity” (12). It states that “we are ready to assume lay ministries” in our parish (especially through the various eucharistic ministries); that “nourished by the Eucharist . . . we wish to promote gospel values in social and political life, in the world of labor and finance, in the defense of family and life, in the field of culture, education, science and arts, in the media, in the search for justice and peace, in the conservation of creation” (13).

And lastly, the *ROLA* states that “we receive the inspiration and the strength for our service of charity . . . of bringing the Good News of Salvation to the least and the marginalized, to those oppressed by poverty, weakness, illness and hardship and to those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice;” (and, to) “take an active part in the actions of our local church to foster solidarity, human dignity, and the holistic development of people” (17).

We have been studying, reflecting on and praying about the *Rule of Life for Associates (ROLA)* and a number of themes related to being a disciple of Saint Peter Julian Eymard. In this concluding session, we prepare ourselves for our Covenant Commitment as Associates of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. In this concluding session, we pause to reflect back on our experience of the many months we have been together and solidify our desire to live our baptismal consecration according to the charism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard.

### **3. Eymard . . . *In His Own Words***

“The Aggregation of the Society of the Most Blessed Sacrament is a spiritual fraternity in which a member is inspired by the Eucharistic life of the Society, shares its goals, according to the limits of his duties of state, and becomes an active participant in all its merits and in all its spiritual graces.”

After April 8, 1863  
OC VIII, 432

The work of First Communion of adults, as a daughter of the work of Christian doctrine, has as its goal: to reach out in Paris for the adults who did not make their First Communion, to instruct them, and prepare them to receive worthily this great sacrament, as well as that of confirmation.”

Early 1860  
OC VIII, 547

### **4. Bible Text**

To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits, to another various tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

1 Corinthians 12:7–11, NAB

## 5. Conversation – tell us your story

For the past year we have reflected together on the life and vision of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the charism of the Blessed Sacrament congregation, the Rule of Life for Associates, and what it means to live as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament. As you discern your call to this way of life, we offer the following questions for you to reflect upon in preparation for making the Promise as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament. Please be prepared to share your reflection at our last formation session before the Promise Ceremony.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard's vision for those called to the Eymardian Family consisted of three primary areas of focus for living a Eucharistic spirituality. They are living the “Gift of Self” in *community* where we find relationships that enable us to share our gifts, our strengths and weaknesses with others who walk our spiritual journey with us; living the “Gift of Self” in a community of *prayer* that opens our heart and life to God both individually and as a community; and, living the “gift of Self” in a community of *service* where we choose to share with generosity the gifts and goods the Lord has given us as we commit ourselves more deeply to the mission of the Church.

- Do you feel that God is calling you to make a commitment to the Blessed Sacrament Congregation as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament? If so, why?
  - How will you live this commitment in the three areas discussed above: community, prayer, and service? Please be specific in terms of what you plan to do or continue to do.
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## 6. Teaching – drawing on the following reading

- *A Theology of Ministry* by Frank Zalar

### Final Meeting – Key Points

- This session brings to a close the initial formation for aspiring associates and an introduction to the vision and mission of Saint Peter Julian Eymard. Each participant is called upon to complete her or his discernment and step forward to be received as an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation.
- The new associate is invited to:
  - a) Actively and joyfully participate in the banquet of the risen Christ on the Lord's Day, on feast days, and whenever possible, even on weekdays. (*ROLA*, 7b)
  - b) Insofar as we can, commit ourselves to personal Eucharistic adoration, whether monthly, weekly or daily. (*ROLA*, 8b)
  - c) Insofar as we can, share the prayer of the church (the Liturgy of the Hours) . . . giving particular importance to Morning and Evening Prayer. (*ROLA*, 9b)
  - d) Joyously celebrate the feasts special to our association: the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament on May 13, the feast of Saint Peter Julian Eymard on August 2, and the day of his baptism on February 5. (*ROLA*, 10b)
  - e) Like Mary, let ourselves be guided by the Spirit so that, docile to his action, we may contribute effectively to the coming of the Kingdom. (*ROLA*, 11b)
- As associates, we now are ready to bring the insights and perspective gained in this formation program to “*be Eucharist* to others through (our) various ministerial works and most of all through the way in which each of us lives our life and relates to others.” (Zalar)

## Reading

### *A Theology of Ministry by Frank Zalar*

*Frank Zalar is a former member of Saint Paschal Baylon Parish in Cleveland, Ohio, where he and his wife, Marjorie, were very active, both in parish ministries and the Life in the Eucharist ministry sponsored by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. He and his wife are both Associates of the congregation and now live in Virginia.*

In this article, I would like to chronicle some of the important theological, ecclesial and experiential elements which support my on-going ministry of Eucharistic evangelizing. The Eucharist, as the source and summit of my life in the Catholic Church, informs and animates my spirituality and the resultant work I do in the church. The spirituality within which I strive to conform my life – and that I try to model for others – is grounded in the Old and New Testaments, supported by church traditions and (I hope) realistically situated within the American culture. My efforts to live this spirituality consciously, has transformed my life in many ways, and continues to manifest itself in the work I do within my parish community. In response to the affirmation at the end of each eucharistic celebration, “go forth to live the Gospel,” I strive to “be Eucharist” to others through my various ministerial works and most of all through the way in which I live my life and relate to others.

### **Eucharistic Spirituality Informs Ministry**

A meaningful spirituality is a way of thinking, doing, and living. It impacts all aspects of our lives and animates our ministry. A simple definition which I find most useful is that of Jesuit Father Walter Burghardt: “Spirituality is a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.” Spirituality, then, is not just a contemplative inner experience of God for me, but also its outward expression in relationship. It is contemplation in action. Father Burghardt further comments that spirituality must be biblical, ecclesial, and eucharistic.

Spirituality is *biblical*, because it should be based upon God’s self-revelation in his word. The Hebrew and New Testaments reveal the profound meaning of justice, declare God’s preferential option for the poor, and relate justice to God’s judgment in this life and the next. In the Jewish Scriptures, injustice

## **Associates of the Blessed Sacrament**

was infidelity; and so, not to execute justice was not to worship God. Jesus' ministry was founded upon this tradition and when Jesus inaugurated a new covenant, loving one's neighbor was said to be like loving God (Mt 22:39). Thus, foundational to my ministry, loving God must be synonymous with loving and serving my neighbors in justice.

Spirituality is also *ecclesial*, because it takes place within a distinctive community. Such spirituality is developed in the midst of people, with people, and for people. Such spirituality is not just between Jesus and me, but rather between Jesus and us. In like manner, ministry which emanates from such inner spirituality is performed publicly within a community of people and within a hierarchical church.

Finally and most important, my spirituality is *eucharistic*. I propose that this is the most important aspect, because a broad reflection upon Eucharist includes the biblical and ecclesial aspects mentioned above. Spirituality flows from the Eucharist because “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows.” In Eucharist, we remember the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a special kind of remembering (*anamnesis*) that makes Jesus truly present to us, and in so doing, transforms our lives. In the Liturgy of the Word, we are called to be part of the story of God’s presence and activity in the universe. We are drawn into the very life of God, into relationship with God, through Jesus Christ in the Spirit.

In the Old Testament, we relive the story of God’s covenant with the Hebrews. Even though it is broken over and over again, God forgives and he himself never breaks the covenant. In the New Testament, Jesus is now the visible embodiment of our covenant relationship with God. During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, bread is blessed, broken, and shared so that – through the power of the Holy Spirit – we may experience the all-encompassing love of God through the presence of his Son. And finally, having experienced Eucharist, we are now called upon to be Eucharist to a hungry world.

Thus, the Eucharist energizes my spirituality to minister in the world. It is for this reason that I can say that eucharistic spirituality informs my ministry at all times and in all places. I have performed many tasks, undertaken many projects, and assumed many responsibilities. I have done and will continue these activities as a result of being in relationship with my triune

God, framed by my experience of God in Eucharist.

## The Call to Ministry

About ten years ago, my experience of ministry became more intense and a transformation began in my life. I attended a Life in the Eucharist (LITE) retreat. This program, initiated by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, is designed to introduce a parish community to contemporary Eucharistic theology and spirituality. Its primary goal is to draw any parish community into deeper appreciation and understanding of the eucharistic mystery. It provides an opportunity for adult Catholics to share their spirituality and their diverse understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist.

I was deeply moved by what I learned regarding my conscious and active participation in the celebration of the Eucharist. I was also challenged to fully understand and unify my life experiences in light of the Eucharist – the source and summit of Christian Catholic life. I joined a LITE team at my home parish, and soon became an active member. Shortly after, I became a trainer of LITE team members and eventually recruited and trained a new team to present a second LITE program developed by the congregation.

My relationship with the members of the congregation as well as the relationships I have forged with my LITE team members and the people I minister to through LITE also supports [an] integrated, Trinitarian view of ministry (Edward Hahnenberg's *Ministries, A Relational Approach*, 2003). Ministry is not about the “being” of ministry (ontology), and is not about the “doing” of ministry (function). Rather, ministry is about relationship, which combines both being and doing. Ministers come to be who they are in relationships of service; and relationships of service shape a minister. I am a living example of such a model of ministry. I have been shaped by the people I have worked with and those whom I have served.

## Conclusion

I go forward on my journey with a better understanding of my own identity as a gift from God bringing me closer to his kingdom. The service I render to the community and the response of that community to my service is key to the authenticity of my charisms and vocations as gifts from God. My ministry, though done within church structures, is not the totality of the reality which I am experiencing.

## 7. Closing Prayer

*All:* Saint Peter Julian,  
the Lord has given you,  
as he once did to Jacob, his servant,  
an ever searching faith.  
All your life long you have sought the way  
to deepen your union with God  
and to satisfy the hungers of humanity.  
In the Eucharist you discovered the answer to your searching:  
God's love was there for you and for all humanity.

Answering this gift of love  
you made the gift of yourself to God  
and you have given of yourself to the service of his people  
without counting.  
Your life, modeled on that of the Cenacle,  
where Mary and the apostles were united in prayer.  
Their apostolic zeal caused them to build Christian communities,  
where the Eucharist is the center and the source of life.

Saint Peter Julian,  
accompany us on our journey of faith.  
May our ardent prayer and our generous service  
help us to contribute to the establishing of a world  
where there is justice and peace.  
May our celebrations of the Eucharist  
proclaim the liberating love of God  
for the renewal of his church  
and the coming of his kingdom.

## 8. Additional Reading Material

- Zalar, Frank. "A Theology of Ministry." *Emmanuel*, September/October 2006.

# *Prayer in Honor of Saint Peter Julian Eymard*

Gracious God of our ancestors, you led Peter Julian Eymard, like Jacob in times past, on a journey of faith. Under the guidance of your gentle Spirit, Peter Julian discovered the gift of love in the Eucharist which your son Jesus offered for the hungers of humanity. Grant that we may celebrate this mystery worthily, adore it profoundly, and proclaim it prophetically for your greater glory. Amen.

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