

The Secularization Project

Texts received as of March 7, 2022
to be tested by provincial membership

Brothers,

We are in the final phase of The Secularization Project in which friars are invited to propose texts to be tested by a vote of the provincial membership. To date, nine proposed texts have been received. Two of them were very similar, and their sponsors worked together to produce a single text for our consideration.

In about two weeks, the Internal Communications Office will distribute a voting mechanism on each of these proposals. In the meantime, we publish the eight texts and their provided background so that friars can discuss them in small groups or house chapters. We encourage discussion groups to publish their reflections on the proposals through *Inforum*. The names of the sponsors are not being published so friars are more prone to discuss the proposed ideas and not the personalities proposing them.

When the voting mechanism is distributed in about two weeks, we will be given the chance to vote in one of three ways: (1) I support the text; (2) I do not support the text; (3) I could support the text if the following changes were made (You must indicate the changes you want). Proposed texts that receive support from more than 50% of votes cast will be included among those achieving that level of support at the end of the process. Those texts that receive a total lack of support from more than 50% of votes cast will be dropped from the process. If a proposed text doesn't receive sufficient support but does when the supportive votes are combined with those offering tentative support with changes, the sponsor(s) of the text will be given the chance to adjust the proposal and resubmit it for a final vote.

In the voting mechanism, the background section of proposals will not be printed so friars are clear that they are voting only on the proposed text itself. A link to the backgrounds will be provided for those desiring to review them.

It is still possible to propose new texts. If you want to do so, click [here](#).

Text #1: Destination Ministries

That as the Province adds, hands over, abandons, sustains, or changes ministries in the future, it gives preference to “destination ministries” that offer opportunities to Catholics, Christians, and others which are not typically available in parishes.

Background:

This proposal considers “destination ministries” to be those to which people travel beyond the confines of their local daily life, including their parishes, for a unique and/or special religious, spiritual, or social experience. Current provincial ministries that achieve this include the Solanus Center to which people travel on pilgrimage, for sacramental confession (about 25,000 per year), spiritual and physical healing, veneration of Blessed Solanus Casey et al. Our Capuchin Soup Kitchen in Detroit and the Capuchin Community Services in Milwaukee bring people of means and

people in need into contact with one another. We also can consider St. Lawrence Seminary as an educational destination ministry. While the American Church experiences ongoing parish closings, mergers, consolidations and the like, destination ministries maintain an attraction and viability that transcends the ongoing struggles with secularization experienced in parish ministry. It's interesting to observe that the Province has served in at least six Chicago parishes over the decades. Today we serve in no parish there and have no provincial ministry in Chicago other than our affiliation with CTU. Destination ministries seem to offer what other ministries don't, and that's partly what makes them more viable. In their distinctiveness, they allow the Capuchins to brand themselves within local churches, making our charism better known and enjoying a higher probability of inspiring vocations to our Capuchin way of life.

Text #2: St. Francis - Milwaukee

That the Province of St. Joseph develop programming, events and displays for the St. Francis Milwaukee church and Capuchin Center to create a pilgrimage/destination site for the region. An open doors policy for the church to provide prayer and other sacraments, enhanced hospitality for groups to visit the center, along with displays that tell the story of this place would be developed. Suitable Capuchin and other personnel would be assigned to this new ministry.

Background:

The province of St. Joseph owns the entire block composed of the historic Monastery, Church and the newly built Capuchin Center. Recently the province has heavily invested in this site by upgrading the monastery building and creating barrier free entrances to the church. New bathrooms and large meeting spaces in the center have been created.

The St. Francis site is historically important regarding the beginnings of the province, its association with Solanus Casey and the civil rights movement. The presence of an intergenerational community in the friary provides an anchor of Capuchin visibility that enhances Capuchin services/ministry at our other city locations. These components that this site offers, like the Solanus Center in Detroit, can be an effective way to make it a place for pilgrimage and in the midst of a secular world, offer a sacred space not found in many of our other church/service ministries.

Text #3: A New Ministry

That before the Provincial Chapter of 2026, the Provincial Council establish a new provincial ministry in a geographic area of the province in which we currently have no provincial ministry.

Background:

Establishing a new provincial ministry has been in our Provincial Plan since the end of John Celichowski's first term as Provincial Minister. That's about 10 years ago. One exploration of a new ministry was rejected, citing our inability at the time to staff a new ministry. No Provincial Council since then has concretely planned for a new ministry, though this goal remains in our Provincial Plan. Even with collaboration of personnel involving five different provinces, we have not planned for a new ministry (in a new area). Without planning to accomplish this goal, it appears unlikely to happen. Further, as secularization shrinks our provincial membership, we become less visible across the

geographic province. This lack of visibility and geographic outreach diminishes our ability to effectively respond to the increasing reality of secularization within our society. Vocation Promotion, which only becomes more important with secularization, is most successful when people already know us. Yet, our major centers of ministry remain in territories established within the first 3 decades after the province's foundation. A provincial ministry and community in a new geographic region of the province increases our visibility and enhances our vocation effort.

Text #4: Engaging Secularization

The Province will engage in ongoing reflection and dialog on the impacts of secularization on our fraternal life and ministries, with a focus on discerning, engaging, and integrating those elements of secularization that are consistent with the life and mission of the Church and the Province.

Background

1. In much of the Church, secularization is considered a threat to our life and mission. To some extent, this is true and inherent to secularization. However, there are elements of secularization that are consistent with or at least not opposed. Here are two examples:
 - a. Secularization emphasizes the importance of reason and science. Catholicism has long valued the importance of reason, including in theology. In addition, the Church has a long history of engagement with science. While it is an admittedly mixed history, Catholic priests, religious, and laity have been at the forefront of many scientific discoveries. The Holy See has had a Pontifical Academy of Sciences since 1936.
 - b. Secularization or at least non-sectarianism is an important part of the “American experiment” of constitutional democracy in a republican form of government. The First Amendment’s Establishment and Free-Exercise Clauses protect religious liberty while also preventing the establishment of a state religion or the tyranny of a religious majority.
2. The train of secularization has left the station here in the USA, and it is a steadily growing force in many parts of the world. The speed and reach of this train will only grow with the expansion of technology and social media. In the face of this, denial is foolish, and defensiveness is self-defeating. Healthy engagement, which includes affirmation, conversation, and cooperation where possible, is a better option.
3. Much of what we take for granted or understand as part of our in the Church today, from our liturgical life to our structures, is rooted in the engagement of the community of faith with the world around us. For example, the cassock and the chasuble, considered two quintessentially ecclesiastical garments, were originally secular garb. This kind of adaptation is another dimension of the Church’s catholicity or universality.

Text #5: Secularization as a Value

Proposal: at chapter or after, friars gather in small groups to share what each one has taken from secularization as a value in their lives and how it fits with our Capuchin values. Become aware of patterns.

Background

Plenty material from the secularization project

Text #6: YouFra

Set up a Capuchin Franciscan spirituality, formative & vocation(al) trajectory covering the ages from High School up to Adulthood. (YouFra)

Background

Due to our ministry at St. Lawrence and SCC in Detroit we encounter many who are open to the idea of vocation - but no ministry that focuses on fostering that growing vocational experience - be it to become a 1st, 2nd or 3rd order vocation.

We especially need to look at the years right after high school as there is an untapped potential and I think we have the qualities in our ranks to be able to minister to them well.

Text #7: Montana Ministries

That during the first two years of the next provincial triennium, the Provincial Council facilitates a process through which the provincial membership engages in a reflective evaluation of its ministries on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservation in Montana, leading to a discerning choice at the Provincial Chapter of 2026 to continue, change or discontinue these provincial ministries.

Background:

About seven years ago, the Province heroically chose to revitalize its ministry on the Crow and Northern Cheyenne Reservations in Montana. There were varied motives and responses to the choice, including the desire to serve a Catholic community that otherwise would be unserved by the diocesan clergy, the desire to serve a group of people on the fringes of society, concerns that Catholicism stood little chance of a significant reception within these two native cultures, concerns that our ministry on the reservations had little promise of providing Capuchin vocations, concerns that the personnel needed to revitalize these Montana ministries denied the personnel needed for a new Capuchin ministry elsewhere, et al. These motives and concerns are affected by secularization on these reservations just as secularization affects people of faith everywhere in the USA. Clashes between the native and mainstream cultures further impact these motives and concerns.

Text #8: Chapter Reports

That henceforward, the chapter reports of all provincial ministries and provincial offices so designated by the Provincial Council include a list of Capuchin and other church vocations impacted by the ministry or office during the past triennium. That the same ministries and offices describe their efforts over the past triennium to promote vocations.

Background:

Secularization has particularly affected the promotion of Capuchin and other vocations within the church, as evidenced in the huge decline of provincial members since 1967. Vocation promotion is the responsibility of every friar, ministry and office of the province. Without new members, there is no Province of St. Joseph or service to our valuable ministries. The province benefits from practices that keep the need to promote vocations at the forefront of everyone's concern.